The Effect of Social Responsibility and Corporate image on Enhancing the Brand Equity

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Abstract— Customers are one of the pillars of success in organizations and have been studied from different aspects. The aim of this study is scrutinizing the factors influencing brand equity in the tobacco industry in Tehran. Therefore, by referring to previous studies, dimensions and components of associated with variables have been identified and a standard questionnaire based on these variables has been used. The validity of the questionnaire has been approved by the elites of management and the reliability of them has been calculated through the software. The statistical population of research consisted of all customers of the tobacco industry in Tehran. In order to determining the sample size the Cochran formula, to the extent of 384 individuals, has been used. In order to test the research hypotheses Structural equation modeling through Lisrel software has been used. The results showed that different variables have significant impact on brand equity and customer loyalty is an important mediating factor in influencing on brand equity.

Keywords— Brand equity, Loyalty, Customer, Tobacco industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The improvement of product quality can cause invaluable results in organizations, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty, acquiring more market share and, eventually, the profitability of organization. Thus, service quality is one of the most important factors to maintain and acquire new customers. In fact, in a service organization providing services with more efficient and better quality is one of essential strategies to sustain (Bell &Eisingerich, 2007).Nowadays, competitiveness is a significant issue among commercial organizations. A variety of strategies are used by corporations for being competitive in domestic and foreign markets. The rate of successfulness of corporations depend on selecting suitable and efficient strategies, and performing them on time.
As these days, people pay attention to the brands very much and live for brand, Brand equity plays the main role

in the service organizations. Persons' mentality is shaped by brands, and finally, their judgment is based on these brands. Therefore, it can be said that the brand reflect thought, identity, sophistication, validity, fame, and capability of corporations (Javanmard and Soltanzadeh, 2009). Popular brands have the symbolic and emotional value to consumers as far as they affecting much extent consumer preferences in order to choose a special brand. Despite of the studies by some researchers, it is found that in addition to spent advertisement, other characteristics of advertisement, such as people's attitude of advertisement, play an important role in enhancing Brand equity, while it has been ignored these characters in previous research on brands (lazer,1995).The social corporation responsibility and sustainability are key issues regarding the current business environment. As a result, the leaders and managers of large corporations and organizations seek to balance the social, economic, and environmental section of their job, and consequently, overestimate their social responsibility (Rahimian, Tavakolnia and Asadi, 2010).If the brand has a high and special value in society, the corporation by using the brand can cut marketing costs as the costumers are faithful of the brand. This company can, also, broaden the range of its services as customers rely on the brand (Ebrahimi, Kheiry, nikkhah, 1390).Meanwhile, the social responsibility involves a variety of aspects such as employees, customers, society and environment, and the awareness of brand, the perceived quality, brand association and the faithful of brand are included in the brand equity. The lack of solutions needed to enhance the brand equity in organizations should considerably be noticed because what must be considered for is the enhancement of responsibility and obligations (= commitment)to domestic and foreign society. It is expected that in organizations, complying with the different aspects of social responsibility, dealing with patients and providing the facilities needing for patients' companion lead to improving the product quality. It is noticed that such

factors will considerably influence the special value of organization brand.

In this study, factors influencing the brand equity, with emphasis on spent advertisement, people's attitude of advertisement and the social responsibility of corporation, and corporate image, in creating the brand equity among the corporations of leather industry, as well as the interaction of aspects of brand equity are assessed. The reason why we selected the leather industry is the importance of brand in the industry and the advertisement growth of leather industry in our country.

II.   THEORETICAL ASPECT OF THE RESEARCH

Social responsibility

Because organizations needed to response to social environment changes, the concept of social responsibility of corporation developed in 1960s (Tuan, 2012; Kline & Dai, 2005).In this decade, social awareness movements led to exceed people's expectations of their organizations as far as people perceived that organizations should serve their vast financial resources and social influence to solve social problems. This change is considered as a Covenant change between the organization and society which reflects changing expectations of the organization's social performance (Taghizadeh&Soltani, 1389).As said by Griffin and Barney, social responsibility is a set of duties and obligations (= commitment)that organizations must bind to protect, look after and help their communities

Social responsibility is a part of the category of work ethic that is called cross-organizational ethics. Actually, the main purpose of social corporation responsibility is to compromise and balance between the demands of shareholders and the community that assists in the relationship between trade and society (Snider, Ronald & Martin, 2003).

