

The Role of Viral Marketing on Behavioral Intentions in Durable and nondurable Goods: Is brand equity as a mediator?

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Abstract

As viral marketing as a factor influencing customer behavior is a new tool that encourages people to comment on companies' products or services online and brand promotion is also one of the most important strategic growth strategies for companies, always at the center of attention so The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of viral marketing on behavioral intentions considering brand equity as a mediating variable; this study was conducted in two parts durable and nondurable goods. For this purpose, a questionnaire based on research work Haifeng Xu & Zhuolun Li 2014. Blanco, Blasco and Azurin 2010. Abdulraheem. M. Ahmad. Zabadi, Mohammad Shura and E. A. Elsayed 2012. Aaker1991, Bambauer & Etal 2011, Shukla 2010, that distributed among consumers and buyers in province-margin of Caspian Sea in Iran, about 400 questionnaires were analyzed. Confirmatory factor analysis test (LISREL) and Cronbach alpha were used to assess the validity of the questionnaire. Results showed the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. The results of the LISREL structural equation show that brand equity is viewed as a mediator in the relationship between viral marketing and behavioral intentions. On the other hand, viral marketing has a positive influence on word-of-mouth marketing and intention to buy and a negative influence on brand change. It turns out that the most influential marketers in the lives of consumers are those who are known and trusted by their consumers. Nowadays consumers usually suffer from a massive influx of information and go through expensive advertising so people decide through word-of-mouth marketing for shopping. There should also be a major investment in brand building, investing in brand's special value contributes to brand reputation among customers as well as non-customers.

Keywords: viral marketing, behavioral responses, brand equity, word-of-mouth, intention purchase, brand switching.

1. Introduction

Viral marketing is commonly defined as spreading a message or content that contains advertising and information about a company's brand through social media. On the other hand, viral marketing is considered as a strategy that encourages people to send out propaganda messages to each other, thus spreading a propaganda message as a virus among the people (Kaplan, et al., 2011, Ephraim, 2012). Kantar Millward Brown (2018) report titled 'Digital and Media Predictions' highlights that online video advertisements are the most important form of content marketing because of their expressiveness and their ability to elicit active involvement of the

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viewers. Moreover, it is difficult to identify substantial evidence to support these assumptions or to explain why and how viral marketing works, which is perhaps why it is currently viewed mostly as an art than a science (Diorio, 2001). Furthermore, keen competition in the online marketplace has reduced stickiness (the extent to which customers remain engaged with a website, firm or product), which is driving businesses to change, but it is suggested that if firms want to improve desirable behaviors, they should not rely only on the marketing mix. On the other hand, they must focus on how to increase excellent user experience; that is, the users' experienced benefits, experienced value, and brand equity.

A strong brand has many benefits for organizations. These include increased customer loyalty, increased organizational capacity in critical situations, higher profit margins, more positive customer response to price changes, the benefits of brand certification sales, and brand development opportunities (Aaker, 2001). In today's competitive marketplace Understanding Consumers' emotional reactions can influence their decision to buy from the specific store. On the other hand, the primary purpose of a market and store is to create consumer intent, with emotional marketing, advertising, and brand equity which are all of factors that companies can focus on to increase consumer's intent and increase sales. Consumer-brand relationships include cognitive beliefs and emotional communication with the brand, which ultimately affect consumer behavior toward the brand. In other words, brand equity generally refers to the different effects that brand knowledge has on customer response to brand marketing, for example when a brand is said to have a positive customer value, customers will react more positively to it (Aaker, 2001). A key element of business refers to providing benefits and value to users by all possible means has become. The importance of brand equity has been the focus in recent studies on SMMA. On the other hand, not a lot of studies have explored the role of brand equity when investigating the impact of SMMA on customers (Kim, 2012; Kim and Ko, 2012; Bruno et al., 2016). Given this negligible potential, it seems that viral marketing can positively impact brand equity (Kirby & Marsden, 2006). Brand is a benchmark for most companies for measuring brand power, and viral marketing as a new way in the world is getting a lot of attention.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the role of viral marketing on behavioral intentions considering brand equity as a mediating variable in two different parts of durable and durable goods. As Goli (2012) suggested, IT is generally considered as a valuable resource which increases the potentials of managers and staff feasibility and effectiveness of the organization's goals with an increased amount of efficiency. In the present study, the impact of information technology on the quality of accounting information listed companies in Tehran stock exchange deal was evaluated.

2. Theoretical Background

Behavioral intentions are considered as signs that the customer will continue to use the services of one company or switch to another provider. Therefore, with a better understanding of customers, marketers and managers can prepare themselves to find the right marketing strategies and tailor their products and services to attract new customers and retain existing customers (Lai & Chen, 2011). Customers often shape their attitude to shopping based on experiences. They also create a cognitive decision-making process about whether to continue to use a company's services (Ryu et al., 2008). In numerous researches, behavioral intentions are divided into several parts, most notably WOM, Purchase intention and Brand switching. Several definitions of WOM have been proposed. It is commonly defined by researchers as an oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator in which the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service. WOM was defined by Westbrook as all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers. According to Harrison-Walker, it is an informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service (Taghipourian, 2013). WOM communication directly influences consumer decisions on purchasing and loyalty (Jung and Seock, 2017). Word of mouth (WOM) is formed among others from satisfaction or dissatisfaction and handling customer complaints (Yasri and Engraini, 2018). Wang (2011) argued that satisfied consumers may or may not produce positive WOM about service, while dissatisfied consumers have a strong tendency to tell others about their anger and

even exaggerate bad experiences. According to Kitapci et al (2014) word of mouth is influenced by customer satisfaction.

