

Effective Complex Factors for Consumer Choice of Iranian Goods: problems and solutions

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Abstract

With neglecting native products and increasing consumption of foreign goods by Iranian consumers, competition between native and foreign products has been increased in Iranian markets. Here, we have investigated the attitude and behavioral intentions of consumers in choosing Iranian goods and the impact of quality and price on the purchase decision of consumers with scientific and practical solutions to this problem. National manufacturing companies need to move beyond their competitiveness to external competitors as quickly as possible, and embark on globalization activities as a key infrastructure strategy that requires competitive advantage to satisfy both native and other consumers. Due to the intense competition in international markets, the only condition for any manufacturer to survive is to adapt to these changes and then to incorporate elements of the marketing mix. With rising the global village, companies that enter the international arena of competitiveness should be provide more options to their customers in providing products or services than other competitors, otherwise they will have no place in foreign markets. This advantage can be lower in price than competitors' similar products, superior quality, more and better after-sales service and any value that distinguishes a company's products and services from those of other competitors.

Keywords: Iranian consumers, Iranian goods, Complex marketing factors, Behavioral abnormalities, consumer's culture.

Introduction

In recent years, the problem of neglecting native products and increasing consumption of foreign goods has become noticeable. With the advent of global free trade, competition between native and foreign products has been increased in world markets. Many global companies have entered the Iranian market and are rapidly trying to gain market share. Furthermore, the availability of wide variety of goods with high quality have been provide for Iranian consumers [1]. With recognizing the importance of this issue, if this neglect of native products continues, it will irreparably damage the structure of the country's economy. In this situation, of course, there is a need for the country to increase its willingness to consume Iranian goods, which will boost native industries, reduce unemployment, and ultimately increase national production, which is one of the key factors of a resistance economy. One of the common opinions related about buying foreign goods is that consumers buy imported products based on the quality; however, in some cases the Iranian consumers national products with low quality prefer to imported products and vice versa. For this reason, this phenomenon could be described by other related factors [4]. Iranian consumers' willingness to buy and consume foreign goods has become one of the issues discussed in scientific forums. There are several reasons for this behavioral disorder. Getting rid of this dilemma first requires changing the point of views of the national producers, then paying attention to the behavior and culture of the Iranian consumer. The national producer should be aware that entering foreign markets will allow companies to grow by increasing sales and profits and reducing their risks by diversifying their sources of income. Working at a global level enables companies to discover new ideas and market global products and services [2]. Obviously, decisions and actions of producers and consumers are linked to the complex factors of markets. Therefore, in this paper, we analyze the reasons why domestic consumers are reluctant to purchase Iranian goods by describing the constituent elements of complex marketing factors (product, price, distribution and promotion). Moreover, we have sought to investigate the attitude and behavioral intentions of consumers in choosing Iranian goods, in addition to the impact of quality and price on the purchase decision of consumers. Finally, scientific and practical solutions to this problem are presented. Obviously, the reasons for the national consumer's unwillingness to buy native products are due to the weakness of the national producer in one or more complex marketing factors related to the product, price, promotion, distribution and attitude of consumers to Iranian goods consumption and their mental conflict to the consumption of these goods.

1- Product-related Factors

Since, goods are the most important part of the markets and companies without product sales have no revenue, there is an essential need to formulate excise products-related strategies including product design, packaging, brand management, support services - including maintenance for getting marketing approaches [3]. Lack of competitiveness of native products in terms of product design and packaging, after-sales services, lack of use of new technologies in production of goods, lack of attention to consumer preference and lack of up-to-date products in the face of similar foreign brands lead to make Consumers reluctant to buy native products. It seems that the absence of national companies in the internationally prestigious markets has led them to lag behind the top technologies in design and production. Introduction of similar foreign brands lead to stablish a comparative and competitive markets by consumers between national and foreign manufactured goods tend to increase preferability of foreign products that are designed and manufactured using the world's leading consumer technologies. The short time tropism of national manufacturers, their concerns associated with the introduction of the goods to global markets due to inefficient marketing management, lack or insufficient language and international marketing skills are the main reasons for the lack of willingness of managers of Iranian production companies to participate in international markets. Therefore, the possibility of competition and evaluation of national products compared with international products has not been provided. Being in the international market requires engaging with reputable international companies. Interaction of Iranian companies with international companies with common area causes information exchanges between them, awareness of the national manufacturer with the latest changes and product-related changes in international markets, awareness of technologies used by foreign manufacturers, which lead to make possible to produce goods with the competition value in national and international markets. Noticably, National companies should have a global point of views about their businesses that globally introduce high quality and cost-effective

products compared with international manufacturers with lower costs, greater experience and better products [3].