In summary, the term social corporation responsibility refers to the emergence of a movement which seeks to insert the social and environmental factors into business decisions of corporations, accounting and business strategy, aiming to increase social and environmental performance alongside economic aspects,so that it is useful and beneficialfor the business unit, society and the environment.([1] McKinley,2008)The social Corporation responsibility refers to two categories: the responsibility to seta value on economic, social and environmental aspects; the transparent and direct response to the demands of stakeholders

Corporate image

In the early twentieth century, psychologists' attention was firstly drawn to the cognitive processes of thinking, feeling and perception. Many of them think that the image is the mental thoughts and imaginations which are visual, sensory or location analogues of reality. (Anderson 1980,Denis 1991,p103). According to this view, people count their mental images among issues of important and serious, and they base their proceedings are on it, although what they regard as picture, is not truly representative of the reality. Experts in marketing and advertising fields, sometimes say that the image primarily is created and modified by organizations; however, researchers of public relations believe that the organization itself don't simply create an image, but the societies related to that organization involve in.MoffitIn a roughly comprehensive definition, creating an image has defined as: "This is a multi-faceted process and has roots in cultural, historical, personal, and organizational factors. Each audience has distinct and particular images in their mind, based on their specific and unique personality, and each image consists of intended and unintended, positive and negative, strong and weak images.Today, the term image is used in variety of aspects and fields. For instance, the store image, the brand image, organization, the country image and such like. It is found that each of the images is the result and output of applying the concept of image in different issues such as the store, brand, product, corporation and country in so far as a specialized concept will finally have been achieved (eveh,2001,p7).

A way of establishing the relationship between the brand and the sub-knowledge of brand is the corporate image of which enhancement is occurred by improving the sub-knowledge of specific brand value. The term 'mental corporate image is defined as an instant / real time mental understanding that an individual, group or network has on the organization, and / ora state of interconnected internal mind that successful or unsuccessful efforts by the company are considered as references and a basis (Cretu&Brodie , 2009).

The role of mental corporate image in creating the brand equity in industrial markets has been highlighted more than consumer markets (Kuhen et al, 2008; Mitchel et al, 2001).

Mudambi et al (1997) showed that the corporate image is a significant prerequisite to industrial markets, and managing the mental image of corporation due to the fragility of image is very difficult, and takes long time and much resource is in a case of damage.

Brand equity

The brand equity has been defined for different aims. However so far, no consensus has been achieved in common. This concept can be discussed from the perspective of the manufacturer, retailer or customer. While, manufacturers and retailers tend to strategic functions of brand equity, It is shown that investors pay more attention to the finance-defined concept (Valgrant and Ruble, 1995).Individuals who favour the financial

perspective define brand equity as the total value of the brand which converts to a separate asset when it is sold or added to balance sheet. Other definitions, consistent with this view, consider brand equity as cash flow which over time has an increasing trend for branded goods in contrast to brand-less goods. Definitions of customer-driven brand equity deal with it from customer's point of view, whether the customer is a person or organization. They state that if a brand is to be valuable, the customers must hold it to be valuable. Thus, the power of the brand has been hidden in what customers have learned, felt, seen or heard over time and during gaining their experience (Keller, 2003). Any of the definitions is meaningful no more if the customer does not have any sense of brand. A most comprehensive and common definitions of brand equity is as following: a set of capabilities and assets attached to a brand is a name and symbol which rises or falls the value provided by a product of the corporation, and its customers (Syed Javadin and Shams, 1386).