Brand switching behavior has been studied in a range of settings, including services (Pick, 2014; Tesfom et al., 2016), automotive retailing (Sambandam and Lord, 1995), banking and finance (Mohsan et al., 2011) and retail channels (Chiu et al., 2011; Mutum et al., 2014). It has also been studied within the realm of grocery stores and supermarkets, where the frequency and low involvement nature of purchases, low switching costs, and availability of product alternatives has been shown to lead to this behavior (Fornari et al., 2016; Bogomolova et al., 2017). Viral marketing has been always defined as a communication and distribution concept, which depends on customers to transmit digital products via e-mail to other potential customers in their social contexts and to animate these contacts in order to transmit the products. E-mailing is the number one internet activity through which eWOM marketing takes place (Sijoria, 2019). According to the report of Radicati Group (2016) on e-mail market, there are about 2.6bn worldwide e-mail users who are expected to increase over 3.0bn by the year-end 2020 and total worldwide e-mail traffic is expected to grow over 257bn from 215bn e-mails per day by the end of year 2020.

Improvement in Web 2.0 technologies has changed the marketing landscape and online social networking is one of the primary activities empowered by the continuous advancements in information technology (Kasavana et al., 2010). This growth has also led to improvements in the applications of viral marketing campaigns. Bampo et al. (2008) argued that the message spreading medium could be both online and offline in viral marketing. This study is inspired by the argument presented from Bampo et al. (2008) who defined viral marketing as the marketing strategy that leads into an increase in product awareness and adoptions as well as company brand recognition by spreading out a persuasive viral message through receivers' social networks. Several advantages of viral marketing over traditional mass media have been recognized by several researchers (Bampo et al., 2008; Subramani and Rajagopalan, 2003). As an example, since the extra effort for the receivers to send the intriguing viral message to another contact is marginal, they will be capable of sending out the message to multiple members in their social networks. As a result, viral marketing can help companies to reach customers on a larger scale, including the possible customers (Subramani and Rajagopalan, 2003). Moreover, according to Bampo et al. (2008), a natural selection process is embedded in message spreading in order to target the communication. On the other hand, behavioral response to viral message is potentially more quantifiable than in other mass communications forms and this is because of the exponential growth (Bampo et al., 2008). With all these advantages, a large body of literature has been developed in studying the dynamics of viral marketing and was organized by the three major components identified by Bampo et al. (2008). They include:

- The social structure in which the messages spread;
- Behaviors displayed by the members.

The seeding viral strategy which can effectively motivate the members in the social networks to share the message and adopt the product. Brand equity can be studied from two perspectives, that of the firm, and that of the customer. In the present research, the customer-based view of brand equity was adopted. Brand equity was defined by Keller (1993) as the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand. Brand equity consists of several components. More specifically, higher levels of perceived advertising spending are linked to higher levels of confidence in a firm's products. It is worth mentioning that customer-based brand equity is a perceived construct. Literature on brand equity includes perceived quality as one of the components of brand equity. Perceived quality has often been considered as a part of brand equity (Godey, 2016). Perceived quality is related to the way one perceives a product or brand, or, if one has had experience with the product or service, perceived quality then refers to the difference between expected and perceived received quality of that product or service (Parasuraman, 1988). Perceived quality is of great important, since brands with higher ratings of perceived quality have the ability to charge higher price premiums (Porral, 2013). Perceived value is the third component of brand equity offered by the existing literature. Perceived value points to the customers' perceptions of the tradeoff between what is spent and what is received. Besides, this perception needs to be favorable in relation to other brands in the marketplace (Martesen, 2015). Literature is perceived value. Another element of brand equity

is brand loyalty. According to Aaker (2013), brand loyalty refers to the level of attachment that a customer has towards a brand in terms of repeat-purchase behaviors, and willingness to pay higher price premiums.

Branding has been referred to the process of creating value through the provision of a compelling and consistent offer and customer experience that will satisfy customers and keep them coming. Moreover, brands cannot be controlled centrally or in a top-down manner in online circumstances. People like to talk about their involvement with products and services for a variety of reasons like the prestige and status that may arise through ownership or a need to share their purchase experiences in order to help others. These conversations are then passed to family, friends and other people in social networks (Fadil, 2015). Social media has a large impact on today consumers' life. Consequently, using social media becomes vital for business firms to reach their customers effectively. On the other hand, social media and brand equity are not widely discussed. Consequently, according to Jayasuriya (2018), the potentialities of social media have been hiding under the sand of unawareness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Viral marketing has positive and significant effect on brand equity.