The traditional packaging design of goods that introduced by national manufacturers is one of the major weaknesses of Iranian producers. As the national manufacturer point of view any changes in packaging design is an unnecessary cost and the products sales will not be significant with the effort to make changes in the packaging design. External stimuli are obviously influenced by human five senses. These stimuli draw the consumer's attention to the particular products. New packaging with the focusing on consumer's visual sense are one of the most critical issues in creating a comparative advantage for product sales [3].

2- Pricing

suitable pricing decisions even in the best of economic seasons is very important for most consumers, which will find a reasonable price - the price that seems fair and the customer can buy for the product - as the most important consideration in buying and being the most influential factor. Competition in the international market requires that our product has a competitive advantage against other foreign products. So, one of the most important competitive advantages of selling a product in the national and international markets is having a competitive price advantage over other similar products. One of the strongest strategies to introduce a new product into new foreign market is to offer a superior product with lower prices than the goods on the market. The price advantage will attract immediate customer attention and those who buy the product will be affected by its quality [3]. It will distinguish the price advantage in the case of a national product from other manufacturers, providing the consumer with at least the same or higher quality than similar products, otherwise the consumer will buy a product with high quality, though the price of the selected product is higher.

The useless of new technologies in the design and production of national products has often resulted in higher prices products with lower quality than foreign manufacturer's products. Therefore, Iranian consumers prefer to buy similar foreign products at a higher price than the national products. Pricing factor is important for companies leads to profitability and has a significant impact on consumer's decision to buy a good [2]. however, the price of the product should be payable by customers, otherwise all other marketing properties will be ineffective [2]. Some of the problems that lead to inability of competition between Iranian products and similar foreign goods follow as:

a) Technological developments and cost-effective products

The use of novel technologies accounts for the key factors in reducing the production cost of a company's product. The national producer will not be able to compete with similar foreign products in terms of higher prime cost. Introducing the national products into world markets, allows the national producer to enjoy the benefits of large number production and increasing demand for their products. At present, foreign-owned mass-production companies are present in the national market, in contrast, national purveyors targeting only the native markets cannot benefit from mass-scale production savings. Technological developments, in addition to creating attractive new markets, have a significant impact on all aspects of marketing activities, including marketing communications (such as web or email advertising), distribution activities (book distribution, and internet marketing), packaging (using new materials), and marketing research (controlling supermarket purchases by scanners) [4]. Therefore, Failure to enter into international markets means that there isn't awareness of technological developments around the world and thus not able to compete with competitors' similar products that have these advantages.

Another important issue leads to higher cost of national products and disadvantage of price competition compared to similar brands is the high cost of financing in the country. This is while manufacturers of similar products in other countries face lower financing costs. The cost of financing in European countries, Japan and the US is much lower than in Iranian companies, which has reduced the cost of products in other countries compared to national producers and created a competitive advantage for foreign producers to national producers. Here we have suggested to the create a competitive advantage for national producers by Improvement production methods to reduce prime costs, upgrade and improve transportation and communications infrastructures due to the long distance of some target countries, gain sufficient and comprehensive understanding of target market requirements, pay attention and apply appropriate scientific management practices in the organization, using the best and optimal export

financing methods and paying special attention to the promotion of product quality and international brands.

b) Government support

Despite the importance of exports and imports, national policies on the movement of goods between countries have always been inconsistent. Governments encourage exports by providing subsidies and indirect supports. Indirect export support includes tax rebates and extensive government support programs for export education and development. Imports of goods are usually restricted by different policies. Various tariffs, import controls and numerous non-tariff barriers are designed to restrict the goods import. Therefore, the policy of different countries is to encourage exports and limit imports (4). Governments and the general public around the world realize that overburdened regulations in the business and commerce sectors limit the entry of new competitors, and increases inflation significantly (2). Governments protect native industries against imported goods under certain conditions and for specific products. But these protections are not in a way that will keep native products from competing with similar imported products forever. In fact, the competitiveness potential of companies is the only key factor to their survival in the international arena, while governments support under certain conditions and for certain products is achievable through the high level of standards for imported products (5).

