

Determining the impact of the perceived image, antiquity, reputation, advertisements and quality of products of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

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Abstract

The present study examines the impact of the perceived image, antiquity, reputation, advertisement and quality of the products of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty. This is an applied research, descriptive in terms of nature and it is a survey as far as the type of study is concerned. The statistical population of the present study consists of customers who use Behrooz food industry. Descriptive statistics were used for the demographic variables of the research and inferential statistics, including correlation test, paired t-test and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test have been used to analyze the collected data with the help of SPSS software. Based on the obtained results, antiquity, reputation, advertisements, quality and the perceived image of Behrooz food industry have impacted customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Perceived Image, Product Advertisement, Product Quality, Antiquity, Reputation

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, we live in an age where production orientations, products and sales cannot guarantee a company's survival in the market. Customers and competitors of the companies have become more intelligent and all companies that wish to survive in such an environment have turned to marketing orientation and even social orientation whether they had liked it or not. If we look into it a bit more precisely, we can detect it in the recent actions and attempts of the domestic companies in our country, since a major section of our market has become quite competitive and its other sections are in the process of becoming competitive. By recognizing consumer needs and finding ways to satisfy them through innovation, maintaining and promoting quality and most of all, acquiring customer loyalty, institutions can maintain their productivity and survive in a competitive market. Many large corporations, such as General Motors, Harley-Davidson and Del Monte, spend a large amount of their budget on building and maintaining customer loyalty ^[1].

In fact, customer loyalty gives the corporations a competitive advantage, since due to customer loyalty, marketing costs of the corporation will be reduced. Experts believe that the cost of attracting new customers is approximately 6 times more than keeping the current customers. In addition, loyal customers tend to spend more on the product and the brand they are interested in and are not too sensitive to their price. Additionally, loyalty to a brand name will lead to the creation of a business leverage for the companies to compete in the market.

The concept of attitudinal loyalty to a commercial name and a brand includes different stages of recognition, effectiveness and deciding to make a purchase. The best way to build attitudinal loyalty in customers is using advertisements and other promotional and communicative activities in media to create a pleasant mental image of the brand ^[2]. Also, loyalty to a brand is reflective of the functional desirability of products and services ^[3]. The main challenge in this study is associated with loyalty to a brand, the concept of loyalty to a brand and measuring it ^[4].

Loyal consumers usually tend to spend more on brand names, because they perceive the unique value of a brand in comparison to others. When loyal consumers see that they lack attachment to a certain brand name, they immediately turn towards brands that are in a better condition. Consumers

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usually buy products from familiar brands to save time and reduce perceptual risk^[5].

Given the positive impacts of loyalty on organizations, managers and officials need to pay attention to it and recognize the factors impacting customer loyalty before they sense shortage or lack of customer loyalty and to reduce its negative impacts by empowering and promoting these factors. If they fail to do so, customers will not be satisfied and dissatisfied customers will end up not buying their products and transfer their dissatisfaction to other customers and the organization will face a reduction in their market share.

Therefore, the main issue in this study is examining the factors that affect the loyalty of customers to a brand in the market of dairy products in the city of Tehran. The reason for choosing the dairy product market is that, currently, given the several companies that are active in this field, this market is quite competitive and there are even some companies that wish to enter this market. Thus, this is a market where customer loyalty can play a significant role in the productivity and survival of these types of companies.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Quality of services

In the past, it was assumed that if corporations adjust to and meet the standards of the customers, they will be loyal. However, it has been seen that as new companies entered the market and deliver products that meet the needs of the customers to a larger degree, customers turned to newly-launched companies. Then, it was assumed that providing unique products leads to customer loyalty. However, the same thing happened as the market became more competitive. This was until the idea of keeping customers by building lasting relationships with them rose. 20 years ago, Ted Lewitt stated that we live in an age where there should be a difference between our thoughts about a product or a service today and yesterday. It does not matter what is important, significant and crucial to us, what does matter is to present this essential core in a way that customers would be totally satisfied with the product, whether it'd be a microwave or a service such as cable TV. If companies fail to do so, they will fail sooner or later. The received quality is a competitive requirement and nowadays, many companies have turned to customer-based quality, as a strong strategic weapon. They have considered the value of the customer and tried to satisfy them through establishing a relationship between customer needs and companies' advantages, products and services^[6]. One way for institutes to get a competitive advantage is to deliver services with higher quality to their customers. The key to their success depends on meeting or even exceeding the expectations of their customers regarding the quality of their services. If the quality of services does not meet the expectations, then customers would lose their interest in a certain service and if the quality meets or exceeds their expectations, it would be more probable for the customers to purchase that certain service again in the future. The quality