In the context of advertisement, word-of-mouth communication has become even more important due to its high rate of frequency in the market by persuasive role playing, since it can affect both the attitudes and the purchasing behavior of consumers (Hofman, 2006). Electronic word-of-mouth and viral marketing have been studied in the context of online customer communities (Cheung et al., 2008), mobile (Palka et al., 2009), and advertisements placed on the internet or social media (Daniasa et al., 2010). Research has proved the positive correlation of product reliability with customer confidence and profit margins. Global customer surveys carried out by the parent company and the recent introduction of customer satisfaction surveys by the UK firm reveal the fact that reliability is perceived as a significant factor both in customer satisfaction and in the decision to purchase another machine instrument in the next capital investment planned by the customers. As Taghipourian (2013) believed, higher levels of trust between buyer and seller relationship will increase the likelihood of continuation and this finally reduces the cost of brand switching. Purchase intention is defined as consumers' intentions to purchase a product or service. Fishbein and Azjen (1975) viewed purchase intention as the single most accurate predictor of actual purchase behavior. Later Tellis (1988) and Rahim (2016) empirically tested this assertion and confirmed this in a study conducted on the consumer durable goods category. Gary and Clinton used ideas around decision making context effects to examine how unit price driven brand switching behavior is moderated by characteristics of the product category (Hsiang, 2019). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 2. Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on WOM.

Hypothesis 3. Viral marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase intention.

Hypothesis 4. Viral marketing has a negative and significant effect on brand switching.

The TORA claims that a person's intention to perform or not perform an action is considered as a significant determinant of the actual behavior. The TORA also claims that customer attitudes and subjective norms are important factors in determining the intention to behave and ultimately the actual behavior. As an example, a favorable attitude toward a brand will lead to positive purchase intentions and acquisition of the brand. Similarly, hostile attitudes will increase customer intentions to switch providers and ultimately lead to the actual switching behavior. The impact of social norms on consumer behavior is recognized by the TORA. On the other hand, the intensity of this influence depends on the level of motivation to comply with these social forces. Have questioned Distinctions between attitude and subjective norms have been questioned by critics of the TORA and there have been concerns over the model's relevance in explaining behavioral influences beyond the customer. With all these criticisms, the TORA has received overwhelming support in the social sciences given the high degree of power in predicting behavior. The TORA also has as priority over other behavioral intention models because it introduces the impact of social influences to account for the inconsistencies between attitude, intention, and actual behavior. There is a huge amount of literature that examines the antecedents of brand equity, but much less research that examines the outcomes (Rambocas, 2018). The way brand equity is of great importance for the company has been always controversy just as the discussion of what comprises brand equity and how it can be built with distinct marketing actions. As Godey (2016) argued, in social media settings brand

equity that social media marketing activities create has a positive relationship with future purchase behavior/responses. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5. Brand equity has positive and significant effect on WOM.

Hypothesis 6. Brand equity has positive and significant effect on Purchase intention.

Hypothesis 7. Brand equity has negative and significant effect on brand switching.

Godey (2016) provides a holistic framework that demonstrates how SMMEs (Social media marketing efforts) influence brand equity and consumer behavior towards a brand. Prior literature recognized the importance of various SMME elements, on the other hand as Godey (2016) suggested, the empirical study details their relative importance and shows that all five elements should be holistically taken into account when planning social media activities. Liu and Wang (2019) incorporated the customer-based brand equity in order to explore interrelationships between viral marketing and purchase intention. The empirical results suggest that viral marketing consists of interesting, useful and informative subjects; message interaction; message reception; and offensive content, in which each had differing effects on customer-based brand equity and purchase intention (Hsiang, 2019). According to the above explanations the following question can be posed: Does brand value act as a mediating factor in the relationship between viral marketing and intentions?

Based on the theoretical framework, the conceptual model of the research is drawn as follows:

