Int. J. Nonlinear Anal. Appl. 15 (2024) 12, 69–86
ISSN: 2008-6822 (electronic)
http://dx.doi.org/10.22075/ijnaa.2023.31799.4717

# Designing a competitive advantage model with an emphasis on brand identity in the apparel industry

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*(Communicated by Farshid Khojasteh)*

**Abstract**

This research was done to design a competitive advantage model with an emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry. The statistical population in the qualitative phase includes 15 experts and managers of clothing manufacturing companies who were selected in a non-random way. The main tool of data collection is a semi-structured in-depth interview. Qualitative data analysis was done with the method of database theory and using MAXQDA software. The statistical population in the quantitative part, statistical population in the quantitative part included all customers of clothing products in Tehran city, based on which a sample of 384 people was selected using Morgan's table. Data collection was done in the quantitative section using a questionnaire and data analysis with the partial least squares method and SMART-PLS software. Based on the obtained paradigm model, the components related to competitive advantage with emphasis on brand identity in the Clothing industry in six categories of causal factors (brand identity and competitiveness factors), background conditions (product and service advantage), central phenomenon (competitive advantage), strategies (company planning), intervening conditions (competition management factors) and outcomes (brand loyalty, brand identity, brand orientation and market share) were identified.

Keywords: competitive advantage, brand identity, apparel, MAXQDA, nonlinear equations, SMART-PLS
2020 MSC: 92D25, 65H20

## 1 Introduction

After the first efforts of Adam Smith [26] and David Ricardo [22] to explain the mechanisms that create the company's competitive advantage using the theories of absolute advantage and comparative advantage, many researchers proposed different economic theories to understand this phenomenon [1]. In the field of clothing and textile, most of the previous studies have been in the field of examining the level of competitiveness of different companies, in this regard, the role of factors such as company strategy, company's relationship with other organizations, etc. have been raised as factors that create competitive advantage for clothing companies. The amount of demand for clothing and textile products has witnessed many changes. Studies show that the characteristics of textile products as well as

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*Received:* July 2023 *Accepted:* October 2023

demographic characteristics have an important impact on increasing the demand for clothing. It has also been found that age, ethnicity, region of residence, etc. are factors that influence changes to purchase clothing products. In such a situation, creating strong brands can be considered a potentially effective factor for increasing the competitive power of apparel manufacturing companies [24].

Brand and branding form the core of all marketing activities. With the expansion of the brand concept from a simple logo and symbol to a set of social relationships, the brand concept has grown unprecedentedly around the world and the branding ideology has been accepted by all industries. This has made the category of brand management more important than ever. In the last decade, there has been a change in the brand management paradigm; In the way that brand owners try to improve their brand both in terms of social psychology and aesthetics [4]. In fact, today, an important part of brand management activities is dedicated to the actions after the purchase of the product to create a long-term relationship with customers and provide a satisfactory experience of buying that product for customers. This has become more intense with the development of information technology, so that brands have become one of the important concepts and topics in virtual communities [12].

Due to the increase in the competition of brands in the clothing industry, nowadays relying on features such as perceived quality or brand logo can no longer guarantee the success of a company; Rather, more original concepts such as brand identity are considered as the main factor in gaining a competitive advantage for companies. Although different authors have not been able to accept a common definition, they have a common opinion; That is, brand identity development is a theoretical concept that is best understood from a supply perspective. Kapferer, (1998) offers a very simple and clear explanation for gaining an understanding of brand identity, which emphasizes the importance of the supply side's perspective in the brand concept: "Before we know how customers perceive us, we need to know who we are. According to his explanation Brand identity should define both the brand and its content. The brand identity can act as a network image that in turn uses relationships with customers to create a common vision that is the basis for joint action in favor of the brand and its organization [16]. Brand identity clearly defines what the brand aspires to be and what future it defines for its customers. Brand identity is based on three main themes: First, "brand identity" is a set of associations that brand strategists seek to create. are to create and maintain it. Second, brand identity represents a vision of how a particular brand should be perceived by its target audience. Third, after design, brand identity should be created by creating a value proposition that potentially includes various benefits. Help create a relationship between a particular brand and its customers [10].

Textile is one of the most important manufacturing industries in Asian countries, which has a very long production chain and has the potential to create added value for the industry at every stage of the production process. At the same time, the garment industry is considered a very valuable source for creating employment opportunities, which is especially important in Asian countries that have a large unemployed population. With 64 million dollars, the country's clothing exports have a 0.02% share in the world's clothing exports. The value of the world's clothing consumption market was 1600 billion dollars in 2020, which is expected to exceed 2000 billion dollars in 2025. 75% of the world's clothing consumption market is owned by the European Union, America, China and Japan, which together have 1/3 of the world's total. The highest value of the country's clothing consumption market in the last 4 years is estimated at 11 billion dollars, which is about 1% of the world's clothing consumption market [25]. On the other hand, the intensity of competition in the clothing industry has increased greatly in the last two decades. Therefore, Iranian clothing companies have no choice but to increase their competitive advantage through branding in order to maintain the domestic market, increase their competitiveness with foreign brands and enter the international market. However, what emerges from Iran's clothing industry is that currently, most domestic companies do not have a specific strategy for branding. By reviewing the research literature, it is clear that so far not much research has been done inside the country regarding the conceptualization of brand identity. Specifically, no model has been presented to explain the relationship between brand identity and competitive advantage, which indicates a major research gap. At the same time, most of the studies have been conducted in areas such as luxury goods, retail, food industry, etc., and the clothing industry has received less attention from Iranian researchers in the field of branding. Considering the importance of brand identity in the clothing industry on the one hand, and considering the lack of studies in this field, the present study aims to design a competitive advantage model with an emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry. In fact, the main question of this research is what are the main components of the competitive advantage model with emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry?

## 2 The literature

Competitive advantage refers to factors that allow a company to produce goods or services better or cheaper than its competitors. These factors allow the manufacturing unit to generate more sales or higher profit margins compared to its competitors. Competitive advantages are attributed to various factors including cost structure, brand name, quality of product offering, distribution network, intellectual property and customer service. Competitive advantage is something that makes the products or services of a business unit more desirable for customers than any other competitor [17]. The four main methods of gaining competitive advantage are cost leadership, differentiation, defensive strategies, and strategic alliances. Cost leadership is the first competitive advantage that businesses often strive to achieve. Cost leadership occurs as an advantage when a business can offer a product of the same quality as its competitors, but at a lower price [27]. Differentiation is the second strategy that businesses often use to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In a differentiation strategy, low cost is only one of many possible factors that may differentiate a business from others. Businesses that differentiate themselves usually look for one or more salable features that can set them apart from their competitors. They then find and market to the segment of the market that values those attributes [11].

Another way to gain a competitive advantage is to use a defensive strategy. The advantage that this type of strategy provides is that it allows the business to further distance itself from its competitors while maintaining the competitive advantage it has gained. Therefore, this strategy is closely related to differentiation and cost leadership because it is the method used by businesses to maintain those advantages once they have been achieved [5]. Competitive advantage can be reflected in different dimensions such as differentiated products, market sensing, cooperation with partners, focus on high value customers, market responsiveness, customers as assets, information transparency and supply chain leadership. Competitive advantage is a construct whose measurement is still fragmented, for example, some researchers used product differentiation, market sense, and market responsiveness as dimensions of competitive advantage. In another study, competitive advantage was measured using cost-based advantage, product-based advantage, and service-based advantage. Other measures of competitive advantage include price or cost, quality, delivery reliability, product innovation, and time to market. These heterogeneous criteria make it difficult to define and measure competitive advantage [19].

Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to the concept of brand identity in business and management literature. Although different authors have not been able to agree on a common definition, they share a common opinion, namely that brand identity development is a theoretical concept that is best understood from a supply perspective. Kapferer (1998) provides a very simple and clear explanation for gaining brand identity perception that emphasizes the importance of the supply side's perspective in the brand concept: "Before we know how we are perceived; we must know who we are." According to his explanation, a product should define both the brand and its content instead of the consumer. Brand identity can act as a network image, which in turn uses the relationship between the company and the customer to create a shared vision, which becomes the basis for joint action for/or against change. In this sense, the supply-oriented view of brand identity is important and recognized by the International Group on Corporate Identity [28].

The role of identity as a supply-side concept that includes the decision-making power of business owners and managers of manufacturing companies has been proven in various studies. In addition, some definitions consider the role of identity as having the dual purpose of analyzing brands internally on the one hand, and on the other hand of calculating brand equity, which includes the cumulative sum of the value that consumers place on specific brands. and also explain their trust and loyalty to a brand [30]. Brand identity clearly defines what the brand aspires to be and has multiple roles. First, brand identity is a set of associations that the brand strategist seeks to create and maintain. Second, brand identity represents a vision of how a particular brand should be perceived by its target audience. Third, after its design, the brand identity should help create a relationship between a particular brand and its customers by creating a value proposition potentially involving benefits or offerings [23].

Brand identity is a set of tools or elements used by a company to create a brand image. Brand image is customers' perception of the brand, which includes various associations related to it and memories related to interacting with it. Brand identity and its elements derive from the company's mission, brand value proposition, long-term goals, competitive position in the market, and connection with the values and interests of the audience. These factors are fundamental in nature and describe what a company wants to communicate in the branding process. At the same time, brand identity describes how these fundamental elements relate. The most commonly agreed upon elements of brand identity are usually:

- A brand names
- A slogan or a sentence
- Colors and graphic styles
- Logo and word mark and their changes

- One voice and one tone
- A style and an image [14].

These elements can be grouped differently, and there are many opinions about which specific brand elements should be included in this list and in what order they should be presented. These differences are usually explained by the context in which the brand identity is discussed and the perspective of a particular expert. For example, a designer who is developing a brand identity for an existing company removes the brand name and slogan from his creative process and emphasizes the visual part more. In contrast, a more complete range of brand identity elements is usually involved during the process of creating a new brand, rather than renaming an existing product or company [3].

## 3 Methodology

The current research is in the field of developmental research. Qualitative data analysis was done with the method of exploratory and interview-based data theory, and quantitative data analysis was based on the nature and method of a descriptive-survey research, which was a questionnaire for data collection. Also, the current research was conducted with a mixed (qualitative-quantitative) approach.

The statistical population in the qualitative phase includes 15 experts and managers of clothing manufacturing companies who were selected in a non-random way. The statistical population in the quantitative part includes all clothing customers of Tehran city (unlimited population), based on which a sample consisting of 384 people was selected using Morgan's table.

The main tool of data collection in the qualitative part is semi-structured in-depth interview. In the quantitative part, to test these research hypotheses, a questionnaire tool was used to collect information. In order to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated and two methods of form-content validity and divergent validity were used to check the validity.

Qualitative data analysis was done with the method of data base theory and using MAXQDA software. In order to analyze the data and test the research hypotheses, inferential statistics and partial least squares technique (PLS) and Smart PLS software were used.

### 3.1 Nonlinear Structural Equation Model

The traditional linear structural equation model is typically made up of two parts: the measurement model describing the relationships between the observed and latent variables and the structural model describing the relationships between the latent variables. Given a vector of $p$ observed variables $Z_i$ for the ith individual in a sample of size n and a vector of $q$ latent variables $f_i$, the linear structural equation model system can be written:

$$Z_i = \mu + \Lambda f_i + \epsilon_i, \tag{3.1}$$
$$b_0 + B_0 f_i = \delta_{0i}, \tag{3.2}$$

where in the measurement model, the matrices $\mu(p \times 1)$ and $\Lambda(p \times q)$ contain fixed or unknown scalars describing the linear relation between the observations $Z_i$ and the common latent factors $f_i$, and represents the $(p \times 1)$ vector of random measurement error independent of fi such that $E(\varepsilon_i) = 0$ and $Var(\varepsilon_i) = \Psi$ with fixed and unknown scalars in ; and in the structural model, the matrices $b_0(d \times 1)$ and $B_0(d \times q)$ contain fixed or unknown scalars defining d different additive linear simultaneous structural equations relating the factors to one another plus the $(d \times 1)$ vector of random equation error $\delta_{0i}$, where $E(\delta_{0i}) = 0$ and $Var(\delta_{0i}) = \Delta_0$ with fixed and unknown scalars in $\Delta_0$.

The simultaneous linear structural model as written in (3.2) is very general. For many practical research questions which can be addressed by simultaneous structural models, it is useful to model specific variables in terms of the rest of the variables, i.e., it is useful to consider some of the latent variables as endogenous and others as exogenous, where endogenous variables are those that are functions of other endogenous and exogenous variables. Let $f_i = (\eta_i', \xi_i')'$ where $\eta_i$ are the $d$ endogenous latent variables and $\xi_j$ are the $q - d$ exogenous latent variables. Then a commonly used form for the structural model (3.2) becomes:

$$\eta_i = b + B\eta_i + \Gamma\xi_i + \delta_i, \tag{3.3}$$

where it is assumed the equation errors $\delta_i$ have $E(\delta_i) = 0$, $Var(\delta_i) = \Delta$ and are independent of the $\xi_i$ as well as independent of $\epsilon_i$ in (3.1), and the matrices $b$ $(d \times 1)$, $B(d \times d)$, $y(d \times (q - d))$, and $\Delta(d \times d)$ are fixed or unknown scalars. The structural model (3.3) is said to be in implicit form, implicit because it has endogenous variables on both sides of the equations, i.e., it is not "solved" for the endogenous variables. It is assumed that the diagonal of B is zero so that no element of $\eta_i$ is a function of itself. A sufficient condition for solving (3.3) is that $(I - B)$ is invertible, then (3.3) can be solved for the endogenous variables and written as

$$\eta_i = b^\star + \Gamma^\star \xi_i + \delta_i^\star \tag{3.4}$$

where $b^\star = (I - B)^{-1}b$, $Y^\star = (I - B)^{-1}y$, and $Var(\delta_i^\star) = (I - B)^{-1}\delta(I{-}B)^{-1}$.

The structural model (3.4) is said to be in reduced form as the $\eta_i$ now appears only on the left-hand side of the equation. It is important to note the assumption that the equation errors $\delta_i$ were additive and independent of the $\xi_i$ in the implicit form (3.3) results in the equation errors $\delta_i^\star$ in the reduced form (3.4) also being additive and independent of the $\eta_i$.