Ajdariet al (1393) concluded that social responsibility has a significant positive effect on perceived quality in the community, customer and the environment aspect. The social responsibility has a significant effect both in the community aspect on the brand association and in the staff and environment aspects on brand awareness. And, it has been confirmed the connection between perceived quality and brand associations with the brand loyalty. Additionally, they found that hospitals must prioritize social responsibility to can retain their position and sustainability in society, and success in work. Hamidizadeh et al (1393) assessed the factors affecting the brand equity with emphasis on monetary and non-monetary incentives as well as corporate image among students of Shahid Beheshti University. The study demonstrated that advertisements and incentives are effective on the brand equity.The effect of advertisements on the brand equity was positive while that of incentives was different. The effect of monetary and non-monetary incentives on the brand equity was positive and negative, respectively. Zamanimoghadam and Jafarizadeh(1393) in his study examined the relationship between the four factors of model (the brand equity, brand popularity, tendency to pay a higher price and brand image)on the customer's tendency to buy. They concluded that of these three variables, the brand equity, tendency to pay a higher price and brand popularity, the latter was the most relevantto the customer's tendency to buy and the brand image didn't directly have significant relationship with customers' purchase, and brand image through brand equity and brand popularity had indirectly a relationship with customers' tendency to purchase

The study by Han-Min Wang et al (2015)showed that there is a direct relationship between the economic aspect of social responsibility and the enticing property of the brand equity. The brand equity due to havingnticing property have more effect on the corporation's performance. Besides, these researchers also found that there is a negative relationship between the corporation performance and brand loyalty. The results of a study conducted by Simone et al (2014)showed that social responsibility has a significant effect on the perceived customer value and consumer-based brand equity. The difference is that the consumer-based brand equity considers as a mediator between the social responsibility and perceived customer value.Li Jian et al. in their study "the effect of social responsibility on the brand equity of corporation concluded that the effect of environmental responsibility and the economical responsibility for consuming energy is positive on the brand equity of corporation. While the responsibility of staff and their employment, the social development responsibility, responsibilities related to customers and compliance with laws and business ethics significantly affect their corporation's brand equity.Abdolvand and Charsetad in 2013 carried out a study as " the social responsibility and brand equity in the industrial market." .

They reached a conclusion that the social performance have a positive impact on the brand equity. Therefore, managers, using the social responsibility as a strategic tool to distinguish their position, can increase the brand equity. The study 'the effect of marketing mix elements and corporate image on brand equity (the case study of Minu Industrial Group) by Kavosh and Asadi (2014) exhibited that the effect of performance of channels distributing products ispositive on customers' understanding the product quality. Performance of these channels has, also, a positive effect on the brand loyalty. Additionally, the value-based price positively affects brand loyalty and the favorable corporate imagehas a positive impact on customer loyalty.

This research showed that a variety of variables influences customers visiting the stores and purchasing products. Among the evaluated variables, the customer loyalty in different studies is very important to because customer loyalty is affected by different variables, in this study perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association are of immense important. In figure 1,the model of research has been described.
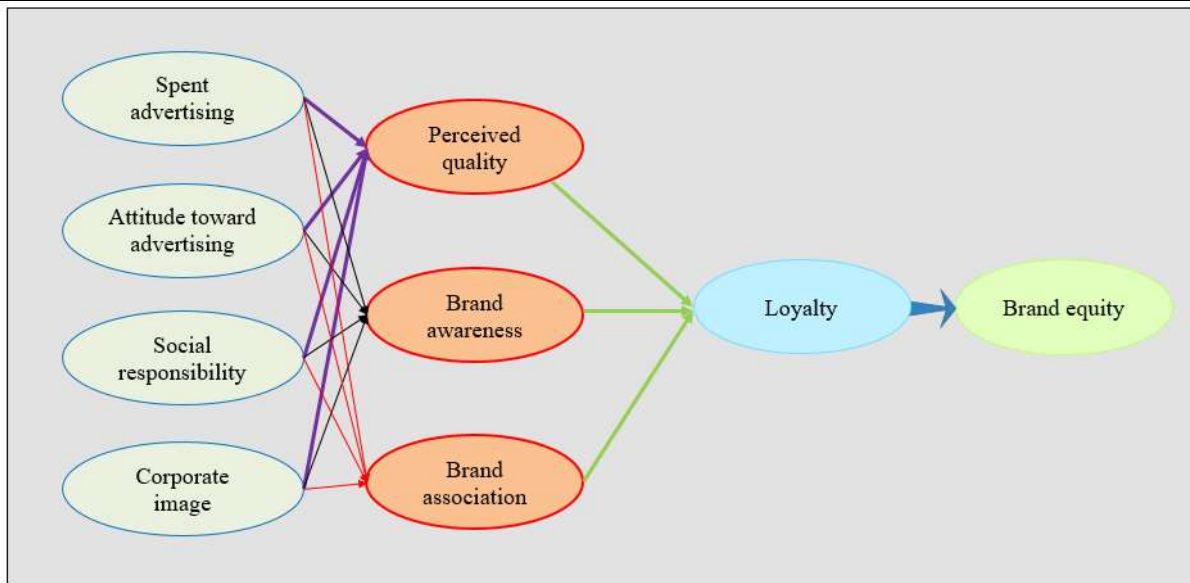
Fig.1: The conceptual model of research (adopted from studies byMirsha, Sinha and Singh, 2014)