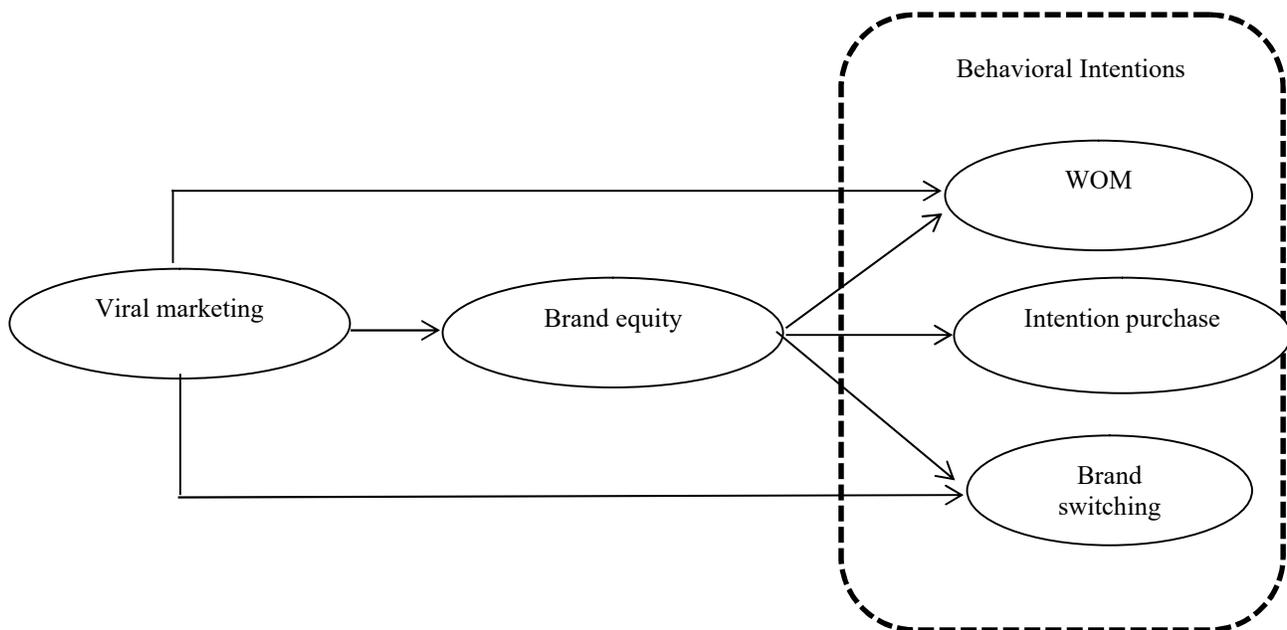


Figure 1. the research conceptual model

3. Methodology

Given the purpose of this study is to examine the role of viral marketing on behavioral intentions, considering brand equity as a mediating variable, a questionnaire consisting of two forms of durable (technology-driven) goods (Apple, Samsung, Sony, , LG, Huawei, Nokia, HP, Lenovo, Asus, Dell, Acer, MSI) and low durable goods that include dairy products (Kale, Damdaran, Mihan, Ramak, Haraz, Pak), meat products and Protein (Kale, Goshtiran, Mofidan, Vorka, Bistoon) and Drinks (Goldis, JoJo, Behnoush, Glenoush) has been developed for this purpose. 430 questionnaires were distributed among which 400 questionnaires were analyzable. It was found that the present questionnaires were from different sources, which are shown in Table (1). Research location: in province-margin of Caspian Sea in Iran.

Table 1. Questionnaire and Source

| Questionnaire | Item | Source |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Viral marketing | 26 | Haifeng Xu & Zhuolun Li 2014. Blanco, Blasco and Azurin 2010. Abdurraheem. M. Ahmad. Zabadi, Mohammad Shura and E. A. Elsayed 2012. |
| Brand equity | 18 | Aaker1991, |
| Behavioral responses | 9 | Bambauer & Etal 2011, Shukla 2010. |
| | WOM | |
| | Intention purchase | |
| | Brand switching | |

In this research, the samples include consumers and buyers, durable goods and in durable goods, in province-margin of Caspian Sea in Iran. In this study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to evaluate the validity with LISREL software and Cronbach's alpha with SPSS software which was also used for reliability assessment. The results are provided in table 2.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Results of the Questionnaire by Variables

| Construct | Cronbach's alpha | Dimensions | Item | Factor load | |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | durable products | Low durable products |
| Viral Marketing | 0.843 | Free Product and Services | 19 | 0.76 | 0.52 |
| | | | 20 | 0.77 | 0.63 |
| | | | 21 | 0.74 | 0.82 |
| | | | 22 | 0.68 | 0.69 |
| | | Distinctive features | 23 | 0.49 | 0.66 |
| | | | 24 | 0.46 | 0.55 |
| | | | 25 | 0.71 | 0.58 |
| | | | 26 | 0.55 | 0.41 |
| | | Discount or Reward | 27 | 0.59 | 0.76 |
| | | | 28 | 0.8 | 0.79 |
| | | | 29 | 0.71 | 0.75 |
| | | Instant gratification | 30 | 0.13 | 0.76 |
| | | | 31 | 0.05 | 0.69 |
| | | | 32 | 0.22 | 0.64 |
| | | In formativeness | 33 | 0.81 | 0.76 |
| | | | 34 | 0.7 | 0.86 |
| | | | 35 | 0.8 | 0.59 |
| | | | 36 | 0.81 | 0.64 |
| | | Entertainment | 37 | 0.76 | 0.87 |
| | | | 38 | 0.95 | 0.81 |
| | | Irritation | 39 | 0.78 | 0.83 |
| 40 | 0.82 | | 0.91 | | |
| 41 | 0.82 | | 0.93 | | |

| Construct | Cronbach's alpha | Dimensions | Item | Factor load | |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | durable products | Low durable products |
| | | Message Source Credibility | 42 | 0.56 | 0.64 |
| | | | 43 | 0.69 | 0.81 |
| | | | 44 | 0.67 | 0.65 |
| Brand Equity | 0.859 | Brand loyalty | 1 | 0.6 | 0.64 |
| | | | 2 | 0.53 | 0.42 |
| | | | 3 | 0.53 | 0.48 |
| | | | 4 | 0.52 | 0.59 |
| | | | 5 | 0.67 | 0.76 |
| | | Perceived quality | 6 | 0.69 | 0.54 |
| | | | 7 | 0.7 | 0.75 |
| | | | 8 | 0.81 | 0.87 |
| | | | 9 | 0.64 | 0.84 |
| | | Brand association | 10 | 0.65 | 0.69 |
| | | | 11 | 0.67 | 0.76 |
| | | | 12 | 0.66 | 0.83 |
| | | | 13 | 0.68 | 0.67 |
| | | Brand awareness | 14 | 0.59 | 0.84 |
| | | | 15 | 0.66 | 0.79 |
| | | | 16 | 0.58 | 0.75 |
| | | | 17 | 0.62 | 0.66 |
| | | | 18 | 0.55 | 0.53 |
| Behavioral Responses | 0.818 | Word-of-mouth | 45 | 0.81 | 0.89 |
| | | | 46 | 0.76 | 0.8 |
| | | | 47 | 0.37 | 0.4 |
| | | Intention purchase | 48 | 0.77 | 0.8 |
| | | | 49 | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| | | | 50 | 0.6 | 0.46 |
| | | | 51 | 0.76 | 0.73 |
| | | Brand switching | 52 | 0.95 | 0.34 |
| | | | 53 | 0.84 | 0.76 |

