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Assessing the Brand Equity of Majid Brand in Comparison with Nike from the Perspective of Iranian Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The importance of brand equity is due to its strategic role in gaining a competitive advantage in the market. The purpose of this study was to assess the brand equity of Majid in comparison with Nike from the perspective of Iranian consumers. The research method was survey in terms of data collection and descriptive-correlation in terms of research method. The statistical population of this study was sport good consumers in the range of 18 to 45 years old. 384 sport good consumers completed an online questionnaire through random sampling. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Results of the Pearson correlation test revealed that there is a significant relationship between brand equity and its components in both brands. The results of the paired t-test, revealed that the Nike brand has higher brand equity than Majid brand according to the perspectives of Iranian consumers. Also, for the Iranian consumers, the quality of the brand is the most important element of brand equity.

Introduction

Sport is an industry, and generating money from different sectors of this industry is of great significance. The sports industry is composed of different parts that in this study we try to deal with sports brands. Sports brands operate in various fields, including clothing, shoes, sports equipment, etc. According to research, more than three-quarters of all global markets are dedicated to sports, and approximately 80% of the sports shoe market is owned by branded shoes. Also, the three brands of Nike, Adidas and Reebok have 33% of this market. (Newbury, 2009). Keller defines the brand as the value of a brand that is perceived by the customer and the value perceived by the customer makes a

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difference in brands (Keller, 2003). Also, American marketers define the brand as a name, phrase, symbol, design, or combination of them that reflects the true nature of the company (Dehdashti et al., 2012). Accordingly, every company to increase the sales of its products must pay close attention to its brand to attract more customer attention and trust. (Hatami & Akbari, 2017). Actually, for every company to be able to fully satisfy its customers and meet their needs in such a way that customers choose that brand in subsequent purchases, it must be accurately aware of the demands, tools, capabilities, capabilities, and limitations. With the knowledge of this information, it is possible to make the right decisions in the field of product marketing and offer products following the benefits expected by customers (Hatami & Akbari, 2017). Therefore companies can win this competition that can create a positive view of themselves in the minds of consumers (Ahmadvand & Sardari, 2014). One of the most important ways to create a sustainable competitive advantage in these markets is to create brand equity. Brand equity means that a product has a special value due to having a specific brand that in the customer's mind, that product has a high purchase value due to the quality and services of that brand (Najafi-tavani et al., 2018). Companies try to use marketing methods to create a valuable image of their brand in the minds of consumers and thus associate their brand in the minds of customers (Del Afrooz, 2017). It is important to note that the value that a brand has for a customer can be related to that customer's emotional attachment to a brand. Brands are also considered as one of the intangible assets of a company, which plays a role in its growth and development (Azimi, 2019). When a company's brand has a special value, it will cause customers to have a positive attitude towards that brand and make them to pay more for the brand's products, and repeat their purchase (Kim & Hyum., 2011). Brand equity has four components that include: brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Brand awareness is the power of creating information nodes about the brand in the customer's memory, which in simpler terms can be defined as the consumer's ability to identify the brand in different situations (Shirkhodaie & Noori Pour., 2013). Brand equity has been accepted as a principle for all researchers, so much so that their research is now about events that can affect and enhance brand equity (Nadaf & Khaje., 2018). According to Gil et al. (2007), the brand association is a value and feel that the customer creates in his mind towards a brand that makes that brand different from other brands (Gil et al., 2007; Jafarpishe, 2011). Brand Loyalty is defined by the extent to which it adheres to that brand. Also, Brand loyalty is defined as the consumer's willingness to repurchase that product. (Haghighi Kafash, 2012). According to Zeithaml, perceived quality is the view that the customer has of the superiority of a brand in terms of quality of goods or services over other competitors. He also believes that high perceived quality makes the consumer choose one brand over other competing brands (Karbasi & Yardel, 2011; Zeithaml, 1988). When a brand has a certain special value, the probability of choosing that brand by customers increases, their loyalty increases, customers tend to pay higher prices, the desire to buy increases and the company experiences less harm in competing with others (Zeithaml, 1988). Each company must act in such a way that consumers are pleased with it. It is necessary to know that no company can succeed without consumer support (Sun, 2019). Therefore, the important issue is that with the increase in knowledge, the importance of paying attention to physical activity and sports has grown a lot among people, so the need for sports goods and services has increased significantly and sports products have become a lucrative industry (Chekalina et al., 2018).