Given $p$, $q$ and $d$, additional restrictions must be placed on $\mu$, $A$, $Y$, $b_0$, $B_0$, and $\Delta_0$ in (3.1)-(3.2) in order to make all the unknown parameters identifiable. The assumption that (3.2) can be written in reduced form (3.4) is the typical restriction placed on the structural model. Additionally, a common restriction placed on the measurement model (3.1) is the errors-in-variables parameterization where q of the observed variables are each fixed to be equal to one of the q different latent variables plus measurement error. For a thorough discussion of identifiability in linear structural equation models see, e.g., Bollen (1989). Finally, it should be noted that there is no inherent distributional assumptions needed for $\epsilon_j$, $\delta_{0i}$, nor fi at this point of model specification although distributional assumptions may be added eventually to perform estimation.

A mixture SEMs for a $p \times 1$ random vectory $y_i$ is defined as follows:

$$f(y_i) = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \pi_k f_k(y_i|\mu_k, \Sigma_k), \qquad i = 1, \cdots, n, \tag{3.5}$$

where $K$ is the number of components which can be unknown, $\pi_k{}'$s are component probabilities which are nonnegative and sum to 1.0, $f_k(y|\mu_k, \Sigma_k)$ is a multivariate normal density function with an unknown mean vector $\mu_k$ and a covariance matrix $\Sigma_k$. Conditional on the kth component, suppose that y satisfies the following measurement model:

$$y = \mu_k + \Lambda_k \omega_k + \epsilon_k \tag{3.6}$$

where $\mu_k$ is an $p \times 1$ intercept vector, $Y_k$ is a $p \times q$ factor loading matrix, $\omega_k$ is a $q \times 1$ random vector of latent variables, and $\epsilon_k$ is a $p \times 1$ random vector of error measurements with distribution $N(0, \Psi_k)$ which is independent of $\omega_k$, and $\Psi_k$ is a diagonal matrix. Let $\omega_k$ be partitioned into $(\eta_n^T, \xi_k^T)^T$ where $\eta_k$ is a $q1 \times 1$ vector, $\xi_k$ is a $q2 \times 1$ vector, and $q1 + q2 = q$. The structural equation is defined as

$$\eta_k = B_k \eta_k + \Gamma_k \xi_k + \delta_k \tag{3.7}$$

where $B_k$ and $Y_k$ are $q1 \times q1$ and $q1 \times q2$ matrices of unknown parameters; and random vectors $\xi_k \lambda_k$ are independently distributed. as $N(0, \phi_k)$ and $N(0, \phi_{\lambda k})$ respectively; and $\phi_k$ is a diagonal matrix.

We assume that $B_{0k}(q1 - B)$ is nonsingular and $(l_{ql}$ is independent of any elements in $B_{k^\star}$. One specific form of $B_k$ that satisfies this assumption is the lower or upper triangular matrix.

As the mixture model defined in (3.5) is invariant with respect to permutation of labels $k = 1, \cdots, K$, adoption of an unique labeling for identifiability is important. Roeder and Wasserman (1997), and Zhu and Lee (2001) proposed to impose the ordering $\mu_{1,1} < \cdots < \mu_{K,1}$ for eliminating the label switching (jumping between the various labeling subspace), where $\mu_{k,1}$ is the first element of the mean vector $\mu_k$. This method works fine if $\mu_{1,1}, \cdots, \mu_{K,1}$ are well separated. However, if $\mu_{1,1}$, $\mu_{K,1}$ are close to each other, it may not be able to eliminate the label switching, and may introduce incorrect results. Hence, it is necessary to find a sensible identifiability constraint. In this chapter, the random permutation sampler developed by Frühwirth-Schnatter (2001) will be applied for finding the suitable identifiability constraints. See the following sections for more details.

Moreover, for each $k = 1, \cdots, K$, structural parameters in the covariance matrix $\Sigma_k$ corresponding to the model defined by (3.6) and (3.7) are not identified. A common method in structural equation modeling for identifying the model is to fix appropriate elements in $A_k$, $B_k$, and/or $Y_k$ at preassigned values. The positions of the preassigned values of the fixed elements in these matrices of regression coefficients can be chosen on a problem-by-problem basis, as long as each $\Sigma_k$ is identified. In practice, most manifest variables are usually clear indicators of their corresponding latent variables. This give rather clear prior information to specify the zero values to appropriate elements in these parameter matrices. See the illustrative example in Section 5 for a more concrete example. For clear discussion of the proposed method, we let $\prod = (\prod_1, \cdots, \prod_K)$, and O be the vector which contains all unknown parameters in the covariance matrices that defines an identified model.

## 4 Research findings

Considering this, the interview method was used to collect data in the present research, and the retest and reliability method of two coders was used to measure reliability. In this research, three interviews have been selected as samples and re-coded with a time interval of one month. The retest reliability rate was 88% and this value is more than 60%, the coding reliability is acceptable. Also, the reliability of the binary coder was 77%, and this value is more than 60%, the coding reliability is acceptable. According to the use of database theory in this research, three stages of coding were done.

In total, 15 main categories and 36 important and influential subcategories of competitive advantage were identified with an emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry. Two main components including brand identity and competitiveness factors and brand association indicators, special brand design, micro factors, macro factors, change factors in product purchase were selected as categories of causal conditions in developing the research model. Based on the secondary coding results of the research, cost-based advantage, product-based advantage and service-based advantage indicators were selected as background categories in developing the research model. The indicators of relative advantage, differentiating advantage and demand factors were selected as the central categories in developing the research model. The indicators of management process, competitive performance and competitive potential were selected as intervention categories in developing the research model. The indicators of cultural branding, display branding and customer-oriented branding were selected as categories of consequences in developing the research model. Short-term and long-term planning indicators were selected as strategic categories in developing the research model.

From all the indicators obtained from the qualitative analysis, 15 interviews, including 15 main categories and 36 sub-categories, have been used to develop a competitive advantage model with an emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry. The figure below shows the competitive advantage model with emphasis on brand identity in the clothing industry. In this research, to calculate the retest reliability, some sample interviews were selected from among the conducted interviews and the specified codes were compared in two-time intervals for each of the interviews. The retest method is used to evaluate the stability of the researcher's coding, but it faces the problem that the results of the retest can be affected by the coder's experience and memory and lead to changes in reliability. Codes that were similar in two-time intervals were identified as agreement and non-similar codes as non-agreement. The reliability calculation method is as follows:
Reliability percentage= number of agreements*2/total number of data*100%

In this research, three interviews have been selected as samples and re-coded with an interval of one month, and the results are presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Reliability percentage by retest method

| interview | Total number of codes | Number of agreements | Number of disagreements | Retest reliability percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 55 | 30 | 9 | %86 |
| 2 | 72 | 37 | 15 | %89 |
| 3 | 77 | 39 | 7 | %88 |
| Total | 204 | 106 | 31 | %88 |

Considering that the retest reliability is 88% and this value is more than 60%, therefore the coding reliability is acceptable.

Figure 1. Paradigm model of competitive advantage with emphasis on brand identity in the apparel industry.

According to the paradigmatic form, in the table below, the groups of each category are also specified based on the primary codes.