III.   METHODOLOGY

In terms of classifying research based on its objective, this study can be considered as an applied research. In terms of categorizing descriptive studies, this study is descriptive- survey research. As a researcher does the field work and by distributing questionnaires among the customers of leather industry in Tehran responds to the survey questions. In the theoretical part, the information required in this study was collected from library and in the field way, the required information of the research subject was collected by offering sample members questionnaires. The statistical population of research is the customers of leather industry in the city of Tehran. In this study, the sampling size was defined by Cochran's formulate sampling size required is 362.The measurement Instrument was a questionnaire in which customers' opinion was collected via a Likert scale. Using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of measurement instruments was ensured. Additionally, to ensure the validity of measurement instruments, content validity was served.

Information and demographic characteristics of respondents
Of the studied sample, 62% and 38% were men and women, respectively, and 78% of them were married. The majority of sample was over 36 years old and only 4% of the studied sample size was consisted of the under-25 – year people. And 22%, 23% and 27% of the sample size included individuals between 26 and 30 years, between 31 and 35 years and between 36 to 40 years, respectively. In other words, the whole bulk sample i.e. 51% were over 35

years. In terms of qualification and educational degree, the majority of samples are composed of people with a bachelor's degree; 20% of the studied sample had associate's degrees or less, and 38% of sample was with a bachelor's degree.And 24% had a master's degree and 17% of the studied sample has PHD degree or higher. This indicates that educated people and people with high academic literacy are a part of customers of leather industry in Tehran.

This research has a questionnaire, which is distributed among customers of leather industry in Tehran. In this regard, to measure the spent advertising, attitude to advertising, brand awareness and loyalty, the standard questionnaire of Yu et al (2000), to measure the social responsibility and perceived quality, the standard questionnaire Papuet al (2006), to measure the variables associated to the brand, the standard questionnaire Lazar et al (1995) and to measure the variable of brand equity, the standard questionnaire of Kim&Hiun (2010) were used. The number of questions in the questionnaire is 26.

In order to measure the reliability, Cronbach's alpha ofa prototype containing 30 questionnaires was pre-tested. Then, using data acquired from the questionnaire and statistical SPSS software, the reliability of Cronbach's alpha was calculated for this instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaires in Table 1 has separately been presented for each of the variables and for each of the questionnaire in general. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was estimated for 30 prototypes of which amount was more than 0.7 i.e. at an acceptable level.

