

Enhancing brand performance based on brand orientation, brand identity and brand equity (case study: the sport and youth general office in Yazd)

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ABSTRACT

The present case study aims to design a model for improving the brand performance based on the brand orientation and brand identity with an emphasis on the mediating role of brand equity, which is conducted at the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd. This is an applied research and it is of the survey types. Standard questionnaires were used to measure brand orientation, brand identity, brand equity and brand performance. The study sample includes 104 employees from the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd, in 2017. To test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling based on partial least squares regression method was used. The result showed that brand orientation had a significant effect on brand equity and brand performance and brand identity had a significant effect on brand equity and brand performance. Therefore, organizations must focus their attention on brand identity and create good brand orientation among the staff in order to improve corporate brand performance.

Keywords: Brand equity, Brand orientation, Brand identity, Brand performance, Sport.

Introduction

Today, managers realize that brand and brand management is essential for the survival of their business life ^[1]; and in today's economy, the brand building activities no longer follow the tradition and are not limited to commodities, and service organizations are also trying to use appropriate strategies to develop their brand ^[2]; the brand of service organizations depends on the organizational culture and intra-organizational factors, that is to say, all elements of the organization and the

service providers are part of the same provided service ^[3]; it is worth noting that service organizations can reduce their vulnerability against their competitors via a strong brand and can set higher values for their services ^[2]; if the service organizations and sport institutions of a country have a strong brand, it will make customers and sport consumers (including coaches, athletes, spectators and the general public) to move further towards professional sport, championship, and sport for all ^[4].

On the other hand, the progress of an organization, undoubtedly, results from the brand performance of that organization ^[5]. The necessity of the organizational performance measurement from different aspects and levels has often been considered in the literature of marketing as a dependent variable ^[6]; therefore, there is a perspective on performance evaluation via services and products provided by the organization, which is called brand performance ^[7]; in other words, corporate brand performance means the extent to which the organizational brand is successful ^[1]. Therefore, having acquainted with the characteristics and dimensions of brand

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performance, the managers will be equipped and they will be capable in implementing more effective brand strategies. On the other hand, the level of brand orientation in an organization is another basic issue in each organization. Brand orientation can be defined as a particular type of market orientation, which is distinguished in relation with brand building by the senior management; it represents a systematic approach to brand management^[8]. Therefore, brand orientation of service organizations is an attitude in which corporate processes moves around the creation, development, and preservation of the brand identity in continuous interactions with target customers and with the intention of achieving competitive advantages^[1]. Hence, adopting the strategy of brand orientation makes the organization more competitive and results in increased performance^[9].

Moreover, to strengthen and promote the brand of service organizations as an important issue in marketing, it is necessary to focus on the brand identity^[2], since brands are introduced to the customers and are differentiated from other competitors^[10]; brand identity is the essence of the brand, and is the brand name's meaning and concept provided by the organization to the society^[11]; and it is defined as the brand's basic idea and concept which introduce the unique and valuable aspects of the brand^[3]. In service organizations, brand identity is a strategic assumption about how the brand of a service organization should be perceived by stakeholders^[12]; and strong brand identity brings itself into the sharp focus of the consumers^[2].

Likewise, in the past, the development of brand and brand equity were only measured in terms of financial and customer dimensions^[13]. However, using available brand equity models with two financial and customer approaches is not completely responsive to brand management and has limitations, especially when brand management is involved in brand building for service organizations^[14]; and considering the concept of internal brand management, the brand equity development approach should be considered from the viewpoint of employees^[15]. The employee-based brand equity is the value created by the brand as a result of employees' attitudes and behaviors^[16]; and using employee-based brand equity, it is pretty hopeful that the concepts of internal brand management will create benefits for the organization^[14].

According to what we mentioned above, today, strong brand building is one of the priorities of many service organizations; and employees are among the effective factors involved in the formation of the concept of organization's brand in the consumers' minds; hence, internal brand building in order to promote brand within the organization by means of employees, plays an important role in the promotion of the organization; therefore, the marketing managers of the sport organization require recent and accurate information about the effectiveness of their programs in order to develop brand building strategies; moreover, in order to develop future plans and marketing strategies, recognizing the importance and priority of each factor involved in corporate brand performance is indispensable.