Also, the final output of MAXQDA20 software is presented in Figure 2:

The values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were more than 0.7 and the shared reliability value was more than 0.5. Also, based on the obtained results, it was found that the conditions of convergent validity are also established; Therefore, convergent validity was also confirmed. The results of the Fornell-Locker test also confirmed the validity of the tool. The coefficient of determination test ($R^2$) and $GOF$ index (equal to 0.698) also confirmed the appropriate fit of the research model.

The fitting of the structural model using T coefficients is such that these coefficients must be greater than 1.96 in order to confirm their significance at the 95% confidence level. Also, the coefficients of the endogenous variables of the

Table 2: Paradigm, main and sub-components of the research

| Paradigm | The main concept | Sub concept |
|---|---|---|
| A central phenomenon | Competitive Advantage | Comparative advantage |
| | | Differentiating advantage |
| | | Demand factors |
| Causal conditions | interoperability | Sensory capabilities |
| | | Learning capabilities |
| | Competitive factors | Micro factors |
| | | Macro factors |
| | | Factors of change in product purchase |
| | Communication with the customer | Customer notification |
| | | Customer persuasion |
| Background conditions | Product and service advantage | Cost-based advantage |
| | | Product based advantage |
| | | Service based advantage |
| | Trust-building capabilities | Trustworthy behavior |
| | | Trust symbols and features |
| Strategies and actions | Organization planning | short term |
| | | long time |
| | Corporate strategy | Aggressive orientation |
| | | Defensive orientation |
| | TSP marketing strategies | Segmentation |
| | | targeting |
| | | placement |
| Intervening conditions | Environmental factors | Management process |
| | | Competitive performance |
| | | Competitive potential |
| | Operational capabilities | Marketing capabilities |
| | | Technological capabilities |
| Consequences | branding | Cultural branding |
| | | Show branding |
| | | Customer-oriented branding |
| | Brand loyalty | Customer satisfaction |
| | | Customer loyalty |
| | Market share | Increase sales rate |
| | | A percentage of the total share of sales |
| | Brand Identity | Brand associations |
| | | Special brand design |

model are used as a criterion to evaluate the relationship between the variables; In such a way that the value of the path coefficient from 0.33 to above shows the strength of the relationship between that structure and the endogenous structure.

Based on the obtained results, it was found that all research hypotheses have been confirmed. As explained, the results of the model fit test also showed that the proposed research model has validity and appropriate fit.

## 5 Conclusion and suggestions

Based on the secondary coding results of the research, two main components including brand identity and competitiveness factors and brand association indicators, special brand design, micro factors, macro factors, change factors in product purchase were selected as categories of causal conditions in developing the research model. A product, rather than the consumer, should define both its brand and its content. A brand-oriented product is a complex concept based on different products, services and experiences, and owned by different stakeholders (industry sector, public sector, government, retailers, customers) with various forms of ownership and often without proper hierarchy with a set of rules for stakeholders. which they must adhere to, is managed. In such a context, the brand identity can act as a networked image, which in turn uses the relationship between the company and the customer to create a shared vision, which becomes the basis for joint action for/or against change. In this sense, the supply-oriented view of brand identity is important and recognized by the International Group on Corporate Identity. This finding is consistent with the results of Suna et al. [28] and Rodrigues et al. [23].

Background conditions are the conditions in which strategies and interactions lead to results. Based on the secondary coding results of the research, cost-based advantage, product-based advantage and service-based advantage indicators were selected as background categories in developing the research model. To explain the obtained result, we

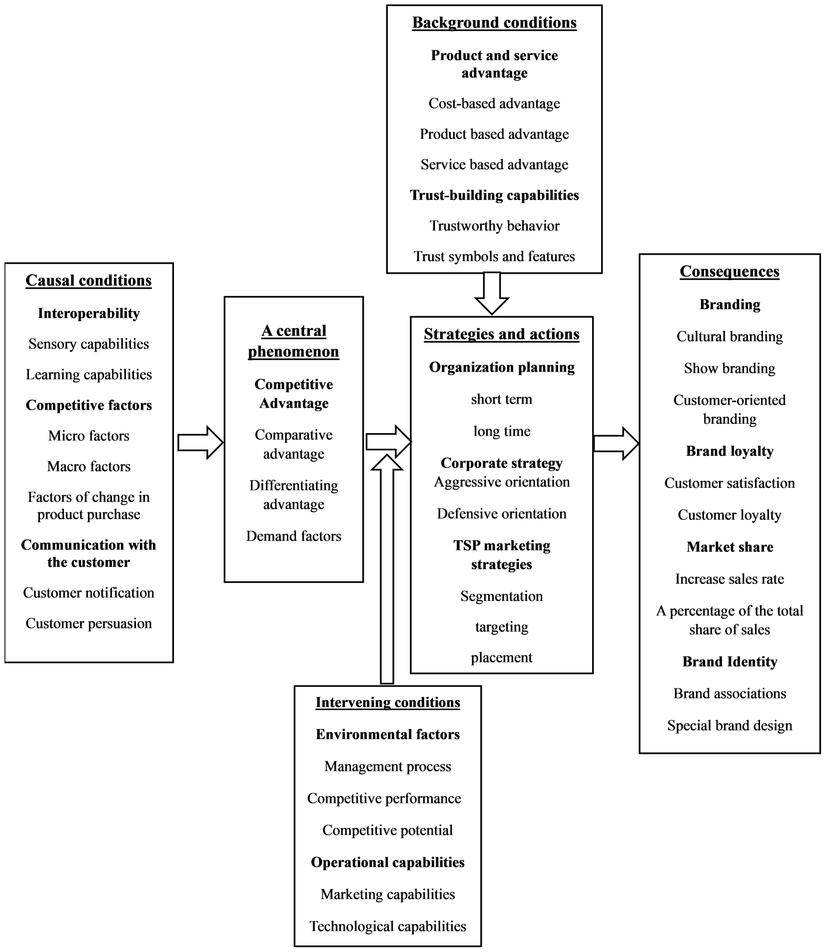


Figure 1: Paradigm model of satisfaction with service re-creation with emphasis on brand loyalty

can refer to the concept of competitive triangle, which was first introduced by Porter. The competitive triangle consists of the consumer, the company, and the competitor. Winning a competition is based on the perceived value offered to the consumer compared to the relative costs between the firm and the competitor. In examining the factors that create competitive advantage, we find that one of the elements that most affects the final cost is the value chain. At each stage, the value chain creates additional cost. One of the strategies that companies follow is actually understanding the most expensive steps in the competitors' value chain and trying to reduce this cost to compete on pricing. However, we recognize that real cost savings do not rely on identifying the most expensive links in a competitor's value chain, but on traversing an experience curve, meaning that companies are able to produce at higher speeds and lower costs as They are the focus of the economy. The obtained result is consistent with the findings of Alvarado-Karste et al. [3] and Piva et al. [21].