of services has been reduced in many fields throughout the whole world. Customers experience different levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction after receiving a certain service based on the extent to which their expectations have been met.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a relatively biased behavioral reaction (in purchasing a product or recommending it) that a person comes to show to a brand in time. It is because of loyalty that an individual tends to turn to a certain brand among many in their decision-making or evaluation processes. This reaction is a function of the mental and psychological processes of a person^[7].

Loyalty is a variable that modifies the quality of services, customer satisfaction and economic performance. Loyalty is the extent to which customers are willing to maintain their relationship with a supplier and usually results the degree to which customers believe that the value of the product they are purchasing from a supplier is higher than that of others. Loyalty occurs when customers strongly feel that a certain organization can meet their needs, in a way that their competitors cannot, and the competitors exit the competition in a way that the customer only purchases the products of that certain organizations. Increasing customer loyalty can reduce the costs of marketing and increase the demand of customers^[8]. In addition, loyal customers are a big part of word-of-mouth advertisements. They also cope with strategies and increase the profits of stock markets^[9]. Customers have an attitude and an emotional attachment to an organization, its employees, products, good and services. For example, when a customer is asked about their favorite drink, the opinion they give about that certain drink is purely emotional and they do not make a conscious effort to purchase or use that certain drink. This is called attitudinal loyalty also known as motivation to repurchase. On the other hand, a customer might not have this emotional attachment to an organization and might just want to show a loyal behavior towards an organization as a habit. For instance, a customer does not have a certain agenda or a legitimate reason for purchasing a certain kind of drink and they only do so because it is what they are used to. Behavioral loyalty is a collection of repeated equations and can be simply measured through observational techniques. Attitudinal loyalty is often defined as a positive effect on consistent relationships or as a tendency to continuing a relationship or as an equal to committed relationships^[10]. Attitudinal loyalty can be measured by using questionnaire. Behavioral loyalty is quite valuable, because it translates to sales. Attitudinal loyalty is also very valuable, because attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty are highly dependent on one another. Strong attitudinal loyalty makes the customers stronger to resist the attempts of other marketers and not to choose other options. It can be claimed that two important issues, i.e. customer's choice and customer loyalty, cover all the attempts in the marketing area. It makes sense since the main objective of economic firms and the main goal of the efforts they make is to attract

customers and to obtain long-term profitability and equilibrium.

Quality of services and loyalty

Quality of services and satisfaction, especially from the service marketing point of view, are approaches with a few similar indexes and of course a number of specific traits. In a satisfaction form, consumers must have had experienced a service. In contrast, the quality of the service that they have received is not necessarily experience-based. Empirical research done by Cronin and Taylor has shown that service quality is a factor that determines satisfaction and explicitly affects reaction. Additionally, service quality, satisfaction and attitude are among the most significant factors when it comes to customer support. Research shows that making customers satisfied gradually leads to a sense of loyalty and a sense of trust in the customers. In this regard, Simon, a management theorist, states: “when an organization successfully attracts a new customer, customer satisfaction is the point where a long-term relationship is created between the customer and the organization ^[6]. We need to pay attention to the fact that the only way for the organizations to keep their customers to meet their needs, demands and expectations, or in other words, make them satisfied. The rate of correlation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is strongly affected by the conditions of the competitive market. In insurance, behavioral loyalty is defined as the tendency of customers to purchase or repurchase insurance from an existing insurer or purchasing a new insurer from a certain supplier.