c) Disregard for consumer preferences

One of the key factors in the success of a manufacturer is the consideration of consumer preferences. Successful companies have realized that any change in products and services should be defined as the definition of quality from a consumer perspective and in accordance with their preferences. The prerequisite for companies to survive in intense international competition is to keep pace with the rapidly changing consumer interests of their products and services. Pioneering the timely recognition of these changes requires very strong research teams, while keeping up-to-date with the technologies needed to design and produce products that are in line with consumer preferences (5).

d) Factors related to promotion

The promotion strategy defines as how market finders proclaim the benefits and features of the product to the target market [2]. Promotion tools include impersonal advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal sales. Paying attention to cultural, linguistic and behavioral differences are the key principles of promotion in target markets. Promotion strategies must be chosen intelligently and taking into account product life curves, promotion strategies of other competitors, relative advantage of our product and tailored to the target market [3]. The mere cost attitude towards sales promotion activities, regardless of the direct relationship between these activities and the amount of sales, has led to the lack of investment in these activities in our country. The lack of extensive intellectual property laws in creative advertising ideas has allowed native producers to cut advertising from other foreign companies in their advertising, regardless of cultural differences.

One of the key factors that should be taken into consideration in promotion activities is the need to pay attention to cultural differences in native retail markets as well as to recognize cultural differences in international production markets. Producing and delivering the product in bulk and with the same design for all consumers is the obsolete production-oriented approach regardless of consumer needs. In international marketing, product-centric attitudes have been neglected, but this has a very strong position in our country.

The reasons that why consumers are reluctant to buy native products have come from a critical attitude towards native producers and using explicit literature based on the basics of successful marketing. we believe that the most important cause of the crisis is consumers 'unwillingness to buy in-house quality native products, inability to compete with foreign competitors' products, lack of attention to sales promotion activities, lack of comparative advantage over similar products and incomplete after-sales services, disregard for consumer-centric attitudes, non-expert support from the government sector for the hub industries specially automotive and construction industries, non-membership of Iran in World Trade Organization, and so on.

3- Distribution-Related Factors

One of the most important introductions of the product to international markets is that an international company whose business transcends national boundaries often positioned to enter new markets. The distribution system can be a major obstacle to creating a favorable position in new markets [3]. Because consumers expect the product to be purchased as quickly as possible after ordering it. Because Time is the most valuable human fund and consumers are prudently paying a heavy price for this high-grade gold. Failure to live up to their expectations of the quick availability of the purchased product will be the loss of the same consumer at superhigh speed and the consumer would be stolen by the competing manufacturer as soon as possible. One of the most important comparative advantages for survival in international markets is to enable consumers to reach the desired product at the desired consumer time. Creating sales agents across the target market countries is in order to maintain this competitive advantage.

4- Factors related to consumers' attitude towards Iranian goods consumption

This study has attempted to identify the most important factors affecting consumers' perception of Iranian goods consumption including perceived value, perceived risk, consumer confidence, global openness, patriotism, consumer attitude as well as mental involvement and their consumer behavioral intentions.

a) perceived value

Perceived value is the quality that individual obtains against the paid price. If the consumer considers the price as lost money, it becomes more sensitive to value [6]. Zeitzel argues that perceived value is a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on its perception of its receipts and payments [7]. Therefore, perceived value is separate from product consumption and distinct from organizational and individual values and is understood by only customers and the sellers cannot determine it objectively. In other words, only the customer can understand the value of the product or service offered [8]. Perceived value includes various dimensions such as emotional, cognitive, situational, social and functional. Social value is the expression of social desirability and customer-centric value that comes from having that product with friends, colleagues, and other reference group members [9]. Functional value means the perceived quality and performance benefits expected of the goods [10, 11]. Functional value is defined as the primary driver of consumer choice and may be the result of features or documents such as reliability, durability, and price [9, 12]. In research, after examining the relationship between values and innovation, it has been shown that values are not directly related to consumer behavior, but through the formation of beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles [13]. Individual values or needs that drive a constant interest in products are associated with consumer and product mental involvement [14].