Based on the secondary coding results of the research, indicators of relative advantage, differentiating advantage and demand factors were selected as central categories in developing the research model. All identified indicators are defined under the concept of competitive advantage. The experience of most industries shows that clear competitive advantage is the exception rather than the rule, and strategic choices rarely guarantee its delivery. Often, among a group of competitors, there are one or two clear leaders and one or two obvious rivals. To assess whether options, and ultimately choices, provide sustainable competitive advantage, it is necessary to test proposals against the various ways in which competitive advantage can be achieved over time. Cost-based advantage is the most obvious way to achieve competitive advantage. Customers are always price conscious and, all things being equal, they will choose the lowest price. Low prices are only sustainable when costs are low. If the offering is differentiated in a way that customers value, it may provide a competitive advantage. The obtained result is consistent with the findings of Tucker et al. [31] and Lieberman [15].

Based on the secondary coding results of the research, indicators of management process, competitive performance

Table 3: Paradigm, main and subcategories of research and primary codes

| **Paradigm** | **The main concept** | **Sub concept** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A central phenomenon | Competitive Advantage | Comparative advantage | geographical location |
| | | | Efficient internal system |
| | | | Higher profit margin |
| | | | Greater efficiency of goods and services |
| | | Differentiating advantage | Product and service differentiation |
| | | | Price quality of the product |
| | | | Non-price quality of the product |
| | | | Residential area |
| | | | nationality |
| | | | Age |
| | | Demand factors | Measuring the target market |
| | | | Clothing smuggling |
| | | | Demographic characteristics |
| | | | Features of the company's products |
| Causal conditions | interoperability | Sensory capabilities | Communicating with the customer |
| | | | Sensory customer experience |
| | | Learning capabilities | Learning by all people in the organization |
| | | | Transfer of learning to the organization |
| | Competitive factors | Micro factors | Use of technology |
| | | | Focus on the customer |
| | | Macro factors | Inimitable ability |
| | | | Irreplaceable feature |
| | | Factors of change in product purchase | Cost factors |
| | | | Service quality factors |
| | | | Labor productivity |
| | Communication with the customer | Customer notification | Political stability |
| | | | government policy |
| | | | Proximity to markets |
| | | | Human infrastructure |
| | | | Physical infrastructure |
| | | | Technology indicators |
| | | | Price competitiveness |
| | | Customer persuasion | Simplifying the purchase decision for the customer |
| | | | Providing complex products for sophisticated customers |
| | | | Look at the customer as an asset |
| | | | Responsiveness to the market |
| Background conditions | Product and service advantage | Cost-based advantage | Good financial returns |
| | | | Cost structure |
| | | | Cost leadership |
| | | Product based advantage | Transparency of product and service information |
| | | | Brand value proposition |
| | | Service based advantage | Brand preference |
| | | | distribution network |
| | | | Product quality |
| | Trust-building capabilities | Trustworthy behavior | How to interact with customers |
| | | | Gaining the trust of customers |
| | | Trust symbols and features | A symbol of trust |
| | | | Having a unique feature |
| Strategies and actions | Organization planning | short term | Company mission |
| | | | Cooperation with partners |
| | | | Implementation of value creation strategy by the company |
| | | | Defensive strategies |
| | | | Economies of scale |
| | | long time | Improving competitiveness with marketing strategies |
| | | | Brand vision |
| | | | long term purposes |
| | | | strategic alliance |
| | | | Proximity to customers |
| | Corporate strategy | Aggressive orientation | The company's multi-layer program |
| | | | Determining and achieving work goals |
| | | Defensive orientation | Reducing risky projects |
| | | | Reducing investment in long-term projects |
| | TSP | Segmentation | Market segmentation |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | marketing strategies | | Collect potential buyers in groups |
| | | targeting | set a goal |
| | | | Select the market |
| | | placement | Identify the market |
| | | | Determine your position in the market |
| | | | Understanding market conditions |
| Intervening conditions | Environmental factors | Management process | Intellectual Property |
| | | | Maintaining competitiveness |
| | | | Management relations |
| | | | Ownership advantage |
| | | | Supply chain leadership |
| | | Competitive performance | Focus on high value customers |
| | | | Competitive position in the market |
| | | | High credit |
| | | | profitability |
| | | | Sales growth rate |
| | | | Market share |
| | | | Dependence on the market |
| | | Competitive potential | Marketing talent |
| | | | Commitment to internal and external trade |
| | | | Cost competitiveness |
| | | | Trying to find a new market |
| | Operational capabilities | Marketing capabilities | A company's specific abilities to identify markets |
| | | | Complex processes of skills and knowledge reserves |
| | | Technological capabilities | Ability to effectively use technological knowledge |
| | | | Creating new technologies and developing new products and processes |
| Consequences | branding | Cultural branding | Establishing the brand personality in the mind of the consumer |
| | | | Proven brand culture |
| | | | Brand nostalgia |
| | | | Cultural symbol of the brand |
| | | | Brand |
| | | Show branding | Brand attitude |
| | | | How to display the brand |
| | | | Brand positioning |
| | | Customer-oriented branding | Economic conditions of people |
| | | | Reflecting the image of the customer |
| | | | Brand loyalty |
| | | | Communication with the values and interests of the audience |
| | | | Communication with the values and interests of the audience |
| | Brand loyalty | Customer satisfaction | Oversee the long-term success of the brand |
| | | | Creating quality products |
| | | Customer loyalty | Efforts to satisfy the customer |
| | | | Consumer expectations |
| | Market share | Increase sales rate | Increase product sales |
| | | | Excellent quality products |
| | | A percentage of the total share of sales | Sales segmentation |
| | | | Profit share of sales |
| | Brand Identity | Brand associations | Reconstruction of the image in the mind of the audience |
| | | | Impressions from a brand to consumers |
| | | Special brand design | Brand logo design |
| | | | Drawing shapes with a special concept |

and competitive potential were selected as intervention categories in developing the research model. The word competition means the desire of a company to fight with other companies. Based on this, the competitive performance includes all the actions and activities that a company does in order to start a competition with other companies and thus increase its market share. Generally, the goal of competitive performance is to increase the company's capabilities and consequently increase the company's market share. Competitive performance occurs between the organization and companies from the same industry and market or companies producing the same products and services so that the organization can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The obtained results are consistent with the findings of Dagnino et al. [7] and Nayak et al. [7].

Based on the results of the secondary coding of the research, the indicators of cultural branding, display branding and customer-oriented branding were selected as the outcome categories in the formulation of the research model. A product that is well received by the target audience can transform a business. As consumers become savvier, businesses must become more strategic in their branding efforts to ensure that their products and services are in high demand.

