

STUDYING THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MARKETING ON BRAND EQUITY IN NON-FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Naser Asgari 

Faculty of Management, ShahidSattari Air University, Tehran, Iran

drasgari.n@gmail.com

Mehdi Khademi

Faculty of Management, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

mehkhademi@gmail.com

Hamid Mehriyari

University of Tehran, Alborz Campus, Karaj, Iran

hmehriari1901@gmail.com

Abstract

Nowadays charity organizations like other non-for profit organizations have a considerable effect in social development and welfare. One of the most important factors affecting their performance is brand equity. The nation of these organizations' mission make social marketing an important enhancer of their brand equity. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of social marketing on brand. The statistical population of this study consists of customers (donors) of Mahak which is a charity organization in Tehran, Iran. The sample consists of 384 customers selected randomly. Present research is an applied research, and uses descriptive design. Standard questionnaire was used to collect data and in order to verify the validity and reliability, the Cronbach's alpha and experts' confirmation have been used respectively. The results showed that social marketing has a significant positive effect on four components of brand equity. Secondary findings indicate that at present social marketing and brand equity in the studied organization are appropriate. Accordingly, recommendations have been provided to improve these factors.

Keywords: Social marketing, Brand equity, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality

INTRODUCTION

Today, NGOs and non-profit communities play an important role in social development. Non-profit organization is any volunteer and non-profit group of global citizens that has been established at the national, local and international level, for the cultural, social, charitable, professional purposes (Zahedi, 2009). These organizations are the most important tools for organizing public participation in line with the social goals. NGOs and nonprofits have the ability to provide appropriate context in order to promote social health especially in the case of vulnerable groups of society (World Health Organization, 2002). These organizations need to be influential to attract public participation in order to achieve their goals (Mohajerani, 2003).

Charity organizations are one of the most major of nonprofit organizations that are not established with the intention of the founders or members to constitute financial interests but they pursue a purpose beyond financial goals. The charity organization is an organization that solely aims at humanitarian issues. These organizations are all non-profit organizations, while all non-profit organizations may not necessarily be charitable organization (Wikipedia, 2013). One of the largest and most successful charitable organizations as an international organization that is active in Iran is MAHAK.

The Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer widely known by its acronym, MAHAK, was set up in 1991 as a non-governmental and non-profit organization with the Department of Social Affairs for NGO activities at the Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In over two decades, it has attracted ever-increasing public support and fulfilled a great part of its mission which is to provide comprehensive support for children with cancer, thus reducing child mortality rates and empowering (or creating an environment that empowers) the families of children who suffer from cancer.

MAHAK has also gained consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a result of which we have joined the concerted global endeavor to accomplish the strategic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the United Nations member states, as well as the World Cancer Declaration targets by 2025. A dazzling drop in cancer-related child mortality rates in Iran from over 80% before MAHAK to fewer than 15% today, underscores the fact that the fourth MDG, namely reducing child mortality, has been largely achieved in Iran in the sphere of pediatric cancer. In order to make the most of this accomplishment for the community, MAHAK is undertaking an active role in fostering collaborative, synergistic relationships with sister organizations abroad, while focusing domestically on integrating best practices and sharing lessons learned.

Among the many challenges facing charities are financial dependence and little awareness of people of the benefits of their participation in such organizations (Namazi, 2002).

Thus, to know the nature and benefits of the activities of such organizations play an important role to encourage people to financial assistance for the purposes of such organizations to achieve their goals. One of the factors that can promote the mentioned understanding and awareness is brand value of these institutions. Therefore, promotion of the brand value can play a decisive role in improving the performance of these organizations. Several studies have been conducted on the factors affecting the promotion of brand value (Wang et al., 2008; Broyles et al., 2009.). One of the factors promoting the brand value is social marketing (Steve Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Although social marketing is expensive at first sight, but it can have a positive effect on the position of organization (Polonsky and Jevons, 2006). Companies that have understood how to use of social responsibility in activities related to their brands will gain many advantages over their competitors (Singh et al., 2008). The greater the social responsibilities, the better performance the organization will have which will include brand equity from the customer's perspective. However, it is not clear what specific measures of social responsibility can provide more brand equity in compared with other measures of social responsibility of the organization (Chomvilailuk and Butche, 2010).