4. Findings

Of the 400 respondents, 172 were men and 228 were women, with singles having more than 72 percent of the population being under 25 years of age, comprising 271 and 67.8 percent of the sample, respectively. The sample includes people with a bachelor degree of 225 people and 56.3% of the sample size. The highest percentage of sample size of people with mental health involvement with durable goods with 28.9% are in the social network of Instagram and the highest percentage of sample size of people with mental health problems with nondurable goods with 32.3% are in social network telegram. The highest percentage in technology domain for durable goods is 25.1% for Samsung brand and the highest percentage for dairy products is 27.3% for Kale brand, 50% for meat product is for kale brand and 54/9% for beverage. Structural equations with LISREL software have been used to test the hypotheses and the model fit index in Table 3 shows that the research model has good fit. To answer this research question, variable mediation, a commonly used test called the Sobel test was used. In the Sobel test, a Z-value is obtained by the following formula, which, if it is over 1.96, can confirm that the mediating effect of a variable is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Table 3. fitting the model according to the product class

| Goods | Fit index | χ^2/df | SRMR | RMSEA | GFI | NFI | NNFI | IFI |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| | Acceptable values | < 5 | <0.05 | <0.08 | >0.9 | >0.9 | >0.9 | 0_1 |
| Indurable goods | Calculated values | 2.105 | 0.043 | 0.075 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.91 |
| Durable goods | Acceptable values | < 5 | <0.05 | <0.08 | >0.9 | >0.9 | >0.9 | 0_1 |
| | Calculated values | 2.252 | 0.041 | 0.079 | 0.91 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.93 |

$$Z - value = \frac{a \times b}{\sqrt{(b^2 \times s_a^2) + (a^2 \times s_b^2) + (s_a^2 \times s_b^2)}}$$

- In this regard: a: path coefficient between the independent variable and the mediator
- b: Path coefficient between mediator and dependent variable
- S_a: Standard error of independent and mediator variable path
- S_b: Standard error of path mediator and dependent variable

Also, to determine the severity of the indirect effect through the mediator variable, a statistic called VAF is used which holds the value between 0 and 1, and the closer this value is to 1 indicates the stronger the mediator variable’s effect. In fact, this value measures the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect. The VAF value is calculated by the following formula:

$$VAF = \frac{a \times b}{(a \times b) + c}$$

- a: The value of the path coefficient between the independent and intermediate variables
- b: The value of the path coefficient between the mediator and the dependent variable
- c: The value of the path coefficient between the independent and dependent variable

The results of the Sobel test for durable and nondurable goods are presented in Tables 4 and 5 as follows:

Table 4. Sobel test of nondurable goods

| Independent | Path | Mediator | Path | Dependent | Z value | Amount of impact | Result |
|-----------------|------|--------------|------|--------------------|---------|------------------|--------------|
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | WOM | 2.222 | 0.429 | verified |
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | Purchase intention | 2.232 | 0.198 | verified |
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | Brand switching | 0.234 | - | Not verified |

Table 5. Sobel test of durable goods

| Independent | Path | Mediator | Path | Dependent | Z value | Amount of impact | Result |
|-----------------|------|--------------|------|--------------------|---------|------------------|--------------|
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | WOM | 3.024 | 0.483 | verified |
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | Intention purchase | 2.811 | 0.323 | verified |
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | → | Brand switching | 1.020 | - | Not verified |

The results of t-value statistics and the results of the path coefficient values between values for nondurable and durable goods are shown in figures 2,3,4 and 5 respectively.