Considering the importance of the factors involved in corporate brand performance, several studies have also been conducted in this area. In the review of brand performance, some researchers took brand identity into account, including Abedi and Jamalou (2017); they conducted a research on "Factors Affecting Brand Identity and its Effect on Brand Performance and Employee Satisfaction". The result of this research indicated that corporate brand identity has a positive effect on organizational commitment and indicated the positive effect of organizational commitment on brand performance and employee satisfaction^[3]. Casidy et al. (2018), in a recent study on the effect of brand on brand performance in services section, showed that brand identity affects brand performance, and the employee's experience about the brand as a mediator variable strengthens the effect of brand identity on brand performance^[5]. It should be noted that research on corporate brand identity is usually focused on the opinions and personal impressions of the brand managers, experts, and staff members^[17]. Moshabbeki et al. (2013) conducted a research entitled "Brand Identity Design for Iran's Sports Industry"; they identified components for the development of brand identity of Iranian football league teams including success, goods delivery, the native area of the team, star players, logo, fans, record, traditional rivals, tradition, team performance, and stadium, and non-player personnel^[18]. Moreover, Bashokouh and Shekastehband (2015) conducted a research entitled "Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Development of Service Brand Identity". Based on the results obtained from the effective factors, the factor of marketing culture and brand personality has little effect on service brand identity^[19]. Based on the findings of Ahmadi et al. (2014), the effect of brand identity on both brand loyalty and brand equity in food industry was confirmed^[10]. Therefore, considering the importance and effect of brand identity on corporate brand performance and the employees' commitment to their organizations and their degree of satisfaction, organizations must pay particular attention to brand identity management in organizations^[20]. On the other hand, many researches focused on the development of brand orientation framework and have considered the measurement of brand experience^[1, 21]. In this regard, Ghasemi et al. (2013) conducted a research entitled "Analyzing the Effect of Brand Orientation on Brand Performance and Corporate Financial Performance in Active Corporate in Ahwaz Industrial States". The research results showed that brand orientation had a direct and positive effect on brand differentiation and brand performance; moreover, brand performance has a positive and direct effect on the corporate financial performance^[1]. In another study, Hirvonen & Laukanen (2014) studied the role of brand orientation on brand performance in small businesses. The results showed a positive and direct relationship between brand orientation and brand performance^[22]. Furthermore, regarding the component of brand equity in service organization, Karimi et al. (2016) conducted a study entitled "Factors Affecting the Evaluation of Employee-Based on the Brand Equity (Third-Generation of Brand Equity) in the Banking Industry"; Findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between employees'

perceptions about the brand of employing organization, the brand of employing organization, and its competitors and employees' knowledge about brand, and the employees' commitment to the brand [14]. On the other hand, King and Grace (2010) are among the researchers who examined the employee-based brand equity. In this study, components such as: knowledge dissemination, feedback from employees, clarity of role, and brand commitment affected the employee-based brand equity [15]. Ultimately, Kordanaej *et al.* (2015) conducted a research about counterfeit products and their impact on brand equity of the products. Findings of the research showed that knowledge of value, price-quality impression, and ethical issues had a significant effect on customer's attitude toward counterfeit products and using counterfeit products has a significant impact on brand equity of the products [23].

Considering the above mentioned issues and the important role of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd as a service organization is considered that helps with the development and provision of sport services to people in the society; therefore, the researcher has tried to provide a model in order to examine the improvement of brand performance based on brand orientation and brand identity with an emphasis on the mediating role of employee-based brand equity among the staff of Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd.

Conceptual Model of the Research:

The brand performance of Sports and Youth General Office in Yazd is influenced by several factors and variables; it means that some factors must be taken into account in order to produce brand performance of a sport organization. Factors that have been represented in the model of the present research as the effective variables are brand orientation and brand identity. In order to facilitate the issue, we also used the brand equity variable as a mediator variable so that we can determine how much the brand performance of Sports and Youth General Office in Yazd could be promoted. Therefore, after conducting library research and the review of the literature, and having examined the methods and models used in previous studies, the conceptual model of the present research was provided, as represented in Figure 1.