Although, there is much research in the field of brand equity and influencing factors on it (Yasin et al, 2007), research conducted in the field of non-profit organizations are not rich enough. In addition to the existing knowledge about the effectiveness of social marketing on brand equity is more speculation.

Given the importance of social marketing and its effects on brand equity on organizations, including nonprofit organizations, in this study, it is discussed how the social marketing can be used to promote brand equity in charity organization. In this regard, it is expected that this study will help the understanding of the role of social marketing in promoting brand equity and each of its components and to improve the effectiveness and success of the organization. For this purpose, first the effect of social marketing on brand equity will be reviewed and then the effect of social marketing on each dimension of brand equity are reviewed and ranked .Finally, some recommendations will be presented based on the obtained results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand equity

Today, building a strong brand has become a marketing priority for many organizations due to the great advantages that it creates. Strong brand creates an identity for the company in the market (Yasin et al, 2007). Although in the classical definitions, brand equity refers to added value of a brand. In the new definitions, a more widespread definition is used which includes a

wide range of characteristics that lead to product selection by customer (Ross and the Et al., 2010). Brand equity is the value added by a brand to a product. Generally, brand equity is the consumer perception of all advantages that a brand had in compared with other competing brands (Gil et al. 2007). The brand has positive value based on customer perception when a customer responses favorably to a known brand. Also, when the customer responses unfavorably to the marketing activities related to a brand, brand equity has the negative value based on customer perception. Additionally, one of the characteristics of having strong brand equity is the existence of high loyalty to a brand (Keller, 2000).

Brand equity has many advantages for the company, for example, if the brand has a high equity then targeted consumer will have a positive behavior to a brand and as a result, he will pay price premium for a specific product, repeats his purchasing behavior and will do word-of-mouth advertising for that product (Kim & Hyun, 2011).

Customer-based brand equity

Although brand creates value for an organization clearly but the root of this value is in customer (Aaker, 2000; Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Indeed, customer-based brand equity determines the real value of brand. One of the comprehensive models to explain brand and branding is the model of customer-based brand equity which has been developed by Professor Keller. This model seeks to answer two main questions. "How to create an strong brand?" And "What makes the brand strong?" (Carlene Elrod, 2007). Customer-based brand equity is the various effects of brand awareness on customer response to brand activities. In this definition, There are three key concepts visible in relation to vale creation of brand: "response resulted from brand awareness", "customer response to brand activities", "distinct responses" (Keller, 1993, 2003, 2006). Hence we can say all kinds of organizational activities influence brand awareness and this change in brand awareness influences consumer response. Also long-term success of a brand is influenced by experiences resulted from short-term marketing activities (Schultz, DE, & Schultz, HF, 2007). In this regard, the process of creating an strong brand is a four-staged process and in each stage, one of the fundamental question of customer will be answered (Keller, 2003):

1. Making sure of brand identification by customers and linking brand to a specific category or need in the minds of customers (who are you? Brand identity);
2. Creating brand meaning in the minds of customers by strategic linking of a range of tangible and in tangible characteristics to a brand (what are you? Brand meaning);
3. Getting favorable response from customers based on their judgment and emotions (what is my answer to you? Brand reply);

4. Converting brand reply to a strong and brand-based relation (how are we together? Brand association).

Indeed, these fundamental stages form brand creating blocks (being outstanding, performance, visualization, emotions, judgment and brand associations) and to create strong brand, organization must integrates its marketing activities alongside with creating these blocks (Keller, 2001; Kotler, P. , & Keller, KL, 2006).

Social Marketing

Kotler believes the third and most evolved part of marketing as affecting mind, heart and soul of human and considering human heart and soul with the introduction of three evolving stages of marketing, and emphasizes the importance of social issues. The social marketing is the process that applies marketing principles and techniques for creating relationship, communicating and delivering value in order to influence the behavior of target audiences, which aims to provide benefit to the community (public health, safety, environment) (Kotler and Lee, 2008). From Anderson point of view, social marketing establishes in activities of the government and non-profit organizations. Unlike commercial marketers, social marketers do not seek to advertise for a specific organization and increasing financial profits. Instead, they seek to create positive social benefits and prevent social problems caused by human behavior. (Mackay and Toldano, 2008).