Recently, Ardakani et al. (2019) assessed the effect of some factors on consumer's willingness to buy and consume Iranian goods. In the hypotheses of the impact of consumer perceived value on consumer attitude toward Iranian goods consumption and his/her mental involvement with consumption of these goods, it can be recommended to marketing managers to try to create the values that consumers expect and formulate new strategies. Marketing should be place greater emphasis on the values created by consumers. This aim can be achieved through decisions such as product design, packaging, brand name management, support services. Inability to compete nationally with foreign brands in terms of product design and packaging, after-sales service, failure to use new technologies in product production, disregard for consumer preference and lack of up-to-date products, causing consumers to buy imported products. It seems that the absence of native companies in the internationally accredited markets has led to lag behind the top technologies in design and production [15]. The results of these two hypotheses are in agreement with Goldsmith (1989) and Kim (2005) results described previously [12, 14].

b) perceived risk

Kumar and Grisaffe (2004) and Pires et al. (2004) stated that risk is one of the key elements in purchasing behavior [16, 17]. Boier first introduced the concept of risk perception into consumer behavior research. He said that consumer behavior was associated with a significant risk, so that any consumer behavior might have unpleasant consequences [18]. Perceived risk is a person's mental sense of the consequences that can lead to undesirable outcomes [19]. Two types of perceived risks are very important: price risk and product risk. Product risk relates to consumer concerns and is defined as how expectations are met

by the product [20]. The perceived risk of the product is greater when the information provided about the product is limited and the consumer has little confidence in evaluating the brand name [21].

The perceived price risk is examined with regard to two elements; the first is the percentage of price deviation from the expected values and the audience perceives it as a price fluctuation. The second element is related to the factors that determine whether the perceived price fluctuation is a kind of risk [22, 23]. According to studies, perceived risk has a significant effect on consumer attitude. Also, perceived risks are important elements in the product's subjective engagement because consumers are more likely to engage in products that may have serious negative consequences [24].

According to Ardakani et al. (2019), the effect of perception risk has been investigated. The impact of perceived risk on the consumer's attitude toward consuming Iranian goods and his / her mental involvement with consumption of these goods is in a negative direction; therefore, marketing managers must first identify these risks and then try to reduce and eliminate them [15]. One of the major risks is price risk. The reason for the importance of good pricing decisions is that even in the best of economic times, most consumers consider the reasonable price as the price that seems fair and the customer can buy the product, the most important factor for buying and the most influential factor in determining the place of purchase. One of the strongest strategies to introduce into the new market is to offer a higher quality product with the least price. The price advantage will quickly attract the attention of the customer and those who buy the product will be affected by its quality. This advantage will only distinguish the product from other similar products when it provides the same or better quality to the consumer. Otherwise, the consumer will buy a better-quality product, even though the price chosen is higher. Useless of modern technologies in the design and production of national products often results in higher cost products and lower quality than those of foreign competitors. The use of new technologies is also an important factor in lowering the cost of the company's products, which unfortunately neglects the fact that the final cost of Iranian goods is much higher than competing imported products. The results of these two hypotheses are in line with the findings of Ang et al. (2001) and Peter, and Olson (2016) [22, 24].

c) Consumer confidence

Consumer beliefs associated with the future occurrence indicates the consumer confidence, which describe the optimism or skepticism of people about economy health of the future and how to deal with it. When people are skeptical about the outlook and the state of their economy, they tend to reduce their spending and have less debt. On the other hand, when optimistic about the future, they tend to reduce their savings, have more debt, and buy their precautionary items [25]. According to the concept of Lymperopoulos et al. (2010), attitude is the main factor related to the intention of purchasing retail brands, which is directly related to consumer perception and indirectly to consumer confidence [26].