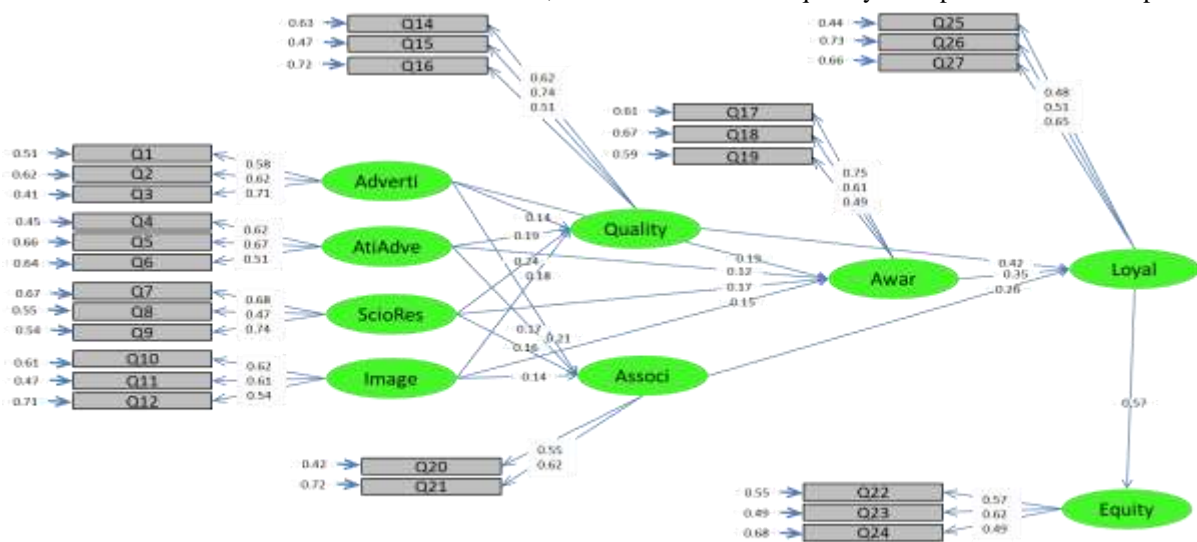*Table.1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaires*

Latent variable	Spent advertisement	Attitude toward ads	Social responsibility	Corporate image	Perceived quality	Brand awareness	Brand association	Loyalty	Brand equity
Cronbach's Alpha	0.76	0.74	0.81	0.75	0.75	0.78	0.82	0.77	0.79

One of the prerequisites for using structural LISREL equation is estimating the sampling adequacy. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy test has been used for estimating it. The amount of sampling adequacy is 0.867.Thus, the sample size is suitable for using the structural equations. The measurement model of standardized coefficients can be found that there is a significant correlation between the latent variables and their corresponding indexes. The coefficients between questions and variables are standardized coefficients,

which show the intensity of the measurement of each index is in each variable. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrated that the structures of the questionnaire have a suitable fitting, and very well showed the relevant variables.
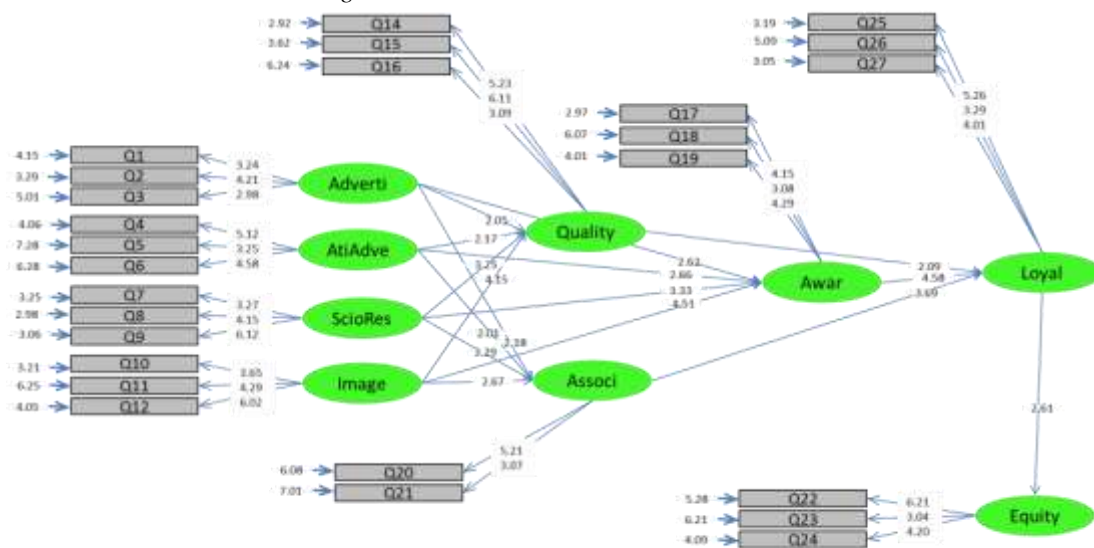
Hypothesis Test
The structural equation model test is used to hypothesis test.The following figures 2 and 3 explain sub-hypotheses that has subsequently been pointed out to interpret them.