Social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable (International Social Marketing Association, 2013, mentioned in wikipedia) . Although "social marketing" is sometimes seen only as using standard commercial marketing practices to achieve non-commercial goals, this is an oversimplification. The primary aim of social marketing is "social good", while in "commercial marketing" the aim is primarily "financial". This does not mean that commercial marketers cannot contribute to achievement of social good (Truss, Aiden, 2010, mentioned in wikipedia).

Empirical Background

Some related research have been presented in Table 1. Their study show that although the effect of social marketing on brand equity has been investigated in various research , these studies were mostly in business organizations and it has been considered less in non-profit and

charity organizations. In this regard, the present study has investigated this issue in a charity organization.

Table 1. the empirical literature on the effect of social marketing on brand equity

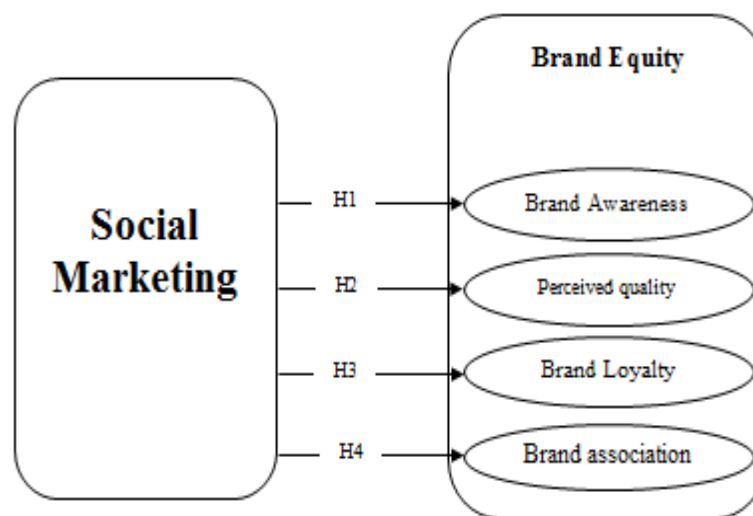
No.	Researcher	Year	Title	The population	The results
1	Ali Soleimani Beshely	2011	Social marketing and its effects in strengthening brand of banks	Banking Industry	Retaining customers and gaining their loyalty, Absorbing more customers
2	Rah Chamani et al.	2013	Studying the effect of corporate social responsibility on the brand preference in the banking industry	Customers of Melat and Refah Banks	Minor improvements in the brand preference, corporate social responsibility would not have a significant effect on brand preference
3	Hamid Reza Saeidnia et al.	2013	Checking ads based on social responsibility, company's reputation and brand equity	Customers of Saderat bank	Customer perception of social responsibility in this bank have a positive effect on customer satisfaction, and the effect of advertising based on social responsibility on reputation and brand equity in this bank was not confirmed
4	Hamsianetefagh	2013	Studying brand equity for services organizations based on the identification and analysis of influential variables	Customers of branches of Melat bank in Isfahan	The effect of different studies variables on brand equity is approved and the greatest effect is recognized for loyalty on the brand equity.
5	Keshvari	2012	The application of the social marketing in libraries		The main concern of social marketing is to promote good ideas, to change undesirable behavior, and to reinforce desired behaviors and habits of the individual and social level , thus employing social marketing elements are proved according to the mission of public libraries to achieve goals
6	Hill	2006	A reply of social marketers to development of a marketing communications program to raise public awareness for a nonprofit organization	----	What is the most effective is the induced feeling by a campaign strategy in the awareness of a non-profit organization