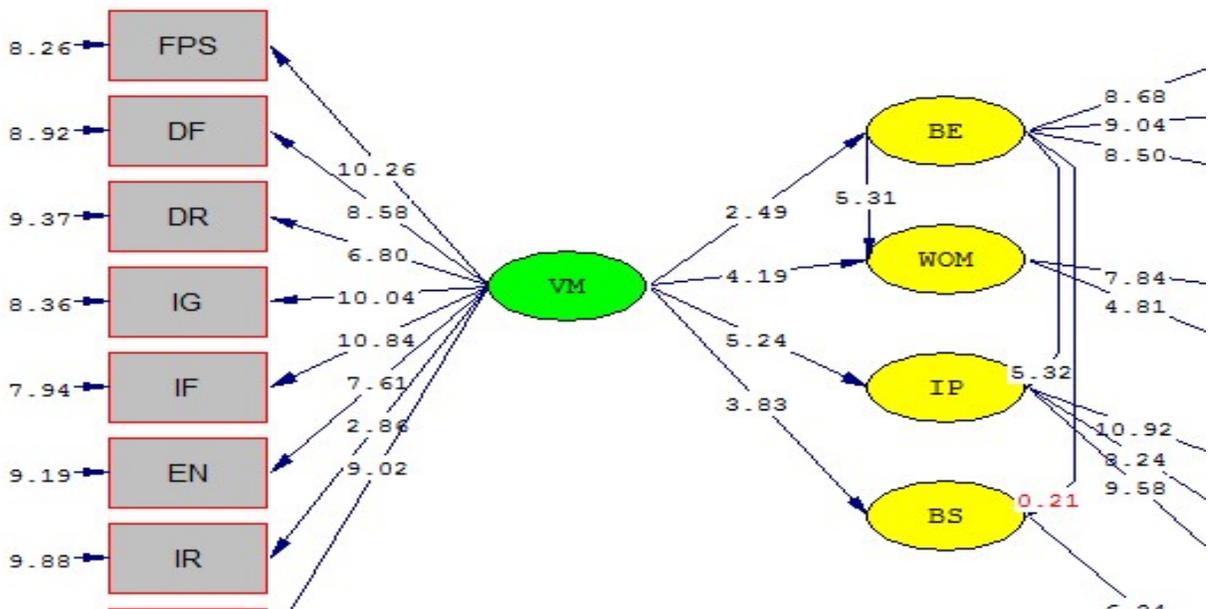


Figure 2. T-value statistics results for durable products

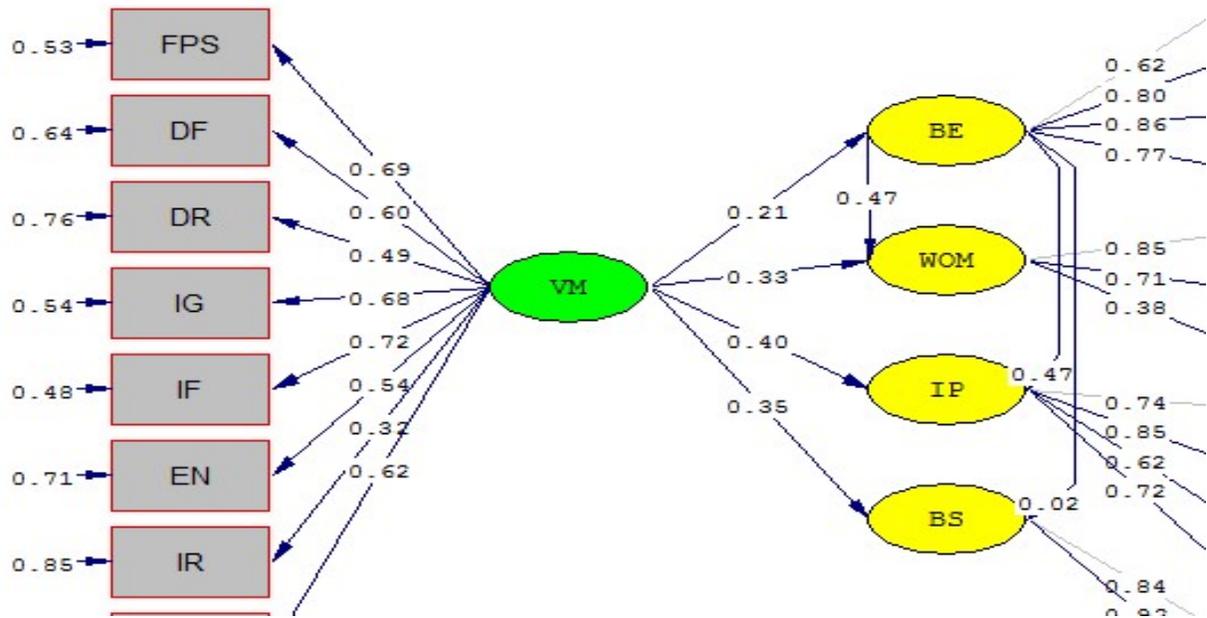


Figure 3. results of verifying the final research model for nondurable products

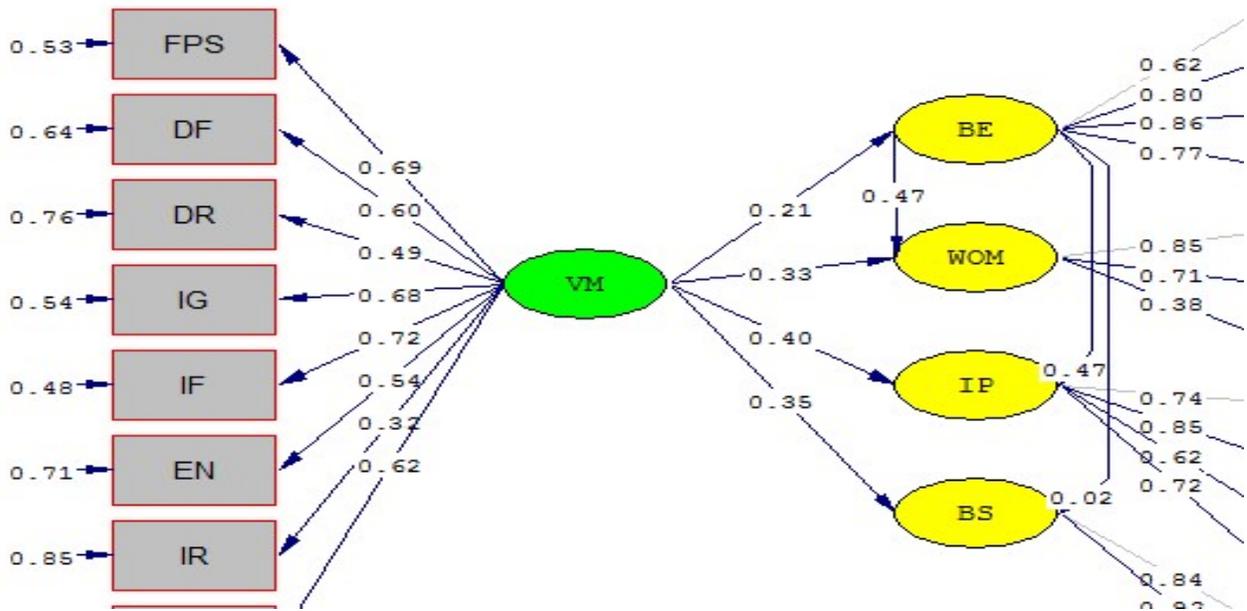


Figure 4. T-value results for durable products

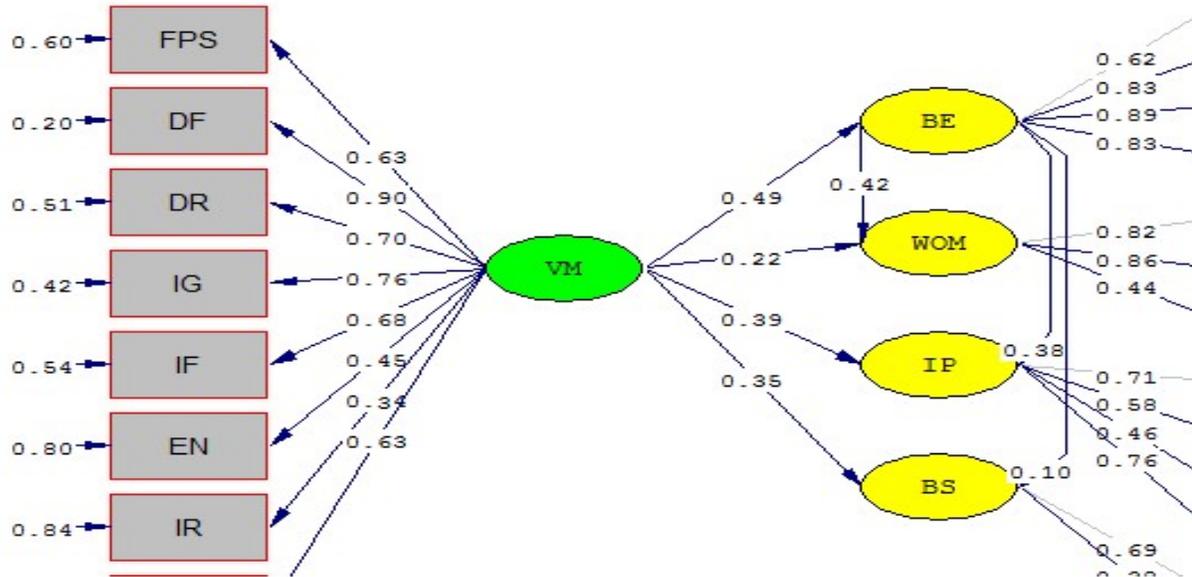


Figure 5. Results of final model verification for durable products

Path results are presented in tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. T value, path coefficient, and standard error for nondurable goods

| independent | Path | dependent | T value | Coefficient value | Standard error |
|-----------------------|------|-------------------------|---------|-------------------|----------------|
| Viral marketing | → | Brand equity | 2.49 | 0.21 | 0.084 |
| Viral marketing | → | Word of mouth marketing | 4.19 | 0.33 | 0.079 |
| Viral marketing | → | Purchase intention | 5.24 | 0.40 | 0.077 |
| Viral marketing | → | Cost of brand change | 5.83 | 0.35 | 0.092 |
| Brand's special value | → | Word of mouth marketing | 5.31 | 0.47 | 0.090 |
| Brand's special value | → | purchase intention | 5.32 | 0.47 | 0.088 |
| Brand's special value | → | Cost of brand change | 0.21 | 0.02 | 0.079 |

Table 7. T value, path coefficient, and standard error for durable goods

| independent | Analysis path | dependent | T value | Coefficient | Standard error |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------|-------------|----------------|
| Viral marketing | → | brand equity | 5.69 | 0.49 | 0.087 |
| Viral marketing | → | Word of mouth marketing | 2.56 | 0.22 | 0.86 |
| Viral marketing | → | Purchase intention | 4.31 | 0.39 | 0.091 |
| Viral marketing | → | Cost of brand change | 2.83 | 0.35 | 0.120 |
| Brand equity | → | Word of mouth marketing | 4.33 | 0.42 | 0.096 |
| Brand equity | → | Purchase intention | 3.96 | 0.38 | 0.096 |
| Brand equity | → | Cost of brand change | 0.85 | 0.10 | 0.079 |