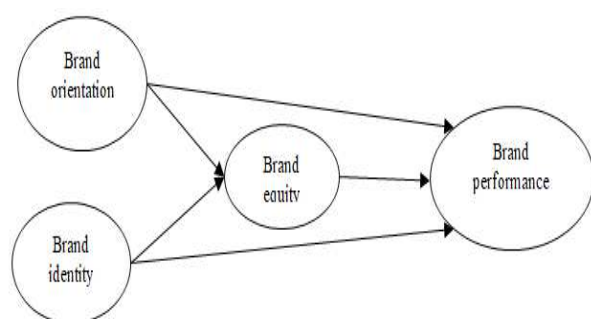


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Research and the effect of Antecedent Factors on Brand Performance

Research Methodology

This is an applied research in terms of topic and objectives and it is of survey type. The research data were obtained using a questionnaire. The research target population was the staff of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd; a group from the staff of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd and its subordinate sport teams that had at least a bachelor's degree and worked as an expert or in a managerial position. According to the personnel department of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd, they were 104 people in 2017; the sample size was considered as amount to the statistical population. The sampling method was based on the whole number. In this research, standard questionnaires of brand orientation (Ahmad *et al.*, 2013) [10], brand identity (Talebpour and Razavi, 2016) [24], Keller's brand equity (2001) [25], and brand performance (Asadullah *et al.*, 2009) [26] were used as the main measurement tools of the research variables. The validity of the questionnaires was verified by 10 professors of sport management; and, the reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.72, 0.81, 0.74 and 0.77, respectively. In the present research, a structural modeling technique via PLS and SPSS22 was used to represent the model.

Research Results and Findings

Table 1: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Managers Based On Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent	Total frequency
Gender	Female	3	3	104
	Male	101	97	
Marital status	Married	103	99	104
	Single	1	1	
Education	Associate degree	14	13	104
	Bachelor's degree	63	61	
	Master's degree	27	26	
Types of employment	Permanent	35	34	104
	contractor	21	20	
	Temporary	45	43	
	Public works	3	3	
Work experience	1-5 years	29	28	104
	6-10 years	37	36	
	11-15 years	12	12	
	16-20 years	14	13	
	Above 21 years	12	11	

Given the results of Table 1, the majority of the samples who were male, married, contractors, had bachelor's degree, and work experience of 6 to 10 years.

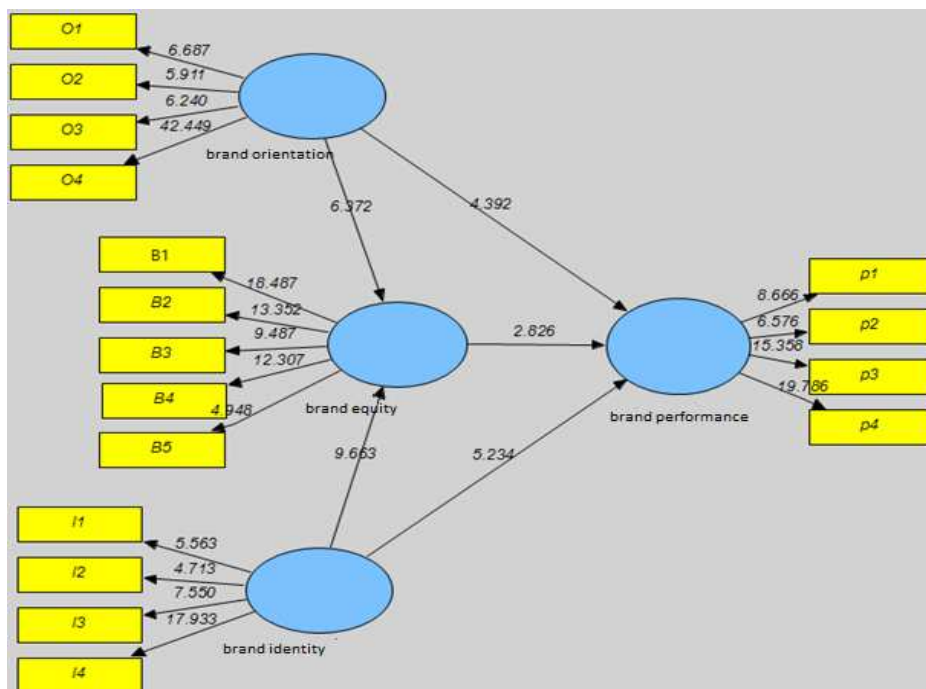


Figure 2: The Model of the Research at the State of Significant Coefficients (t-value)