7	Hoeffler and Keller 2002	Creating brand equity through corporate social marketing		CSM corporate social program will lead to increase brand awareness, to enhance brand image and to excite brand and to create external symbols in relation to brand, to create related and significant perception and feeling of brand .
8	Denis B.Arnett and Steve German and Shelby D. Hunt 2013	Drksb recognize superior achievement in relationship marketing model for a non-profit organization	----	The strategy is to promote long-term relationships with key stakeholders. One of the most vital relationship marketing strategy and marketing for social change BC and marketing for nonprofit organizations
9	Hasaj and Krymbi 2013	Brand Strategy for non-profit institutions in developing countries in a cover in Albania	The Institute of "I Care "	By using branding strategies they can increase their brand perception and they should continue this trend by focusing
10	Meekers and Rahaim 2006	The socio-economic importance of social marketing models in the development of sexual health based on the 555-year of experimental programs	Managers of social marketing program	Socio-economic context is clearly the most impressive effective than other models of social marketing and the maturity of program and size of the target group are also very important
11	Blery et al 2010	Marketing for non-profit organizations	Plans of Global Fund for nature WWF and a non-profit organization in Greece	WWF marketing plan that is associated with society had a successful message as well as low-cost influence on people in order to support and protect animals(preferred) and they used media such as direct email, publishing articles, newspapers and internet for this purpose.
12	Saegeant and JFord 2007	Power of brands in non-profit organizations	9 charity organizations, active in the field of child welfare and protection of animals	1. Drawing up a non-profit organization for using the four organizational dimensions 2-emphasis on the factors that differ the organization from other organizations 3. Paying special attention to perception of people who help organization financially. 4. Paying attention to the existing common points with other organizations

Research model

This study focused on social marketing because marketers and scholars have largely accepted the notion that social marketing has a considerable effect on the organizations' profitability and sustainability (Chomvilailuk and Butche, 2010). In addition there is growing evidence to suggest that brand equity has a notable effect on organizational performance (Yasin et al, 2007). Therefore, this study examines the effect of social marketing on brand equity. Figure 1 illustrates the suggested research model for this study. According to the model social marketing is considered as independent variable. Furthermore, brand equity (with four dimensions namely brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty) is considered as the independent variable. These brand equity dimensions are widely accepted and used by numerous researchers (eg Yoo et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2003; Pappu et al., 2005; Lee and Back, 2010; Pike et al., 2010; Kim and Hyun, 2011).

Figure1: The conceptual model of the research



Research Hypotheses

According to the discussed issues and conceptual model, about the brand equity on consumer responses, formulated hypotheses of this research are as follow:

Hypothesis 1: The social marketing has significant and positive effect on the brand awareness.

Hypothesis 2: The social marketing has significant and positive effect on the brand identity.

Hypothesis 3: The social marketing has significant and positive effect on the brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 4: The social marketing has significant and positive effect on the brand associations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study from targeted view is practical because its findings are used to solve problems inside organizations. From quality of collecting data point of view, is considered as descriptive-survey, because it tries to obtain required information of current position of statistical sample by using questionnaire. Also in terms of time period, it is cross sectional and from view of data type is quantitative.

The statistical territory

The population of interest in this research includes customers of Mahak Charity Organization in Tehran. In this study, using the stratified random method, 384 people were selected as sample. To ensure collecting right numbers of questionnaire, 460 questionnaire were distributed and finally 390 questionnaires were collected (6 questionnaires were excluded due to confounding).

Data collection tools

Data collection tools used in this research is a 30 question questionnaire that has been used as Likert scale. To test the reliability of the questionnaire, the primary prototype Including 30 questionnaires were pre-tested and then by using resulted data and with the help of statistical software of SPSS, the confidence coefficient was calculated by Cronbach's alpha that confidence level of 89% has been obtained.

Methods of data analysis

In this study, analysis of obtained data from samples and checking the presence or lack of simultaneous relationship between variables of structural equation modeling by means of Lisrel was used.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In structural equation modeling, existing relations between traits that were extracted based on the theory, are investigated according to collected data .In this model, there are 30 given variables (survey questions) and 5 latent variables (expressed independent and dependent variables).

After modeling in order to assess the validity of model, special indicators are used including: Chi square ratio to freedom degree that must be less than 3, the root of mean square of approximation error must be less than 0.08 and P-value must be less than 0.05 and adjusted fitness index must be greater than 0.9.