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated the effects of viral marketing on behavioral intentions with regard to the mediating role of brand equity. The study found that brand equity acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between viral marketing and behavioral intentions, so it is in line with the findings of Fadil (2015) whose results focused on the role of viral marketing as a tool in branding. Viral marketing has been positively related to branding and has also influenced people's awareness. Following from research done by Jayasuriya et al (2018) into the role of social media marketing on brand equity, the results show that SMM activity leads to brand development and has

a positive relationship with brand equity. In this regard, to increase brand equity, whether in durable or nondurable goods, they need to invest more in advertising, and brand recognition can be important when making in-store decisions and have a huge impact on brand awareness. The most influential marketers in the lives of consumers are those who are known and trustworthy to their consumers, as if they are considered as family, friends, and co-workers. In addition, it can be noted that shopping for a particular brand creates a more unusual and prominent image of the consumer and reflects that person's uniqueness.

The findings also indicate that viral marketing has a significant and positive impact on WOM, purchase intention, and cost of change. This finding is in line with the findings of 2014 by Miquel-Romero et al. The study emphasizes the link between corporate-consumer and viral marketing via email and its findings suggest that the greater the value perceived by the recipient of the message, the more individual's involvement in message transmission. It is also emphasized in establishing a customer relationship with prospective customers, in this case the idea of viral marketing will emerge. Tghipourian et al. (2013), emphasized the impact of customer satisfaction on WOM, pointing out that features of a product or service that are surprisingly well beyond what is expected are often cited as satisfying and exciting factors of the added value. Mortimer and coworkers in 2019 highlighted a range of product features in a group that makes a brand change, pointing out that prices influence brand change. Considering the materials mentioned to reinforce behavioral intentions that include three variables of WOM, the willingness to buy and the cost of change, whether in durable or nondurable goods should not be the most powerful form of human communication that is viral marketing and positive corporate advertising messages of organizations move from one person to another at no cost. Of course, in some cases this is a neutral tool and the message can be transmitted both negatively and positively, always lovers of a positive business brand create word of mouth charges for marketing.

On the other hand, enemies create a negative charge advertisement by transmitting negative charges. Consumers today are suffering from a massive influx of information, and as a result, they pass by the expensive and mass advertising of radio and television so people decide to buy a variety of products through word-of-mouth marketing. The obtained findings show that brand equity has a positive and significant impact on WOM and willingness to buy and has a negative impact on cost of change. This study is in line with Rambocas et al (2017). The present study is focused on the relationship between brand equity and consumer's behavioral intentions, and its results indicate a positive relationship between brand equity and WOM and the tendency to buy, it also indicates a negative relationship to undesirable intentions of change, and also emphasizes that satisfaction explains the impact of brand equity on customers' behavioral intentions to some extent.

Accordingly, substantial investment in brand construction should be considered to reinforce the behavioral intentions and dimensions of both durable and nondurable goods. Investing in brand equity promotes brand reputation among customers as well as non-customers. Marketers and companies can focus on creating strong and powerful brands at the same time to pursue customer acquisition and customer retention strategies. Understanding the relationship between brand equity and customer intention enables marketers to predict the impact of brand equity on key performance indicators including customer satisfaction and behavioral intention. The findings also indicate that viral marketing has a positive effect on the willingness to buy and WOM due to the mediating role of brand equity and has a negative effect on the cost of change. This study was in line with the research of Godey et al. 2016 in which the social media marketing efforts of luxury brands and the impact on brand equity and consumer behavior was studied. That was the first study to elaborate on how social media marketing influences brand equity and thus explains key customer outcomes.

The results of the present study show that not only does brand equity affect overall consumer responses (which is consistent with previous work in CBBE), but that brand equity also has a partial SMME intermediary role. This is in line with a study done by Liu et al. in 2019 in which the relationship between viral marketing and purchase intention was investigated through customer-based brand equity. This study found that interacting with viral marketing messages to have a positive impact on brand equity or buying tendency is important because receiving messages only has deleterious effects on brand equity and purchase intention. Accordingly, in order to reinforce behavioral intentions with regard to the mediating role of brand equity in durable goods and nondurable goods, brand managers first value online reviews of customers' views and opinions about their brand and the factors that shape these beliefs. To understand the elements of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction,

they need to focus more on assessing customer needs through appropriate feedback mechanisms and providing appropriate service to them in order to receive post-purchase reviews in their favor. Companies can perform web analytics with better eWOM to assess consumer satisfaction from brand and brand status analysis; such actions may help them to incorporate good service and increase customer satisfaction and CBBE from brand products of durable and non-durable goods. Because trust in online surveys is an important factor in enhancing brand equity, companies should make every effort to update relevant information at any time, if necessary. They should also identify and ask loyal consumers to share their SNS consumption experiences. In this research, a set of durable (technology-driven) and in durable goods in the field of food and beverages was considered, which could be categorized in other categories such as automotive, clothing, cosmetics and watches in different brands. Another point is that this study examined behavioral intentions in physical retail while shopping was growing online in most cases. Therefore, it can be suggested to marketing practitioners to work in the field of negative word of mouth marketing.

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