Figure 2 represents the conceptual model of the research at the state of significant coefficients (t-value). This model, in fact, tests all the measurement equations (factor loadings) and standard coefficients using t statistics.

Goodness-of-Fit Assessment:

Variable	AVE	composite reliability	R2	CV-Red	CV-Com
Brand orientation	0.47	0.80	-	0.134	0.134
Brand identity	0.41	0.73	-	0.043	0.043
Brand equity	0.50	0.83	0.77	0.347	0.250
Brand performance	0.49	0.79	0.84	0.398	0.177

In the partial least squares method (PLS regression), the quality and fit of the model are measured using the two indices of the CV-Redundancy and CV-Communality. Positive figures indicate the good quality of the model. According to Table 2, the values obtained for CV-Red and CV-Com are all positive, which indicates the good quality of the tested model. Moreover, the results showed that the composite reliability and average of variance extracted for all latent variables of the model, were more than 0.4 and 0.7, thus showing a good value. Moreover, the R2 index was calculated and reported only for second-order variables of the model. It is reported for “brand equity” and “brand performance” variables which were dependent variables of the main conceptual model of the research; the findings indicate good model fit.

Brand	Observed variables	Factor loading	t statistic	Significance level
Brand performance	P1 Expansion capacity of	0.67	8.66	0.001

brand				
P2	Accessibility	0.60	6.57	0.001
P3	Innovation	0.77	15.35	0.001
P4	Brand advice advertising	0.76	19.78	0.001

Given the results represented in Table 3, it can be stated that for all the variables of brand performance, all indices have created a significant weight and can have significant factor loadings at the confidence level of 99%.

Components	Item	Observed variables	Factor loading	t statistic	Significance level
Brand orientation	Q1	Focus on brand orientation as an essential strategy for the organization	0.64	6.68	0.001
	Q2	Brand orientation flows through all activities in the organization	0.60	5.91	0.001
	Q3	Necessity of brand orientation in performing activities in the organization	0.60	6.24	0.001
	Q4	Considering brand as a major property of the organization	0.87	42.44	0.001
Brand identity	I1	Brand failure in meeting its pervious brand personality	0.53	5.56	0.001
	I2	Decreased service quality of the organization	0.57	4.71	0.001

Brand equity	13	Brand failure in meeting your demands	0.67	7.55	0.001
	14	Brand boredom	0.76	17.93	0.001
	E1	Brand salience	0.77	18.48	0.001
	E2	Brand image	0.74	13.35	0.001
	E3	Brand judgments	0.72	9.48	0.001

E4	Emotions towards brand	0.70	12.31	0.001
E5	Brand resonance	0.57	4.94	0.001

Given the results represented in Table 4, it can be said that for all the variables of brand orientation, all indices have created a significant weight and can have significant factor loadings at the confidence level of 99%.