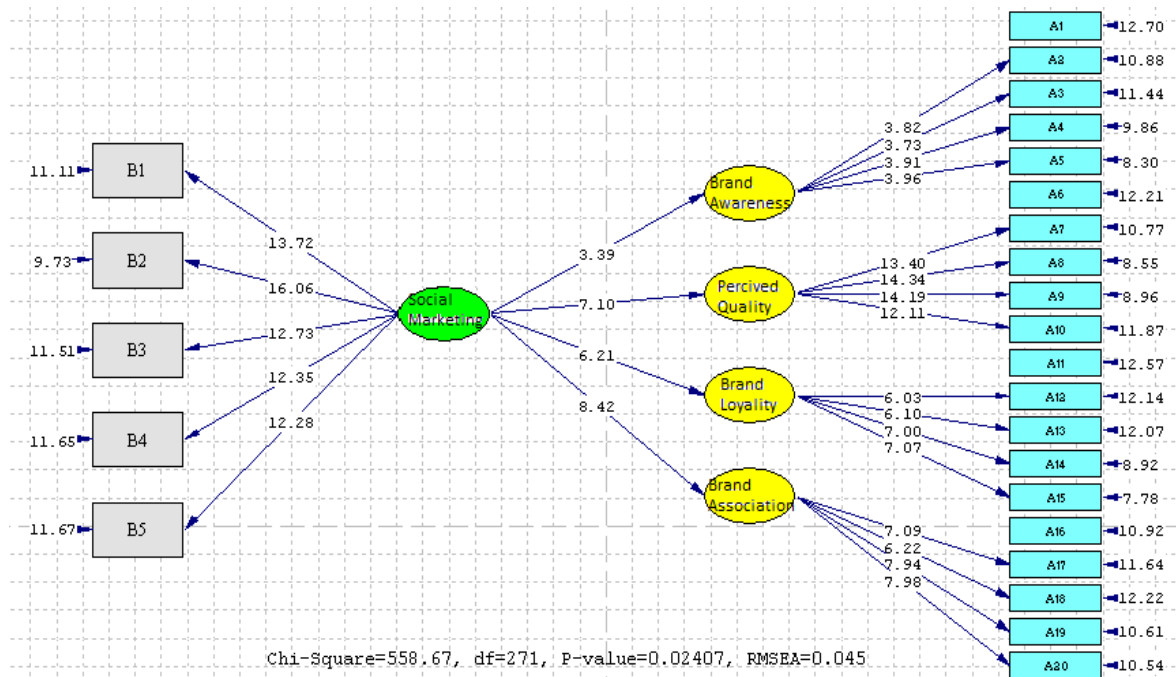
To determine the significance of the effect of social marketing on brand equity, significant model is used and for assessing quality and amount of this effect, standards model is used. Figure 2 and 3 illustrate the significant model and standards model pertinent to the research hypothesizes.

About the significance of the obtained numbers, it can be said that since the confidence level of testing hypotheses is 0.95, those quantities will be significant that are not between 1.96 and -1.96. This means if a number exists between these two, it will not be significant.

Model fit of hypotheses and testing them

In this section for testing the hypotheses of this research Structural model has been used, this model shows 5 latent variables (exogenous and endogenous), and explain the effect of exogenous latent construct (social marketing) on endogenous latent construct (brand equity dimensions). Following model is the T-value model which is showing significance of the effect of exogenous on endogenous and also shows the fit indices of the model.