Chi-square= 2314.68, df= 1354, p-value=0.00000,   RMSEA= 0.000

Fig.2: The model test in a standard estimate

Chi-square= 2314.68, df= 1354, p-value=0.00000,   RMSEA= 0.000

Fig.3:The model test in a significant level

A significant level which is between -1.96 and 1.96 represents the lack of significant effect among latent variables. A significant level which is between 1.96 and 3shows the significant effect, with the confidence of more than 95%, among latent variables. A significant level with values equal to or greater than $3 (\geq 3)$ indicates a significant effect with the confidence of more than

99%among latent variables. Therefore, as observed at the column of significant level, the effect of variables on each other with the confidence of more than 95%, can be confirmed. Moreover, the model itself must also have the features of a suitable fitting. The following table 2 describes the fitting indexes of final model.

Table.2: The fitting indexes of final model

Index	*Acceptable range*	*value*	*Result*
X^2/df	$X^2/df \leq 3$	1.71	Approving Model
RMSEA	RMSEA< 0.09	0.000	Approving Model
GFI	GFI> 0.9	0.92	Approving Model
AGFI	AGFI> 0.85	0.91	Approving Model
CFI	CFI > 0.90	0.92	Approving Model
IFI	IFI> 0.90	0.93	Approving Model

All of the fitting indexes used in the research model indicate that this model is a good fitting.
Thus, we conclude that the research model has a high capability of measuring the main variables. As the model

is standard, LISREL's results are reliability of its findings. Finally, Table 3 evaluates the hypotheses.

Table.3: Values of final model

Row	*Hypothesis*	*Significant level*	*Standardized value*	*Result*
1	Spent advertising has an effect on perceived quality	2.05	0.14	Approved
2	Spent advertising has an effect on brand awareness	2.62	0.19	Approved
3	Spent advertising has an effect on the association of the brand;	2.08	0.21	Approved
4	Attitude of advertisement has an effect on the perceived quality	2.17	0.19	Approved
5	Attitude of advertisement has an effect on the brand awareness	2.66	0.12	Approved
6	Attitude of advertisement affect the association of brand	2.01	0.17	Approved
7	Social responsibility has an effect on perceived quality	3.25	0.24	Approved
8	Social responsibility has an effect on the brand awareness	3.33	0.17	Approved
9	The social responsibility has an effect on the association of brand	3.29	0.16	Approved
10	Corporate image has an effect on the perceived quality	4.15	0.18	Approved
11	Affect the company's image on brand awareness	4.51	0.15	Approved
12	The association of the brand's corporate image	2.67	0.14	Approved
13	Perceived quality has an impact on loyalty	2.09	0.42	Approved
14	brand awareness has an effect on the Loyalty	4.58	0.35	Approved
15	The association of brand has an effect on loyalty	3.69	0.26	Approved
16	Loyalty affects the brand equity	2.61	0.57	Approved

IV.   CONCLUSION

The evaluation of results obtained from the structural equation software of LISREL indicates that on one hand, the spent advertising, the attitude to advertising, the social responsibility and the corporate image affect the perceived quality, the brand association and the brand awareness, and on the other hand, the perceived quality, the brand association and the brand awareness have an effect on loyalty, and loyalty, in turn, affects brand equity.

Effectiveness is also positive and significant; in other words, increasing the different variables of model leads to improve the brand equity in view of customers of the leather industry. Comparing previous studies with the result of this research shows that the result of this research is compatible with research such as Simon et al. (2014), Taleghani et al. (2012), Bongi et al (2008), Tang (2009), Hamidizadeh et al. (1390), Seyed Javadin et al

(1389), Mohammad (1390), J. Kim and Hyun (2010), MakDugal & Lvskv (2000) and Shank et al (2006).

V.   DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Marketing is an instrument that can increase the growth of business revenue. Today, it is an undeniable fact that the customers and market have been scaled up. Today customers have more opportunities to compare services, and their financial management has become more complicated. Consequently, creative relationships among customers, businesses and the high quality service stand the nature of services purchased when buying depend on the quality of interaction between the two sides i.e. customer and employee. Customer judgments on the business set is based on its ability to solve complex problems and develop its business. For a customer what has a determinant and ultimate value is the business ability of offering their services. Therefore, to make the leather industry efficient, this industry also requires to find enough information on the customers, understanding their interests and their demands and developing relationships with them.