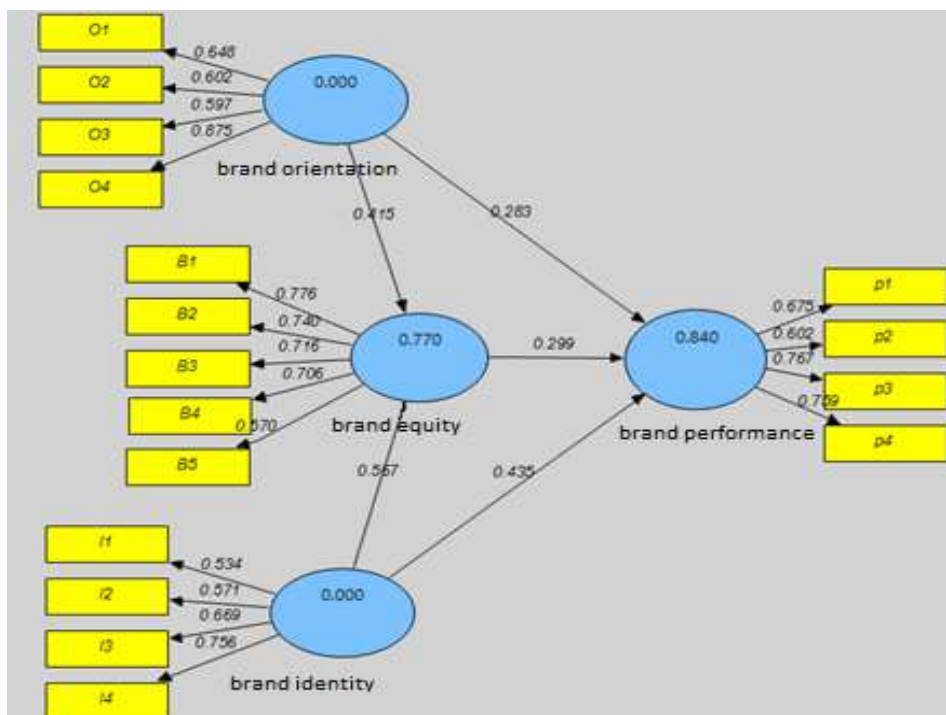


Figure 3: The Model of the Research at the State of Standard Coefficients and Factor Loadings

Research variables	Standardized beta coefficient (β)	t statistic	Significance level	Result of variable's effect
Brand orientation→brand equity	0.41	6.37	<0.05	Confirmed
Brand orientation→brand performance	0.28	4.39	<0.05	Confirmed
Brand identity→brand equity	0.57	9.66	<0.05	Confirmed
Brand identity→brand performance	0.43	5.23	<0.05	Confirmed
Brand equity→brand performance	0.30	2.83	<0.05	Confirmed

Given the findings represented in Table 5, brand orientation had a significant effect on brand equity and brand performance. Moreover, brand identity had a significant effect on brand equity and brand performance. Brand equity had a significant effect on brand performance.

Relationship	Mediating role	Indirect effect coefficient
1	Brand orientation→brand equity→brand performance	$0.41 \times 0.30 = 0.12$
2	Brand identity→brand equity→brand performance	$0.57 \times 0.30 = 0.17$

As seen in the conceptual model of research, Figure 3, brand orientation through the mediator variable of brand equity had indirectly affected the brand performance. Brand identity also affected brand performance indirectly through the mediator variable of brand equity. Since the model was formulated with respect to the direct effect of research variables, and since testing the conceptual model of the research, only the direct effect coefficients are estimated, therefore, it is necessary to calculate the indirect effect coefficients through a path analysis approach separately. Table 6 represents these coefficients. The indirect effect coefficients are calculated through the direct effect coefficients. The findings showed brand orientation via mediating role of the brand equity variable affected the brand performance variable of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd by 0.12%, and, brand identity via mediating role of the brand equity variable brand affected the brand performance

variable of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd by 0.17%.

Discussion and Conclusion

In today's highly competitive situation, sport organizations as providers of community requirements must take advantage of their brand equity to maintain and improve their position against other sport organizations inside the country or abroad. Since today, the main capital of organizations is their brand, the organizations are spending a lot to strengthen this new concept. On the other hand, brand stability of an organization is depended on brand performance, therefore, when brand performance is realized in an organization, the organization becomes a productive organization. In this regard, it seems that the development of brand equity of service organizations causes customers and employees to build a good relationship with the brand of the organization and ultimately, the improvement of corporate brand performance is evident. Therefore, the researcher taking a broad view, tried to provide a comprehensive model for brand orientation and brand identity with an emphasis on the mediating role of brand equity on brand performance of Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd.