Figure 2: T-value model



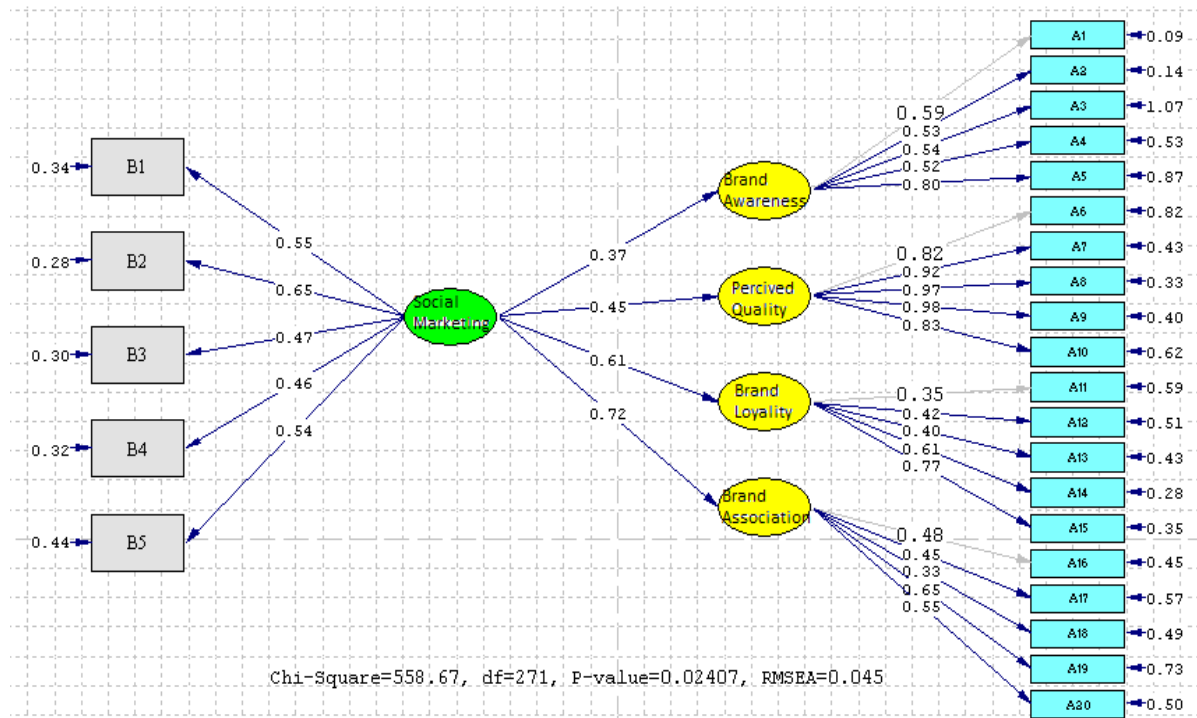
Fitness indices indicate this model can be regarded as an appropriate approximation of reality.

Table 1: Fitness indices

χ^2 / df	AGFI	GFI	RMSEA
1.70	0.91	0.94	0.058

Following model is the standard model which is indicating the standard coefficient of the path between exogenous and endogenous.

Figure 3: Standard model



In standard model, exogenous latent constructs explain endogenous latent construct as follow: Social marketing as the latent constructs explain (subsequently) 0.37, 0.45, 0.61 and 0.72 of brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association as endogenous latent constructs. So the results of above models indicate that all of the four hypothesis of this research have been accepted. This means that social marketing has considerable positive effects on the brand equity in the studied charity organization.

Investigating the status quo of variables in the population

In this part of the study, the status quo of each of social marketing and the dimensions of brand equity has been studied in statistical population. To this end, student T -test was used in SPSS.

One-sample average test to measure social marketing

In this section the results of the one-sample T-test for specific values of social marketing followed by specific values of the brand and its components are presented. The results of this analysis are presented in tables 2 and 3:

Table 2: One-sample T-test results

Variable	Statistics T	Degrees of freedom	Sig. (2-tailed) Significance level	Mean	Test value = 3 95%	
					Lower	Upper
Social marketing	24.304	383	0.000	0.79195	0.7279	0.8560

As can be seen in the table above, the observed significance level of social marketing is zero. The obtained t-statistic (24.304) is greater than 1.96, and also the lower limit and upper limit in confidence interval of 95% are both positive and consequently, the obtained average for social marketing is greater than test result. It is therefore concluded that the status quo of social marketing in studied organization is desirable.

Table 3: One-sample t-test results

Variable	Statistics T	Degrees of freedom	Sig. (2-tailed) Significance level	Mean difference	Test value = 3 95%	
					Lower	Upper
Brand awareness	43.815	383	0.000	1.2770	1.219	1.334
Perceived quality	10.428	383	0.000	0.5652	0.4586	0.6718
Brand loyalty	16.635	383	0.000	0.5298	0.4672	0.5925
Brand association	28.317	383	0.000	0.9046	0.8418	0.9674
Brand equity	29.562	383	0.000	0.8191	0.7647	0.8737

As can be seen in Table 3, an observed significance level of brand equity is zero. The obtained t-statistic (29.562) is greater than 1.96, and also the lower limit and upper limit in confidence interval of 95% are both are positive. The obtained average for brand equity is greater than the test value. It is therefore concluded that the status quo of brand equity in this organization is desirable. Accordingly, the results show the status quo of each four components of brand equity (brand awareness, perceived quality of brand, brand loyalty and brand association) is desirable in this organization.