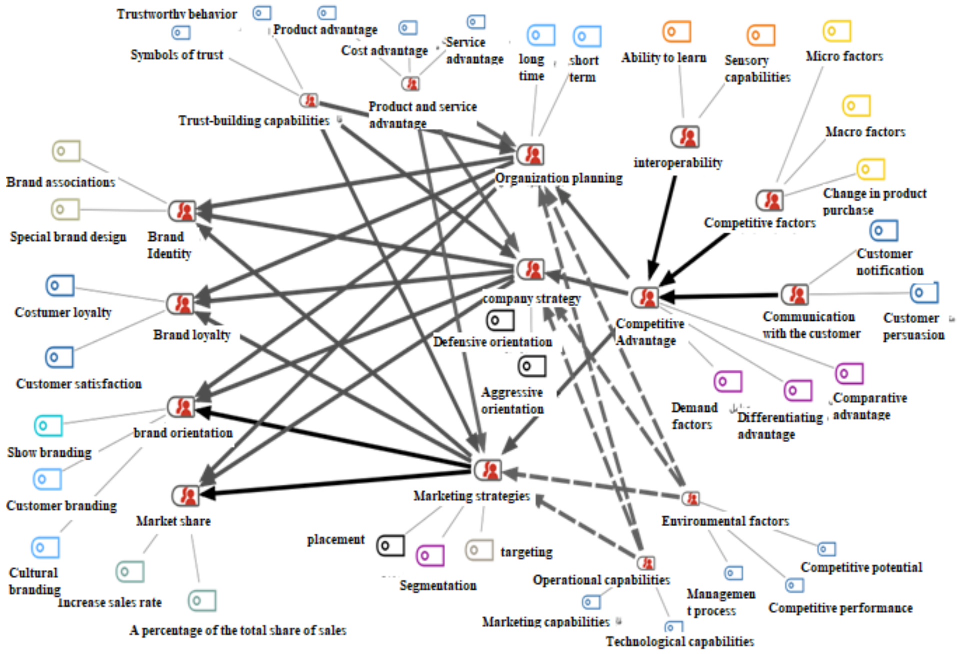


Figure 2: Tree diagram of Strauss and Corbin model

Large companies with a variety of well-known products may choose an individual branding strategy by giving each product a brand name. For example, Apple is the parent company, but it relies on an individual branding strategy to market its various brands, such as the Mac, iPhone, or iPad. This finding is consistent with the results of previous researchers such as Park et al. [20] and Zuhdi et al. [32].

Based on the secondary coding results of the research, short-term and long-term planning indicators were selected as strategic categories in developing the research model. The obtained results show the importance of strategic planning to gain competitive advantage in industries. Success in the competitive environment that governs business in today's world depends on having the ability and intelligence to create the labor market, which by providing a strong and coherent movement in the markets (market making), this and as a result, reaching Competitive conditions become possible. Meanwhile, to achieve this goal, having a strategy, especially a competitive strategy, is inevitable. The result obtained in this research is consistent with the findings of Stevens et al. [29].

The test of the first hypothesis showed that meta-capability has a significant effect on competitive advantage. Considering the t-statistic equal to 5.240, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.227, it has a positive and weak effect. Based on the results obtained in this research, it is clear that the use of approaches such as learning and sensory capabilities will make the company achieve a higher level of competitiveness. This finding is consistent with the results of previous researchers such as Suna et al. [28].

The test of the second hypothesis indicates that competitiveness factors have a significant effect on competitive advantage. Considering the t-statistic equal to 9.722, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.528, it has a positive and moderate effect. According to the findings of the research, a combination of micro and macro factors inside and outside the organization makes a company achieve a competitive advantage and stabilize its position in the market. This finding is consistent with the results of Hansamali et al. [13].

The test of the third hypothesis showed that customer communication has a significant effect on competitive advantage. Considering the t-statistic equal to 5.634, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.216, it has a positive and weak effect. The result obtained in this research shows the importance of customer orientation and long-term communication with customers in gaining a competitive advantage. In service industries, customer orientation is at the heart of any marketing activity. Customer orientation is a type of organizational culture that creates the necessary behaviors to value customers in the best possible way. Also, based on another definition, customer orientation is the customer's perception of the fulfillment of their wishes and expectations. Based on this definition, it is clear that customer orientation is at the heart of service

Table 4: Reliability and validity values of the questionnaire

| Variable | (AVE) | Shared reliability | Composite reliability | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Customer notification | 0.849 | 0.930 | 0.869 | 0.869 |
| Communication with the customer | 0.905 | 0.934 | 0.779 | 0.779 |
| Corporate strategy | 0.905 | 0.934 | 0.779 | 0.779 |
| Increase sales rate | 0.895 | 0.950 | 0.905 | 0.905 |
| Segmentation | 0.789 | 0.908 | 0.832 | 0.832 |
| Organization planning | 0.930 | 0.947 | 0.660 | 0.660 |
| branding | 0.765 | 0.770 | 0.885 | 0.885 |
| Cultural branding | 0.782 | 0.874 | 0.698 | 0.968 |
| Customer-oriented branding | 0.962 | 0.972 | 0.897 | 0.897 |
| Show branding | 0.719 | 0.748 | 0.514 | 0.514 |
| long time | 0.920 | 0.940 | 0.579 | 0.759 |
| Brand associations | 0.762 | 0.894 | 0.808 | 0.808 |
| placement | 0.730 | 0.880 | 0.786 | 0.786 |
| Defensive orientation | 0.896 | 0.951 | 0.906 | 0.906 |
| Aggressive orientation | 0.855 | 0.932 | 0.873 | 0.873 |
| A percentage of the total share of sales | 0.826 | 0.920 | 0.852 | 0.852 |
| TSP marketing strategy | 0.906 | 0.928 | 0.682 | 0.682 |
| Customer satisfaction | 0.766 | 0.895 | 0.810 | 0.810 |
| Trustworthy behavior | 0.841 | 0.926 | 0.863 | 0.863 |
| Market share | 0.904 | 0.933 | 0.777 | 0.777 |
| Special brand design | 0.848 | 0.929 | 0.868 | 0.868 |
| Competitive performance | 0.898 | 0.925 | 0.711 | 0.711 |
| Factors of change in product purchase | 0.899 | 0.930 | 0.770 | 0.770 |
| Demand factors | 0.918 | 0.942 | 0.803 | 0.803 |
| Micro factors | 0.907 | 0.941 | 0.843 | 0.843 |
| Competitive factors | 0.928 | 0.945 | 0.596 | 0.569 |
| Environmental factors | 0.880 | 0.902 | 0.847 | 0.847 |
| Macro factors | 0.932 | 0.949 | 0.787 | 0.787 |
| Management process | 0.888 | 0.91 | 0.963 | 0.693 |
| Trust-building capabilities | 0.727 | 0.792 | 0.593 | 0.593 |
| Marketing capabilities | 0.904 | 0.954 | 0.913 | 0.913 |
| Sensory capabilities | 0.782 | 0.940 | 0.886 | 0.886 |
| Operational capabilities | 0.876 | 0.909 | 0.715 | 0.715 |
| Technological capabilities | 0.826 | 0.920 | 0.815 | 0.852 |
| Learning capabilities | 0.775 | 0.899 | 0.816 | 0.816 |
| interoperability | 0.890 | 0.925 | 0.754 | 0.754 |
| Customer persuasion | 0.859 | 0.934 | 0.887 | 0.877 |
| Differentiating advantage | 0.936 | 0.949 | 0.756 | 0.756 |
| Competitive Advantage | 0.971 | 0.974 | 0.730 | 0.730 |
| Service based advantage | 0.868 | 0.919 | 0.792 | 0.792 |
| Product based advantage | 0.711 | 0.875 | 0.508 | 0.508 |
| Cost-based advantage | 0.903 | 0.939 | 0.838 | 0.838 |
| Product and service advantage | 0.895 | 0.924 | 0.627 | 0.627 |
| Comparative advantage | 0.958 | 0.969 | 0.887 | 0.887 |
| Trust symbols and features | 0.771 | 0.837 | 0.527 | 0.527 |
| targeting | 0.795 | 0.907 | 0.830 | 0.830 |
| Brand Identity | 0.864 | 0.908 | 0.711 | 0.711 |
| Brand loyalty | 0.892 | 0.925 | 0.756 | 0.756 |
| Brand loyalty | 0.873 | 0.940 | 0.887 | 0.887 |
| Customer loyalty | 0.820 | 0.889 | 0.657 | 0.657 |
| short term | 0.849 | 0.930 | 0.835 | 0.869 |

innovation strategies, which is in line with Madni results [**?** ].