According to the hypothesis of Ardakani et al. (2019), the effect of consumer confidence on consumer attitude toward consumption of Iranian goods was rejected, but its effect on consumer mental involvement with consumption of these goods was confirmed. Consumer beliefs about what is going to happen in the future is one of the determinants of consumer confidence that shows the level of optimism and skepticism about the future. When the consumer is optimistic about their future, they feel a closer connection between themselves and their consumption of Iranian goods and are more subjectively involved with these products and goods. With regard to the confirming this hypothesis, we can understand the importance and indirect effect of economic and social factors on the mental involvement and purchasing behaviors of Iranian consumers. In this regard, the role of governments and economic institutions in contributing to the livelihoods and economic status of the people of society is highlighted and emphasized on these issues. Institutionalizing customer-centric and quality-centric culture in native producers; real commitment of domestic producers to meet product quality requirements; To become a WTO member, to facilitate appropriate financing and export optimization for domestic producers and ... [26]. The main factor related to the intention of purchasing retail brands is the attitude is indirectly related to consumer confidence, which is not in line with the findings of Ardakani et al. (2019).

d) Global openness

According to Roberson, and Lechner (1985), globalization refers to processes that transform the world into a single place with systematic properties [27]. Given that global consumers are individuals who do not influence cultural and national differences in their purchasing behavior, it is reasonable to assume

that one's level of importance to ethnic tendencies can often be considered an open global consumer. Current literature addresses the effects of globalization directly and indirectly on consumer attitudes and behaviors across cultures; however, consumers who differ in cultures, attitudes, perceptions, and preferences. They have different values, even after being exposed to the wave of globalization [28]. According to Ardakani and colleagues (2019), the relationship between variables was in the opposite direction. Consumers who are at a high level of global openness, for example those who are interested in interacting with other countries' cultures and influencing their way of thinking and living, do not have a positive attitude toward consuming Iranian goods and have less subjective involvement with these goods [15]. For this reason, it can be traced to the competitiveness of Iranian goods with similar items produced in other countries. People with high global openness have higher expectations of Iranian products, and because these expectations are not met well, a positive attitude has not been formed. Consumers should buy only native products if we can offer them a unique competitive advantage over their competitors. This advantage can be the least price, superior quality, more and better after-sales services and providing any value that can make a difference [15], which is consistent with the results of Suh, T & Kwon (2002) [28].

e) Patriotism

Patriotism is a valuable tradition that demonstrates love and devotion to the country and causes individual to have positive emotions and emotional attachments to their nation [29]. The consumer may find native goods to be more desirable for a variety of reasons, including acquaintance with or believing that it contributes to the national economy and employment in the country [30, 31]. According to Shimp, and Sharma, (1987), patriotism is one of the emotional factors that fosters the positive attitude and preference of native products in contrast with foreign products [32].

Confirming the two hypotheses that the effect of patriotism on consumer attitude toward Iranian goods consumption and his mental involvement with consumption of these goods can help marketing managers in formulating appropriate promotional and propaganda strategies by emphasizing this feeling and stimulating it. Iranians have a strong sense of patriotism in their own country, and it is clear that part of their positive attitude toward consuming Iranian goods and mentally engaging with these goods originates from this sense. The high path coefficient of patriotism on subjective involvement confirms this point. Promotional strategies should be cleverly chosen, taking into account product life curves, other competitors' promotional strategies, the relative advantage of our product and tailored to the target market. The mere emphasis on patriotism will not be helpful without considering other factors affecting consumer attitudes. Producing and delivering the product massively and equally designed for all consumers is the same obsolete production-centered approach regardless of consumer needs [15, 28].

f) consumer attitude

Attitude is a combination of beliefs and emotions leads to make an advance point of view in individual against others, objects, and groups in a positive or negative way. Attitudes summarize the evaluation of objects and thus predict or guide future actions or behaviors [33]. In international marketing research, there are two general views on consumers' attitudes toward native and foreign products: The first is a logical information processing paradigm that states consumers need to evaluate and choose their product through a rational process and under the same cognitive process such as quality and price. Another view is the emotional pattern of information processing that expresses consumer choice influenced by emotional factors such as normative, patriotism, and so on [28]. According to compatibility theory, one's attitude toward an object is expected to be strongly related to the behavior of that object [24].