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays the role of non-profit organizations, especially charities is very important in providing health care and social welfare. The non-governmental nature of such organizations makes donations to become one of the main sources of funding in such organizations. Thus knowing the nature and benefits of such activities of such organizations by public play an important role in encouraging people to donate for the purposes of such organizations. To this end, these

organization should pay special attention to the continuous improvement of knowledge and their public image in the eyes of the community. The brand of these organizations have a key role in the creation and development of such knowledge. Enhancing brand value can improve the performance of the organization and make a significant contribution, hence knowing the underlying factors affecting brand value of these institutions is one of the main priorities of the organization. Humanitarian and charitable nature of the mission, goals, and performance of these organizations will make the social marketing play an effective role in promoting brand value.

In this study, the effect of social marketing has been studied based on the four dimensions of brand equity in a charity (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand associations). The results of the analysis of data collected in this field indicated that the social marketing has had an important and significant effect on each four dimensions of brand equity.

These results show that social marketing activities initially can increase the brand awareness. In other words, creating and brand development for charities such as business organizations have begun by increasing brand awareness. Organization with more participation in social activities, will witness the increase of its brand awareness. This trend continues to improve and upgrade the level of brand association of the company in the minds of the public. Increasing brand associations in the mind of the customers (donators) will increase their tendency to interact with the institution. The quality of this relationship and awareness of performance of an institute will form the perceived quality of brand in the mind of donator, here their brand loyalty will be improved if the perceived quality of institute in the mind of donator is desirable.

Those non-profit organizations apply social marketing in order to promote brand equity, will be more successful in improving organizational performance and achieving goal and social responsibilities. Therefore, it is recommended to MAHAK and other similar charities to codify and implement comprehensive social marketing programs more in order to increase brand equity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the results of studying the effect of social marketing on each dimensions of brand equity and also results of checking the status quo of these variables in MAHAK, following applicable comments have been recommended in order to improve brand equity of this organization and other similar charity and non-profit organizations:

In order to increase brand awareness

1. Planning related campaign ,applicable in social marketing
2. MAHAK and its organizational logo should be used in all its activities
3. The use of mass media such as television in social marketing activities
4. Participation and activity on social networks
5. The use of weblogs, academic websites(universities),medical sites
6. Sponsorship of meetings, festivals and social conferences
7. The use of commercial sites that provide the opportunity to free use of advertising space

In order to increase brand association

1. The use of positive and active personalities in social marketing and planning campaigns
2. Joint work with active organizations in the field of social marketing
3. Social marketing activities for children in order to make good sense to invest for years to come and to make a kind of altruism in customers
4. To introduce MAHAK as an organization that is concerned about social health in conferences and meetings
5. To hold painting and essay writing competitions in schools on topics related to the field of social marketing

In order to increase the perceived quality of the brand

1. Reporting and informing this issue that social activities of MAHAK not only is effective in attracting funds for organization but also influence the promotion of public health
2. Informing this issue that extensive services of MAHAK are in the field of social health and also treatment of children with cancer and it confirms the superiority of MAHAK over other competing organizations
3. To invite customers and stakeholders of MAHAK to visit its social marketing activities in workshops, festivals.
4. To get confirmation of famous people about social marketing and releasing these confirmations

In order to increase brand loyalty

1. To individuate and to care about customers even involving them in doing activities that result in respecting them

2. Special attention should be paid to good and superior customers, for example sending them text for birthday greetings, Inviting special customers to make decisions about social marketing
3. To pay attention to feedbacks and suggestions of customers about social marketing activities
4. To establish fan clubs in cyberspace and to guide social marketing activities through it
5. To provide participation opportunity for customers interested in participating in social marketing activities
6. Presenting honesty and goodwill of MAHAK in providing social marketing activities through various ways such as social networks

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the limitations of this study, it is suggested that in future studies in this area the following issues should be considered:

1. Factors affecting brand preference by customers in non-profit organizations
2. Campaigns suitable for every non-profit organization
3. The model of this research will also be examined in other non-profit organizations
4. This issue should be evaluated from financial perspective or other models
5. Studying the effect of social marketing on customer satisfaction

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