In today's changing conditions, advertising messages are sent in various forms and with great speed to attract the attention of consumers. In this regard, it is difficult to identify and to buy the right product for the consumer, so there is more and more need for a tool to identify suitable and high quality products for consumers (Cheirani & fard sabouri, 2011). The importance of brands for customer satisfaction and purchasing process is so great that some people consider it as a complete product and believe that sometimes customers buy brands instead of buying the product (Samiei Nasr & Alaavi, 2011). The Brands represent their manufacturer. Brands increase profitability and customer loyalty, it also reduces potential harm in competing with competitors and advertising costs (Azizi et al., 2011). Numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate the brand equity in the clothing and sports equipment industry. The findings of Seyed Javadin and Shams (2007) showed that brand loyalty had a direct and positive role in brand equity, but perceived quality and brand awareness did

not have a direct and significant effect on brand equity (Seyed Javadin & Shams, 2007). Heydarizadeh Hanzi and Asadollahi (2012), examined the impact of brand equity and business priority on customers' purchase intentions. The results of this study conducted in Tehran showed that there is a significant relationship between brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand equity. But there was no significant relationship between brand awareness and brand equity (Heydarizadeh Hanzeh & Asadollahi, 2012). Also in another study conducted by Heidarzadeh et al. (2011), the results showed that the mental image of the brand and brand awareness is relevant to the current and future purchases of customers (Heidarzadeh et al., 2011). Ranjbarian et al. (2013) in a study entitled the "Effect of brand equity on advertising with an emphasis on the components of brand equity (perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness and business relationship with the brand)" showed that brand equity had a positive effect on advertising. Zarehpour and Nazem (2013) study entitled "Investigating the relationship between brand characteristics and customer satisfaction with brand loyalty" on 502 customers of well-known sports brands such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok and Fila in the city of Tehran showed that brand is strongly associated with brand loyalty. Also, variables such as reputation, brand image, customer satisfaction, price and advertising had a positive effect on the brand (Zarehpour Nasirabadi et al., 2013). Tang and Howley in a study entitled "Assessing Brand Equity for the Consumer in the Chinese Garment Market" found that brand awareness and loyalty played a crucial role in increasing brand equity, but this role was low in perceived quality (Tong & Howley, 1999). Cui's (2011) study entitled "Creating Consumer-Based Brand Equity in the Chinese Sports Shoes Market", showed that formation of brand equity had a significant effect on brand equity (Cui, 2011). Israil et al. (2012) found that brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality had a positive and significant relationship with brand equity (Israil et al., 2012). Based on previous research, the study of brand equity has led to large profits by large companies. Therefore, research in the field of sports marketing and brand is increasing and any company that is inattentive to conducting research may face losses (Ismailpour & Kabirifard, 2019). Authors in this study are looking to see how successful Iranian manufacturers have been, in competition with Adidas and Nike in the sportswear market.