The test of the fourth hypothesis showed that competitive advantage has a significant effect on organizational planning. Organizations have no choice but to acquire and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in order to

Table 5: Determination coefficient test

| | **R-square** |
|---|---|
| Customer notification | 0.889 |
| Communication with the customer | 0.787 |
| Corporate strategy | 0.892 |
| Increase sales rate | 0.874 |
| Segmentation | 0.876 |
| Organization planning | 0.011 |
| branding | 0.861 |
| Cultural branding | 0.024 |
| Customer-oriented branding | 0.820 |
| Show branding | 0.940 |
| long time | 0.837 |
| Brand associations | 0.781 |
| placement | 0.878 |
| Defensive orientation | 0.873 |
| Aggressive orientation | 0.876 |
| A percentage of the total share of sales | 0.902 |
| TSP marketing strategy | 0.879 |
| Customer satisfaction | 0.914 |
| Trustworthy behavior | 0.015 |
| Market share | 0.860 |
| Special brand design | 0.742 |
| Competitive performance | 0.873 |
| Factors of change in product purchase | 0.868 |
| Demand factors | 0.814 |
| Micro factors | 0.911 |
| Competitive factors | 0.666 |
| Environmental factors | 0.823 |
| Macro factors | 0.896 |
| Management process | 0.799 |
| Trust-building capabilities | 0.879 |
| Marketing capabilities | 0.896 |
| Sensory capabilities | 0.943 |
| Operational capabilities | 0.867 |
| Technological capabilities | 0.856 |
| Learning capabilities | 0.734 |
| interoperability | 0.893 |
| Customer persuasion | 0.891 |
| Differentiating advantage | 0.763 |
| Competitive Advantage | 0.851 |
| Service based advantage | 0.021 |
| Product based advantage | 0.037 |
| Cost-based advantage | 0.901 |
| Product and service advantage | 0.924 |
| Comparative advantage | 0.889 |
| Trust symbols and features | 0.787 |
| targeting | 0.892 |
| Brand Identity | 0.874 |
| Brand loyalty | 0.876 |
| Brand loyalty | 0.011 |
| Customer loyalty | 0.861 |
| short term | 0.024 |

remain immune from environmental shock waves and adapt to competitive requirements. It is obvious that achieving this goal requires designing a very intelligent competitive path that is causally ambiguous and socially and managerially complex. However, knowing the concept and content characteristics, types and causal domain of competitive advantage can be very effective and open the way in the design and implementation of this path. The result obtained in this research is in line with the findings of Chikán et al. [6].

The test of the fifth hypothesis showed that the competitive advantage has a significant effect on the company's strategy. Competitive advantage includes a set of factors or capabilities that always enable the company to perform better than its competitors. Competitive advantage occurs when a company achieves advancements and developments and capabilities that are superior to competitors in an indicator or a combination of indicators. Such as access to natural resources, or highly specialized human resources, industrial or information technologies, etc. Competitive

Table 6: Hypothesis test

| Row | predictor variable | Criterion variable | $\beta$ path coefficient | t statistic |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Meta capability | Competitive Advantage | 0.227 | 5.240 |
| 2 | Competitive factors | Competitive Advantage | 0.528 | 9.722 |
| 3 | Communication with the customer | Competitive Advantage | 0.216 | 5.634 |
| 4 | Competitive Advantage | Organization planning | 0.294 | 4.488 |
| 5 | Competitive Advantage | company strategy | 0.313 | 4.701 |
| 6 | Competitive Advantage | Marketing strategies | 0.388 | 9.152 |
| 7 | Product and service advantage | Organization planning | 0.186 | 4.194 |
| 8 | Product and service advantage | company strategy | 0.294 | 5.842 |
| 9 | Product and service advantage | Marketing strategies | 0.389 | 8.807 |
| 10 | Trust-building capabilities | Organization planning | 0.239 | 7.238 |
| 11 | Trust-building capabilities | company strategy | 0.317 | 5.842 |
| 12 | Trust-building capabilities | Marketing strategies | 0.206 | 5.210 |
| 13 | Organization planning | Brand Identity | 0.251 | 2.987 |
| 14 | Organization planning | Brand loyalty | 0.351 | 7.879 |
| 15 | Organization planning | branding | 0.137 | 6.875 |
| 16 | Organization planning | Market share | 0.632 | 6.853 |
| 17 | company strategy | Brand Identity | 0.259 | 4.876 |
| 18 | company strategy | branding | 0.175 | 3.958 |
| 19 | company strategy | Market share | 0.116 | 5.936 |
| 20 | company strategy | Brand loyalty | 0.578 | 8.477 |
| 21 | Marketing strategies | Brand Identity | 0.621 | 7.926 |
| 22 | Marketing strategies | branding | 0.389 | 7.368 |
| 23 | Marketing strategies | Market share | 0.682 | 8.931 |
| | Marketing strategies | Brand loyalty | 0.852 | 6.864 |

Table 7: Testing the hypotheses of the moderating role

| independent variable | Dependent variable | moderator variable | coefficient | T test | Test result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Competitive Advantage | Organization planning | Environmental factors | 0.277 | 6.876 | confirmation |
| Competitive Advantage | company strategy | Environmental factors | 0.484 | 4.987 | confirmation |
| Competitive Advantage | Marketing strategies | Environmental factors | 0.487 | 6.872 | confirmation |
| Competitive Advantage | Organization planning | Operational capabilities | 0.365 | 3.876 | confirmation |
| Competitive Advantage | company strategy | Operational capabilities | 0.651 | 6.732 | confirmation |
| Competitive Advantage | Marketing strategies | Operational capabilities | 0.389 | 3.433 | confirmation |

advantage is the increasing attractiveness of the company's offers from the point of view of customers compared to competitors. The results of Suna et al [28] are consistent with the results obtained in the present study.

The test of the sixth hypothesis showed that competitive advantage has a significant effect on marketing strategies. Considering the t-statistic equal to 9.152, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.388, it has a positive and moderate effect. These findings show that competitive advantage directs a company's marketing strategies. The results of Hansamali et al. [13] are consistent with the results obtained in the present study.

The test of the seventh hypothesis showed that the advantage of products and services has a significant effect on organization planning. According to the t-statistic equal to 4.194, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. The result obtained in this hypothesis points to the importance of the advantages of products and services in terms of influencing all strategic plans within the organization. Although considering that the standard coefficient is 0.186, it has a positive and weak effect, but it shows the importance of product and service advantage in organization planning. These findings show that a company's product and service should be in a way that brings an advantage to the organization. The results of Madani [**?** ] are consistent with the results obtained in the present study.