Loyalty and responsiveness

Loyalty: entering the third millennium, in leading organizations, many concepts have been redefined. Loyal customers have become more and more significant, in a way that with a 5% increase in customer loyalty, profit goes through a 25 to 85-percent increase and this rate is called loyalty cost ^[11].

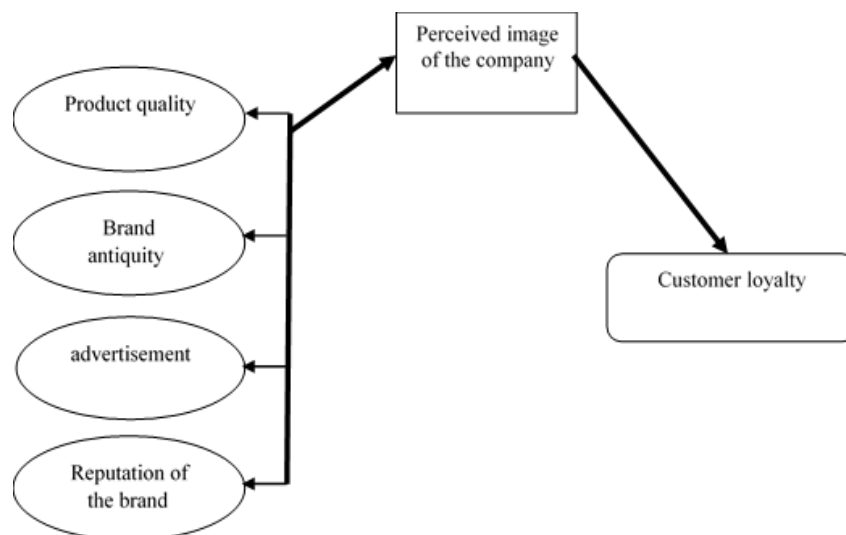
Nowadays, in Iran, economic firms must pay a great deal of affection to marketing loyalty based on agility pattern. Customer satisfaction is the center of agility model and is among the components that affect the measurement of agility capacities, i.e. responsiveness, competition and flexibility. In most industries, it is essential for companies to do some research to evaluate and implement loyalty strategies and to make them objective-oriented to create and promote a strong relationship with their best customers.

Marketing, in its evolution journey, is at a point where the focus is on pushing customers up the loyalty of ladder to organization with a better understanding of the market in the framework of different environments and the target market. Responding to the current and potential needs of the customers must be done based on purchasing processes and impactful factors, i.e. customer traits and loyalty to a brand. Loyalty marketing has various synonyms such as frequency marketing, one-to-one marketing, customer-oriented marketing and relationship marketing. In this regard, the following question arises: are customer really loyal? Nonetheless, marketing is in fact “growing” and “committing”. Marketing is the art of turning customers to supporters and advocates of the organization.

For the following reasons, customers might return to an economic firm and stay loyal to it: 1) customers might not have a better alternative; 2) they might not know the differences between different options and hence not change their choice; 3) they might not be willing to take risks; 4) it might not be worth it to manage the costs to move on to the next choice; 5) it might not be so easy to distinguish between products and services or they might not have a single supplier; 6) organizations might have loyalty programs to encourage repurchases of products or services.

Conceptual model of the research:

The conceptual model of the research has been developed by reviewing previous studies and research literature.



Graph 1: conceptual model of the research

As far as research method is concerned, the current study is a descriptive research in terms of nature and a survey as far as type of research is concerned. In addition, since the results of this study can be practically applied, this is an applied research.

The spatial territory of the present research was Behrooz food industry and its temporal territory was April to September of 2012. The statistical population of the current study consists of customer who consume the products of Behrooz food industry.

The sampling method is a simple random sampling method. Since the variance of the statistical population is unknown in this study, it was necessary to do a preliminary research on a group selected from the research population to pre-estimate the sample variance. For this purpose, first a group of 30 research subjects were selected out of the statistical population of the research and a questionnaire was distributed amongst them. After extracting the data associated with the aforementioned group and pre-estimating the variance ($s^2 = 0.31$), the size of the statistical population was calculated to be equal to 152 people using the finite population sampling formula.