Majid brand is one of the most famous Iranian brands in sports products. For several years, this company has been responsible for producing the uniforms of the Iranian national football team, the Iranian national volleyball team and several Premier League teams in the field of football. In the research of Angoori et al. (2017), the people of Tabriz highly valued the Majid brand (Angoori et al., 2017). According to the research of Mohammadian and veisi (2017), Majid brand is the most famous brand from the perspective of Iranian consumers and this brand is the only Iranian brand that has been able to compete with world-famous brands (Mohammadian & veisi, 2017). The sports industry is one of the most important, competitive, and attractive industries in the world. Sports clothing section in sport industry, play a significant role in implementation and development of sports fields and it is highly welcomed worldwide. The latest statistics related to sports clothing in the world shows that in 2017, the Nike sports brand was at the forefront of this market (Kalashi et al., 2021). The position of the brands in the industry determines its profit generation. Creating and maintaining a proper position among competitors is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage in the market. One of the key factors in obtaining a competitive advantage and ensuring the long-term survival of companies is creating a strong brand (Asadollahi et al., 2020). While performance can play an important role in brand positioning, marketing strategy and competitive environment can also be regarded as two critical factors that influencing brand performance (Asadollahi et al., 2020). According to what was said, this company has been able to have high growth in Iran. Now, we are looking to evaluate the brand equity of this brand from the point of view of Iranian consumers. Also, with further investigation, we seek to determine in which components of the brand equity dimensions this brand is stronger and in which components it is weaker in comparison with highly distinguished brand, Nike. Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to assess the Brand equity Majid brand in comparison with Nike from the perspective of Iranian consumers.

Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of nature and objective, and descriptive-correlational in terms of methodology, and quantitative in terms of data collection. There was a field survey in this regard, and the required data was collected using a questionnaire. The statistical population of this study is all Iranians consumers of sport goods (at least 3 sessions per week) and are in the age range of 18 to 45 years. The statistical sample of the research according to Morgan table was found to be 384 people. The samples were selected through a random sampling approach. The researcher has collected information by presenting a questionnaire online on social networks. Aaker and Keller (1991) standard questionnaire was used to examine the variables of brand equity. In this questionnaire, four components of brand equity (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty) were examined (Aaker, 1991; Aaker & Keller, 1990). This questionnaire includes 27 questions, 5 of which are demographic questionnaires (gender, education, age, do you exercise regularly and the province of residence) and 22 questions are about the special value of the Nike and Majid brands. This questionnaire is designed on 5 Likert scales (very high, high, somewhat, low, and very low). Also, the validity of this questionnaire was reviewed and confirmed in the research of Mansouri (2015) and Azadi et al. (2015). The reliability of this questionnaire was calculated 0.868 in Aaker and Keller's research (Aaker, 1996), 0.92 in Azadi et al's research and 0.81 in Mansouri's research (Azadi et al., 2015, Mansouri, 2015). The reliability of the tools was determined by Cronbach's alpha test in a preliminary sample of 30 was calculated 0.89 for the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient has also been calculated for the research dimensions, which are 0.87 for brand awareness, 0.88 for perceived quality, 0.81 for brand loyalty and 0.78 for brand association.

Table 1. Frequency of Respondents by Province of Residence

Row	province	Frequency	Percent	Row	province	Frequency	Percent
1	East Azerbaijan	8	2.08	17	Fars	9	2.34
2	West Azerbaijan	9	2.34	18	Ghazvin	8	2.08
3	Ardabil	6	1.56	19	Qom	10	2.6
4	Esfahan	22	5.72	20	Kurdistan	5	1.3
5	Alborz	9	2.34	21	Kerman	25	6.51
6	Ilam	7	1.82	22	Kermanshah	10	2.6
7	Bushehr	8	2.08	23	Kohgiluyeh	8	2.08
8	Tehran	45	11.71	24	Golestsn	7	1.82
9	Chahar mahal va Bakhtiari	9	2.34	25	gilan	10	2.6
10	South Khorasan	12	3.12	26	Lorestan	8	2.08
11	Khorasan Razavi	20	5.2	27	Mazandaran	12	3.12
12	North Khorasan	12	3.12	28	Markazi	4	1.04
13	Khoozestan	14	3.64	29	Hovmozgan	14	3.64
14	Zanjan	10	2.6	30	Hamedan	12	3.12
15	Semnan	8	2.08	31	Yazd	15	3.9

16	Sistan va Baloochestan	28	7.29	All	384	-
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In this study, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, etc.) and inferential statistics (paired t-test, Pearson correlation) were used. Also, SPSS software version 16 was used to analyze the data.

Findings

Descriptive and inferential tests were conducted for data analysis. The findings in table 2 show the demographic Characteristics of the research sample.