The test of the eighth hypothesis showed that the product and service advantage have a significant effect on the company's strategy. Considering the t-statistic equal to 5.842, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.294, it has a positive and weak effect. In explaining this finding, it should be stated that the company's strategies are not formed in a vacuum, but are formed based on concrete realities; This means that a company formulates strategies and plans a strategic plan based on the advantages of services and products. The results of Stevens et al [29] are largely in line with the results obtained in this research.

The test of the ninth hypothesis showed that product and service advantages have a significant effect on marketing strategies. According to the t-statistic equal to 8.807, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.389, it has a positive and moderate effect. A company that has a high product and service advantage determines its marketing plans according to these advantages. Therefore, marketing strategies are directly affected by the advantages of the company's products and services. This finding is consistent with the results of Ge and Li [11].

The test of the 10th hypothesis showed that trust-building capabilities have a significant effect on organization planning. According to the t-statistic equal to 7.238, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.239, it has a positive and weak effect. Trust in a brand or a company is one of the most important components for gaining a competitive advantage. Based on the obtained results, it is clear that the measures taken by the company in order to build trust affect the internal planning. This finding is consistent with the results of Suna et al. [28].

The test of the 11th hypothesis indicates that the trust-building capabilities have a significant effect on the company's strategy. According to the t-statistic equal to 5.842, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.317, it has a positive and moderate effect. Trust-building can be defined as a combination of trust-building behaviors and trust-building symbols. The obtained result shows that the company's ability to create trust has an impact on the company's strategies. The result obtained in this research is in line with the findings of Ali et al. [2] and Ezzati et al. [9].

The test of the twelfth hypothesis indicates that trust-building capabilities have a significant effect on marketing strategies. According to the t-statistic equal to 5.210, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.206, it has a positive and weak effect. In explaining this finding, it should be mentioned that the trust-building capabilities have an impact on all the planning of the organization, and hence it will also have an impact on the strategies that an organization adopts for marketing. This finding is consistent with the results of Daneshgar et al. [8].

The 13th hypothesis test indicates that organizational planning has a significant effect on brand identity. Considering the t-statistic equal to 2.987, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.251, it has a positive and weak effect. In explaining this finding, it should be stated that brand identity is affected by a set of different actions carried out by an organization. Obviously, in such a situation, macro-organizational planning will create a strong brand identity through the impact it has on the customer's perspective and attitude. This finding is consistent with the results of Ge and Li [11].

The fourteenth hypothesis test showed that organizational planning has a significant effect on brand loyalty. Considering the t-statistic equal to 7/879, which is more than 1.96, we conclude that the hypothesis is confirmed. Considering that the standard coefficient is 0.351, it has a positive and moderate effect. Customer loyalty means that the customer repeats the purchase, and this is largely due to the organization's plans, including sales methods, advertising, marketing mix, etc. The obtained result actually shows the importance of planning to establish a long-term relationship with the customer and make customers loyal. This finding is consistent with Madani results [**?** ].

The fifteenth hypothesis showed that organizational planning has a significant effect on branding. Branding is the most central component in the formation of the relationship between the organization and the customer. If the organization formulates and implements its strategies in a way that shows its benevolence and honesty to the customer, then the probability that the customer's trust will increase will increase, and thus it will have a positive effect on branding. This finding is consistent with the results of Suna et al. [28].

The sixteenth hypothesis showed that organizational planning has a significant effect on market share. Due to the increase in competition, organizations use different programs to gain more market share; If the planning of the organization is formulated in a precise way and based on field realities, then it provides the necessary platform to increase the market share. This finding is in line with Madani results [**?** ].

The 17th hypothesis test showed that the company's strategy has a significant effect on brand identity. Brand identity is all the visual components of a brand, including design, color, logo, and font, that distinguish it from other brands in the minds of customers. Brand identification is visible and in line with tastes and tries to accelerate brand recognition through visual communication. Brand identity is very important and necessary to create and maintain brand communication in the minds of customers. According to this definition, it is clear that the company's strategies can have a positive effect on the brand identity if they are in line with the customer's tastes and desires. This finding is consistent with the results of Ge and Li [11].

The 18th hypothesis showed that the company's strategy has a significant effect on branding. The company's strategy affects almost all the executive actions of the company; Therefore, depending on this point of view of the managers in formulating the company's strategy, these strategies can have an impact on branding. This finding is consistent with Madani results [**?** ].

The 19th hypothesis showed that the company's strategy has a significant effect on the market share. Market share is an indicator of a company's ability to acquire more customers; In the modern world of business, which is characterized by uncertainty and increasing complexity, only a company can achieve a high level of market share by formulating a targeted and calculated strategy. This finding is consistent with the results of Suna et al. [28].

The 20th hypothesis showed that the company's strategy has a significant effect on brand loyalty. Customer loyalty means their desire to repeat purchases from a company; Therefore, in order to make customers loyal, it is necessary for the company to have a customer-oriented strategy in accordance with the demands of customers. This result is consistent with the findings of Ge and Li [11].

Hypothesis 21 showed that marketing strategies have a significant effect on brand identity. Brand identity, as explained above, refers to the overall perception of customers about a company's brand. Therefore, the company's marketing strategies, including advertising, sales promotion activities, etc., affect the customer's inference and understanding of a company's brand. This finding is consistent with Madani results [**?** ].

The 22nd hypothesis showed that marketing strategies have a significant effect on brand loyalty. Through appropriate marketing strategies, a company can establish an emotional bond with customers and thus increase their willingness to repeat purchases.

The 23rd hypothesis showed that marketing strategies have a significant effect on branding. This finding shows that brand orientation is partially affected by the strategies that top managers of an organization adopt in relation to marketing actions. This result is consistent with the findings of Lopes et al. [16].

The 24th hypothesis showed that marketing strategies have a significant effect on market share. As its name suggests, marketing strategies aim to dominate a company's market (as much as possible); Therefore, the effectiveness of marketing strategies increases the customers of a company and consequently improves the company's market share. This finding is consistent with the results of Hansamali et al. [13].

The 25th to 30th hypotheses show the moderating role of environmental factors and operational capabilities. The obtained value is more than 1.96, so they are significant, as a result, operational capabilities and environmental factors play a moderating role. The business environment is a set of all internal and external factors such as employees, customer needs and expectations, supply and demand, management, customers, suppliers, owners, government activities, technological innovation, social trends, market trends, economic changes, etc. These factors directly or indirectly affect the performance, actions, decisions, business strategies of the company and the environment and position of a company or business organization. Although every business operates in its own unique environment, no business can be independent of its external or surrounding mutual and influencing forces, and its performance is somehow affected by them. The business environment has a wide influence on the organization and usually the success of a business depends on its environment. For this reason, businesses are expected to identify, assess and respond to all threats and opportunities in their environment. Businesses that realize the impact of the environment on their growth and profitability are constantly adapting to it.

Based on the findings obtained in this research, it is suggested that the managers of clothing manufacturing companies should focus on the differentiation strategy among the general strategies, so that they can achieve a higher level of competitive advantage.

The second suggestion given to the managers of clothing companies is to form a coalition or consortium among the managers of manufacturing companies to discuss and review the existing conditions to find an effective approach to deal with foreign brand products (which are often smuggled into the country).

Finally, it is recommended that managers of manufacturing companies use customer-oriented methods such as creating a customer database and CRM software to create a deeper relationship with customers.

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