Information collection method

In this research, the field and library methods were used to collect the essential information. A questionnaire was used to analyze the collected data using the field method.

Information collection tools

In this research, a questionnaire was used to collect data and it was developed in two different parts. To design the questions of this questionnaire, the 5-point Likert scale was used.

Measuring research validity

The present study has content validity.

Measuring research reliability

To determine the reliability of this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used.

Reliability of the questionnaire:

Hypothesis zero: reliability of the research questionnaire is acceptable.

Hypothesis one: reliability of the research questionnaire is not acceptable.

H0 : Alpha ≥ 0.7

H1 : Alpha < 0.7

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha test for evaluating the factors affecting customer loyalty in Behrooz food industry

| Questionnaire variables | Number of cases | Number of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Perceived image | 68 | 10 | 0.88 |
| Product quality | 68 | 4 | 0.91 |
| Advertisements | 68 | 4 | 0.80 |
| Reputation of the brand | 68 | 3 | 0.87 |

Based on table 1, hypothesis zero is accepted for all items except for questions associated with the brand antiquity variable. Alpha ≥ 0.7 means that the questionnaire is reliable to an acceptable extent. The questions associated with the antiquity of brand have to be redesigned.

Data analysis method

Descriptive statistics were used for the demographic variables of the research and inferential statistics, including the correlation test, paired t-test and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, were used to analyze data with the help of SPSS software.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

Describing demographic variables:

Table 2: distribution of participants of the study based on gender and education

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage | Validity percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 42 | 61.8 | 63.6 | 63.6 |
| Female | 24 | 35.3 | 36.4 | 100 |
| Unknown | 2 | 2.9 | | |
| Total | 68 | 100 | 100 | |
| Education | | | | |
| 8 th grade | 1 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| Highschool diploma | 9 | 13.2 | 15.3 | 16.9 |
| Associate degree | 10 | 14.7 | 16.9 | 33.9 |
| Bachelor's degree | 25 | 36.8 | 42.4 | 76.3 |
| Master's degree | 11 | 16.2 | 18.6 | 94.9 |

| | | | | |
|----------------|----|------|-----|------------|
| PhD | 3 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 100 |
| Unknown | 9 | 13.2 | | |
| Total | 68 | 100 | 100 | |

Table 2 shows that out of the 68 participants, 42 participants (63.6%) were male and 24 participants (36.4%) were female. Therefore, approximately 60% of the respondents were male. In addition, it could be seen that out of 68 participants, 1 person's (1.7%) education level was below diploma (8th grade), 9 people (15.3%) had a high school diploma, 10 people (16.9%) had an associate degree, 25 people (42.4%) had a bachelor's degree, 11 people (18.6%) had a master's degree and 3 people (5.1%) had a PhD. Thus, approximately

60% of the respondents had either a bachelor's or a master's degree.

Analytical findings K-S (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) test to review the normality of factors:

H0: distribution is normal (Sig. \geq 0.05).

H1: distribution is not normal (Sig. \geq 0.05).

Table 3: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to review the normality of factors

| Variables | Mean | Standard deviation | Kolmogorov statistic | Significance level |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Loyalty to brand | 2.5414 | 0.70964 | 0.699 | 0.713 |
| Product quality | 3.1243 | 0.72596 | 1.010 | 0.260 |
| Antiquity of the brand | 2.8951 | 0.59469 | 1.611 | 0.011** |
| Advertisement | 2.7538 | 0.79676 | 0.832 | 0.493 |
| Product quality | 3.2388 | 0.84047 | 1.044 | 0.266 |

*It is significant at the level of 0.05. **it is significant at the level of 0.01.