Table 2. Analysis of Demographic Characteristics the research sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Man	181	47.1
	Woman	203	52.9
	All	384	-
Age	18-26	173	45.05
	27-35	155	40.36
	36-45	5	14.53
	All	384	-
Education	Secondary	33	8.6
	Diploma	27	7
	Associate	39	10.2
	Bachelor	169	44
	Master	65	16.9
	PhD	51	13.3
	All	384	-

As shown in Table 2, 47.1% of the respondents to this questionnaire are men and 52.9% are women. The highest number of respondents is 18 to 26 years old and the lowest number is 36 to 45 years old. Also, the average age of the respondents is 28.31 years. The education of most of the respondents to this study was bachelor (44%) and people with diploma education (7.6%) had the lowest number of respondents.

Also, the naturalness of the data was investigated for all dimensions of research (brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association, brand awareness and brand equity). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to evaluate the normality and independence of the data. According to the results of Table 3 of this study, the sig value for all research variables was more than 0.05, so the hypothesis that the data is normal is proved.

Table 3. Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Variable	Brand Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	P-value
Brand Loyalty	Nike	16.34	2.68	2.93	0.084
	Majid	11.15	2.95	3.13	0/21
Perceived Quality	Nike	29.26	4.58	3.7	0.15
	Majid	17.33	2.11	6.9	0.22
Brand Associations	Nike	17.55	3.42	3.75	0.09
	Majid	11.11	2.05	3.41	0.07
Brand Awareness	Nike	18.05	2.79	2.89	0.11
	Majid	10.6	2.35	3.61	0.7

Brand	Nike	81.21	9.72	5.04	0.34
Equity	Majid	50.21	4.57	3.75	0.17

Inferential Findings

Paired t-test was conducted to test the research hypotheses. The results have been presented in table 4.

Table 4. Nike and Majid brand T-pair Comparison Test Results

Variable	Brand Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	df	P-value
Brand Loyalty	Nike	16.34	2.68	28.51	383	0.001
	Majid	11.15	2.95			
Perceived Quality	Nike	29.26	4.58	49.39	383	0.001
	Majid	17.33	2.11			
Brand Associations	Nike	17.55	3.42	38.76	383	0.001
	Majid	11.11	2.05			
Brand Awareness	Nike	18.05	2.79	37.88	383	0.001
	Majid	10.6	2.35			
Brand Equity	Nike	81.21	9.72	72.36	383	0.001
	Majid	50.21	4.57			

According to the results of Table 4, the P-value of paired t-test for four variables of brand equity was less than 0.05, also this value was calculated for brand equity less than 0.05, which means that there is a significant difference between Nike and Majid brand equity. Also, considering that the average of Nike brand in all components of research is more than Majid brand, so the Nike brand equity is significantly higher than Majid brand. Also, in the perceived quality component, the average rate in both brands is higher than other components, which indicates the high importance of this component for the consumer. Also, the difference between the means in the perceived quality component is the most different between the two brands.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Test Between Research Variables in Nike Brand ($p < 0.05$)

Variable	Brand Equity	Brand Loyalty	Perceived Quality	Brand Associations	Brand Awareness	P
Brand Equity	1					0.001
Brand Loyalty	0.71	1				0.001
Perceived Quality	0.86	0.42	1			0.001
Brand Associations	0.56	0.19	0.35	1		0.001
Brand Awareness	0.67	0.59	0.51	-0.59	1	0.001

According to Table 5, there was a significant relationship between Nike brand equity and dimensions of brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and brand awareness. According to Table 5, the perceived quality of Nike products among other dimensions of Nike brand equity has a higher correlation with Nike brand equity, which can indicate a more important role in expressing Nike brand equity for the Iranian consumer. Also, According to Table 5, the brand association of Nike brand equity among Iranian consumers has the least correlation in Nike brand equity.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Test Between Research Variables in Majid Brand
($p < 0.05$)