The major challenge of organization managers in the current situation, is ongoing changes in customers' expectations and demands. Thus, managers of the leather industry always keep on considering that workplaces is changing, and they need to offer new models and methods to deal with these changes. This is a point where traditional thoughts is not efficient, and marketing and a new marketing paradigm will be emerged. The yesterday's marketing (traditional) only thought of finding a customer while today's marketing (modern) is "the knowledge and art of finding and keeping customers." In the yesterday's marketing, the indicator of success is market share, but in today's marketing, indicator of success is "share of customer ."What today's organizations consider it as a value is to create an ongoing relationship with the customer and retain them for a long time, and jointly gain experiences with together and successful organizations are those which can find "lifetime customers."A variety of variables affect the enhancement of the brand equity in the leather industry, in this regard, the following is recommended;

- Acquiring sufficient knowledge of the target population of brand: the managers and administrators in the leather industry should carry out the necessary research to can identify your customers. Awareness of customer's is a basic prerequisite of understanding their needs. Moreover, to enhance the brand equity, we require familiarity with our customers and thus, Leather industry managers in this case should properly plant acquire the necessary information, and in this path, they also should use the information technology (IT) and research tools.

- Attracting the attention of the target population by using proper techniques of advertising; Managers and administrators in different brands working in the leather industry should serve the appropriate advertising to motivate their target population. Today's world is based on the information that advertising on networks and Internet sites, Instagram, etc. can be a solid basis for their ads. But the important point in advertising is that advertising should be suitable with the target population. It is obvious that complying this suitability, can improve the brand equity among customers.

- Constructing infrastructures for sustainability in mind of target population via proper communication techniques; Managers and administrators of the leather industry should well invest in staff who communicate with customers and in employees related to customers, and serve people with appropriate experience and knowledge. On the other hand, for returning customers and improving customers' intention of rebuying, managers and administrators of the leather industry should design encouraging and incentive mechanisms, in order for customers with a positive mentality to return to the product provider

- creating a perfect image of the brand in the reader's mind; Managers and administrators of the leather industry can, with planning properly and suitable with the target population, can introduce their brand to customers such that They are capable of understanding all of their demands in the brand, and don't not need to refer to other brands. Administrators of the leather industry, also, must notice that customers merely do not search their needs in products. As the results of hypothesis test showed, there is the indirect effect of social responsibility on the brand equity among data; therefore, to introduce the perfect brand to customers, administrators of the leather industry should consider this. The reflection of social responsibility in the brand and brand activities and products is influential in the customer's view, and is effective on enhancing the brand equity in the view of customers.

- Enhancing the created brand image; an important thing in marketing and the customer management is sustainability, and customers as purchasers of goods and products refer to the service and product provider. But returning customer is important; thus, in here, proper planning of leather industry managers is to enhance and improve the brand image that can assist very much to return the

customer. For deal with this, managers must enhance brand image with providing high quality products and the appropriate services related to the products, and acquiring the trust of customers.

- Setting up a forum; the initial setup of a forum is hard and it takes long time to attract people for functioning. But, if forum makes a certain level of progress, it can be administered alone and with the help of the people, and have a high effect on attracting customers. An active and dynamic forum demonstrates your importance to customers and their satisfaction. It can also lead to making customers loyal and active in your work.

- Possibility of recording feedback; Creating an appropriate and free atmosphere to offer comments and perspectives of customers about a product, provides a mentality of site visitors that you are sure about the quality of your products, while will have a high effect on winning customer confidence. And, if former customers write positive comments, the chance of attracting new people will increase.

- Social Networking; The best method to create a customer network or fan club of customers is using social networks; vast facilities and a countless number of users of these networks will quickly increase your popularity. The most effective way to gain the customers' trust is that you are introduced to friends and acquaintances by one of your customers. To function effectively in social networks, you will not need to serve all of them, but select one or two networks tailored to the needs of your clients. Reading the articles of social networks and increasing site visitors can your convenient reference for selecting the required network; introducing services in the social network of weblog by customers is a sample.

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