Table 3 shows the obtained numbers and with the exception of the brand antiquity variable, all variables confirm hypothesis zero (significance level of $P < 0.05$). Therefore, with a 95% confidence, we can claim that the studies variables follow a normal distribution. Hence, to analyze the research hypotheses, the parametric equivalent tests, i.e. the single-sample t-test, was used. Additionally, the nonparametric equivalent test, i.e. the binomial test, was used for the hypothesis associated with the brand antiquity.

Testing the hypotheses

Single-sample t-test for the effect of the perceived image of the Behrooz food industry brand on customer loyalty

First research hypothesis: the perceived image of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty.

H0: the perceived image of the Behrooz food industry brand does not affect customer loyalty. Sig \geq 0.05

H1: the perceived image of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty. Sig $<$ 0.05

Table 4: single-sample t-test for the perceived image of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

| 95% confidence interval | | Mean of differences | Significance level Sig | Degree of freedom | t | Perceived image |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------|-----------------|
| High degree | Low degree | | | | | |
| -0.2868 | -0.6304 | -0.4585 | 0.000 | 67 | -5.329 | |

As it can be seen from the numbers presented in table 4, hypothesis zero (H0) is strongly rejected (significance level = $P < 0.05$). Therefore, with a 95% confidence level, it can be claimed that the perceived image of Behrooz food industry impacts customer loyalty.

Single-sample t-test for the effect of the product quality of the Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

Second research hypothesis: product quality of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty.

H0: product quality of the Behrooz food industry brand does not affect customer loyalty. Sig \geq 0.05

H1: product quality of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty. Sig < 0.05

Table 5: single-sample t-test for product quality of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

| Test rate = 3 | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 95% confidence interval | | Mean of differences | Significance level Sig | Degree of freedom | t | Product qualitt |
| High degree | Low degree | | | | | |
| 0.3000 | -0.0514 | 0.1243 | 0.163 | 67 | 1.412 | |

*it is significant at the level of 0.05. **it is significant at the level of 0.01. ns: not significant

As it can be seen from the numbers presented in table 5, hypothesis zero (H0) is strongly rejected (significance level = P<0.05). Therefore, with a 95% confidence level, it can be claimed that product quality of Behrooz food industry does not impact customer loyalty.

Third research hypothesis: advertisements of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty.

H0: advertisements of the Behrooz food industry brand does not affect customer loyalty. Sig ≥ 0.05

H1: advertisements of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty. Sig < 0.05

Single-sample t-test for the effect of advertisements of the Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

Table 6: single-sample t-test for advertisements of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

| Test rate = 3 | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| 95% confidence interval | | Mean of differences | Significance level Sig | Degree of freedom | t | Advertisements |
| High degree | Low degree | | | | | |
| -0.0534 | -0.4391 | -0.2462 | 0.013 | 67 | -2.548 | |

*it is significant at the level of 0.05. **it is significant at the level of 0.01. ns: not significant

As it can be seen from the numbers presented in table 6, hypothesis zero (H0) is strongly rejected (significance level = P<0.05). Therefore, with a 95% confidence level, it can be claimed that advertisements of Behrooz food industry impacts customer loyalty.

Fourth research hypothesis: antiquity of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty.

H0: antiquity of the Behrooz food industry brand does not affect customer loyalty. Sig ≥ 0.05

H1: advertisements of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty. Sig < 0.05

Binomial test for the effect of the antiquity of the Behrooz food industry brand on customer loyalty

Table 7: binomial test for antiquity of Behrooz food industry brand on customer loyalty

| Performance index | Classification | Number | Observed probability | Test probability | Significance level |
|-------------------|----------------|--------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Rejection group | ≤2 | 9 | 0.13 | 0.50 | 0.000** |
| Acceptance group | >2 | 59 | 0.87 | | |
| Total | | 68 | 1.00 | | |

*it is significant at the level of 0.05. **it is significant at the level of 0.01. ns: not significant

As it can be seen from the numbers presented in table 7, hypothesis zero (H0) is strongly rejected (significance level = P<0.05). Therefore, with a 95% confidence level, it can be claimed that antiquity of Behrooz food industry brand impacts customer loyalty.