Variable	Brand Equity	Brand Loyalty	Perceived Quality	Brand Associations	Brand Awareness	P
Brand Equity	1					0.001
Brand Loyalty	0.57	1				0.001
Perceived Quality	0.59	-0.12	1			0.001
Brand Associations	0.37	-0.26	0.65	1		0.001
Brand Awareness	0.38	0.2	-0.15	-0.4	1	0.001

According to Table 6, there is a significant relationship between Majid brand equity and dimensions of brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association and brand awareness. According to Table 6, the perceived quality of Majid products among other dimensions of Majid brand equity has a higher correlation with Majid brand equity, which can indicate a more important role in expressing Majid brand equity for the Iranian consumer. Also, According to Table 6, the brand association of Majid brand equity among Iranian consumers has the least correlation in Majid brand equity.

Discussion and Conclusion

In recent years, many efforts have been made in the field of branding and increasing production by domestic manufacturers, but despite these efforts, manufacturers have not been able to achieve significant success. Iranians are more inclined to buy from foreign brands, which has caused problems for domestic brands. Domestic brands pay little attention to brand and branding, which has led to their failure. Therefore, the present study aims to Distinguishes the positioning of Brand equity Majid in comparison with Nike from the perspective of Iranian consumers. According to the results of this study in Table 3, all dimensions of brand equity in the Nike brand have higher averages than the Majid brand, which indicates more consumer satisfaction with foreign brands. The findings of this study are consistent with the research of Sadeghi et al. (2013). This finding is based on the thinking and perspective of the Iranian consumer. Also, the results of this research show that advertising alone cannot encourage people to buy domestic brands. Companies can encourage Iranian consumers to buy again by increasing the quality of their products. In this regard, the results of this study are in line with the findings of Yousefi et al. (2015). According to the results of this study, the most important factor of brand equity from the perspective of Iranian consumers is perceived quality. Foreign brands have created more awareness in their audience than domestic brands and have helped their mental association. Organizations can use appropriate media advertising and after-sales service to build a good relationship with the consumer. In this way, the consumer becomes interested in the brand and after buying the products, he can be known as a loyal consumer. According to the results of Table 4, the Nike brand equity components are highly correlated with each other. The correlation between the components of the Nike brand is higher than the correlation between the components of the Majid brand. This high correlation can be recognized in all components of the Nike brand compared to Majid. Of course, in Majid brand, the amount of correlation has shown a significant relationship, but its amount is less than Nike brand. The results showed that among the different variables perceived quality in both brands had the highest mean and the highest correlation. Moreover, brand association in both brands had the lowest mean and correlation, so from the Iranian consumer perspective, product quality has the most important feature of a brand and its brand association has the least impact, Acker believes that there is a high correlation between the dimensions of brand equity. The results of the research showed that the averages for all components of research in the Nike brand were better than the Majid brand and the Iranian consumer knows the value of the Nike brand more. The findings are

in line with a study by Yu and Dante that aimed to create an international model of brand equity. The results of Yu and Dante's research showed that there is a high correlation between the dimensions of brand equity. Also, the results of this research in this field are consistent with the research of Samita and Sooki (2015) and Ebrahimi et al. (2015). The results of this research showed that there is a high correlation between brand loyalty and brand equity.

In general, it can be noted that brand equity is very important in the minds of customers and their loyalty, so in a competitive environment in the sportswear market where brands have a very high share of product sales, to be successful, every company must create a strong image of itself in the minds of consumers. Manufacturers can work to promote their brand by investing in and supporting teams and sporting events. Companies can spend time and money trying to make consumers aware of their brand and also attract loyal customers to their brand by producing quality and customer-friendly products. In this way, the special value of domestic brands is increased and there is no need to import foreign brands into the country

One of the limitations of this research was the lack of access to all customers of Nike and Majid brands. Also, this study was a cross-sectional study and the perspective of the Iranian consumer can change over time. Therefore, in the continuation of this research, it is recommended to the interested parties to repeat this research at 5-year intervals, to compare the status of Majid brand as one of the most famous Iranian brands with Nike brand as the most famous foreign brand.

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