The research findings based on structural equation modeling showed that brand orientation had a positive and significant effect on brand equity and brand performance. In other words, if the managers and staff of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd move towards brand orientation strategies, we can evidence an improvement in brand equity of the Sports and Youth General Office in Yazd and in corporate brand performance, this result is consistent with the results of studies by Bridson and Evans (2004) ^[21], Ghasemi *et al.* (2013) ^[11], and Hirvonen and Laukkanen (2014) ^[22]. Hirvonen and Laukkanen (2014) conducted a research on the role of brand orientation on brand performance in small businesses, and the results showed a positive relationship between brand orientation and brand performance ^[22]; on the other hand, Hasani *et al.* (2013) in their research showed that the internal communication of brand and the level of corporate brand orientation have a positive and significant effect on the employee-based brand equity ^[6]. It seems that brand orientation represents a plethora of pleasant emotions towards corporate branding, therefore, if the staff of the organization has pleasant emotions towards brand, and if special attention is paid to brand orientation in the organization, we will evidence the development of brand equity and brand performance in the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd. In this regard, it is necessary for the officials and staff of the organization to identify brand orientation strategies appropriate to their organization's status, its competitive competence and customers of the target group; and the managers of sport organizations should move towards brand orientation and management and they should realize that achieving strong and distinct brands will definitely improve corporate brand equity and brand performance and will bring about a lot of benefits.

Another research result showed that brand identity has a positive and significant effect on brand equity and brand

performance. In other words, as brand identity of the Sport and Youth General Office enhances we can expect an improvement in brand equity and brand efficiency in line with an improvement of organizational performance. This is consistent with the results of the research by Cassidy *et al.* (2018) ^[17], Abedi and Jamalou (2017) ^[3], and Ahmadi *et al.* (2014) ^[10]. Cassidy *et al.* (2018) showed that brand identity affected brand performance ^[17]. In their research, Ahmadi *et al.* (2014) confirmed the effect of brand identity on both brand loyalty and brand equity ^[10]. As a result, it seems that the strong and positive effects of brand identity on brand performance and brand equity, and employees' behavior towards the corporate brand, has the following important consequence that a good organization should pay more attention to the concept of brand identity and recognize its importance. It should be noted that organizations, especially service organizations whose importance is highly recognized by people and society, and which are considered as a major factor in the development of the country, are seeking to improve their brand performance; however, they are unaware that brand performance is rooted in brand identity. As a result, if an organization has a strong brand identity, its brand performance will be improved.

The other research findings showed that brand orientation and brand identity with the mediating role of the brand equity variable had a positive and significant effect on the brand performance variable of the Sport and Youth General Office. In other words, if brand orientation, brand identity, and brand equity are all considered and if they are improved in proportion to each other, we will evidence an improvement in brand performance of the Sport and Youth General Office. This is consistent with the results of the research by Hirvonen and Laukkanen (2014) ^[17], Abedi and Jamalou (2017) ^[3]. It is necessary for the managers and staff of the Sport and Youth General Office in Yazd to develop strategies and guidelines for brand development and pay attention to their corporate brand promotion; moreover, corporate brand identity should be preserved and maintained by its managers, likewise, brand managers must create and maintain a clear, consistent and coherent identity for their organization, in a way that it serves as a solid reference point for the consumers ^[10]. It is expected that employees have a good tendency towards the corporate brand, in other words, to create a positive brand image, employees have to regulate their behaviors for the development and promotion of the corporate brand, and consequently, brand performance will be improved.

As a result, the focus on the use of comprehensive models about brand performance, similar to what represented in the present research, can help the managers of sport organization to develop their brand performance. Therefore, it is recommended that the managers of these organizations apply various methods, such as conducting periodic research at fixed-intervals to assess the brand positioning among the clients, conducting workshops on brand management and benefits of brand orientation, formulating brand orientation strategies based on the organization status, creating motivation among the staff, improving the service quality of the organization, and

offering various rewards with respect to the staff's competence, in order to increase the employees' tendency towards the corporate brand; so that using employees' tendency towards the corporate brand, they could improve brand equity and corporate brand performance and in this way, help the improvement of sport in the country and provide useful and constructive services in the society.

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