Single-sample t-test for the effect of reputation of the Behrooz food industry brand on customer loyalty

Fifth research hypothesis: reputation of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty.

H0: reputation of the Behrooz food industry brand does not affect customer loyalty. Sig ≥ 0.05

H1: reputation of the Behrooz food industry brand affects customer loyalty. Sig < 0.05

Table 8: single-sample t-test for advertisements of Behrooz food industry on customer loyalty

| 95% confidence interval | | Mean of differences | Significance level Sig | Degree of freedom | t | Brand reputation |
|--|------------|---|------------------------|-------------------|------|------------------|
| High degree | Low degree | | | | | |
| 0.44 | 0.035 | 0.2388 | 0.022 | 67 | 2.34 | |
| *it is significant at the level of 0.05. | | **it is significant at the level of 0.01. | ns: not significant | | | |

As it can be seen from the numbers presented in table 8, hypothesis zero (H0) is strongly accepted (significance level = $P < 0.05$). Therefore, with a 95% confidence level, it can be claimed that reputation of Behrooz food industry brand impacts customer loyalty.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to review the effect of the perceived image, antiquity, reputation, advertisements and product quality of Behrooz food industry brand affects its customer loyalty.

The results obtained from this study are as follows:

The perceived image of Behrooz food industry impacts customer loyalty and given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (k-s), this variable has been normal. The t-test has been used to review this variable which shows that the research hypothesis is accepted.

The product quality of Behrooz food industry impacts customer loyalty and given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (k-s), this variable has been normal. The t-test has been used to review this variable which shows that the research hypothesis is accepted.

The advertisements of Behrooz food industry impacts customer loyalty and given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (k-s), this variable has been normal. The t-test has been used to review this variable which shows that the research hypothesis is accepted.

The antiquity of the Behrooz food industry brand impacts customer loyalty and given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (k-s), this variable has been normal. The t-test has been used to review this variable which shows that the research hypothesis is accepted.

The reputation of the Behrooz food industry brand impacts customer loyalty and given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (k-s), this variable has been normal. The t-test has been used to review this variable which shows that the research hypothesis is accepted.

Based on the obtained results, it is recommended to the managers of Behrooz food industry to take the following points into consideration and apply them:

1. Taking the opinion and the interest of customers into consideration while developing products
2. Creating effective advertisements in a way that it would be focused on the different specifications of products in comparison to the products provided by the competing organizations and to make the customers aware of them
3. Developing creativity-oriented strategies to improve the methods used for attracting customers
4. Making plans to increase the diversity of products and produce new ones
5. Effectively planning for qualitative or quantitative development of employees' performance in order to establish long-lasting relationships with customers
6. Improving the organization's response to media in terms of production efficiency and performance
7. Devoting themselves to their commitments associated with the quality of products
8. Devoting themselves to their commitments regarding the production of new products
9. Supporting improvement processes by increasing motivation, innovation and employee encouragement
10. Meeting the needs and expectations of consumers and customers and paving the way for them to participate in activities that are supervised by the managers.
11. Operational employees who are in contact with customers to make it possible for customers to participate in the planning of strategies
12. Managers need to make an effort to meet with customers, suppliers and other agents outside of their own organization
13. Senior managers should also participate and pay special attention to plans focused customer loyalty and including them in the strategic statements of the organization or the industry and determining the journey and culture of the organization

Finally, for further reviews, it is recommended to future researchers to:

1. Study and measure the factors affecting customer loyalty using fuzzy methods
2. Study customer loyalty plans of successful companies and presenting a conceptual model

3. Review the advantages of EFQM in the customer dimension and its effectiveness on customer loyalty
4. Document the strategies of leading corporations and developing customer loyalty plans
5. Study the relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty

Limitations

Among research limitations, we can refer to some employees' concern and their lack of cooperation as far as receiving information and filling out the questionnaire is concerned. In addition, the broad spectrum of the products of Behrooz food industry and the large number of its customers were some of the limitations. Since the time period of this study was between April and September of 2012, thus the findings of this study are only for this year and there will be a change in future years.

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