The effect of consumer attitude on consumption of Iranian goods and their mental involvement with consumption of these goods on purchase of Iranian goods has been confirmed. Obviously, when the consumer has a positive attitude towards Iranian goods and their mental involvement with these goods is at a level that is stimulated to pay attention to the information of these goods, these motivational modes of behavior are stimulated and purchase intentions are formed [15]. The result of the rational choice process is the individual's intention to engage in specific behavior, while, behavioral intentions are the best predictors of actual behavior.

g) Consumer involvement

Researchers have defined the concept of conflict as a useful scale for explaining consumer behavior and segmentation of consumer markets [34]. Mental product involvement is defined as the person's perception of how the product relates to their needs, values, and interests [35]. Mental involvement is a motivational state of interest that is triggered by external factors such as position, product and communication, and internal factors such as individual pronouns and core values [14]. Moven and Minor (2001) revealed that the level of consumer mental involvement is the second most important factor in information processing. If consumer involvement is high, consumers are more likely to pay attention to, understand, and disclose information about purchasing goods [36].

h) Behavioral intentions

From a consumer behavior perspective, behavioral intentions represent the customer's willingness to perform specific behaviors, such as buying a product. Behavioral intentions can be both desirable and undesirable. Favorable behavioral intentions often lead to a relationship with the service provider, increasing purchase volume, praising the service provider, and a tendency to overpay. On the contrary, unfavorable behavioral intentions increase the likelihood of brand change, decreasing purchase volume, word-of-mouth negative advertising, and Reluctance to surplus payments [37].

The Kumar et al. (2009) in a study examined the intentions of Indian consumers to buy some type of American and Indian brand and concluded that the need to be unique was directly related to the consumption of American goods (38). Pelton et al. (2008) examined the factors affecting the purchase of Mexican college students by an American apparel brand. The results showed that emotional value had a positive effect on intention to buy American goods and perceptual quality had a negative effect on intention to purchase [39]. Hadidi et al. (2016) examines the tendency of Iranian consumers to consume native goods from the standpoint of resistive economics in the five indices of ethical commitment, fanaticism, support for employment, support for production and national economy and opposition to foreign products in Zavareh show that Zavareh nationalism is more than average nationalism in the country [40]. Bayat and Forghani (2015) in a study of brand personality and consumer budget with preferences and decision to purchase goods, cited four types of goods with different degrees of consumption from two types of native and foreign brands and showed that in north Tehran and for All the cited goods, brand personality has been the preferred foreign brands over the Iranian type. This result was observed only for consumer and semi-durable goods in the south of Tehran, and was more effective for other goods [41]. Talebi and Akbari assessed the tendency to use foreign goods and its influencing factors with emphasis on media, the effect of several social factors including variables of media consumption, material value, dignity competition, dissatisfaction with religious life and adherence, and an economic factor including proportional variable. The lack of quality Iranian goods was investigated on the tendency to use foreign goods. The results showed that variables such as media consumption, material value, prestigious competition, and disproportionate price of Iranian goods had an additive effect on foreign goods tendency and religious adherence and life dissatisfaction had negative and significant effect on foreign tendency [42].

Conclusions

National manufacturing companies need to move beyond their competitiveness to external competitors as quickly as possible, and embark on globalization activities as a key infrastructure strategy that requires competitive advantage to satisfy both native and other consumers. International markets are at the forefront of their marketing strategy. Consumer awareness of competitors' products has increased dramatically due to the use of the Internet and new information and communication technologies, make it difficult for the national manufacturer to sell their products. Consumers should buy Iranian product if we can offer them a unique competitive advantage over other competitors. Due to the intense competition in international markets, the only condition for any manufacturer to survive is to adapt to these changes and then to incorporate elements of the marketing mix. In today's modern world, new information and communication technologies have changed all global markets into a single village called the Global Village, keeping the consumer's loyalty to each manufacturer's products more valuable than other domestic and foreign competitors. Basically, companies that enter the international arena of competitiveness should be provide more options to their customers in providing products or services than

other competitors, otherwise they will have no place in foreign markets. This advantage can be lower in price than competitors' similar products, superior quality, more and better after-sales service and any value that distinguishes a company's products and services from those of other competitors.

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