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CONTENT MARKETING AS A STRENGTHENER OF CUSTOMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION

EL MARKETING DE CONTENIDO Y LA INTENCIÓN DE COMPRA DE LOS CLIENTES





Shiva Ghavami Lahiji Dr Vahidreza Mirabi Dr serajallin mohebbi

RESUMEN
Esta investigación se realizó con el objetivo de ofrecer un modelo de proceso de marketing de contenidos con el objetivo de fortalecer la intención de compra de los clientes de la industria minorista, centrándose en las redes sociales. Esta investigación se aplica en términos de propósito y encuesta exploratoria en términos de enfoque. Los resultados mostraron que el concepto de "intención de compra del cliente" se consideraba como la categoría principal y axial.
Palabras clave: Marketing de contenidos, Redes sociales, Clientes.

ABSTRACT
This research has been conducted aiming to offering a process model of content marketing with the aim of strengthening the purchase intention of the customers of the retail industry by focusing on social media. This research is applied in terms of purpose and survey-exploratory in terms of approach. Results showed that the concept of "customer purchase intention" was considered as the main and axial category.
Keywords: Content marketing, Social media, Customers.

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1 Student of PhD, Department of management, Tehran science and research branch, Islamic azad universitiy, Qeshm International paradise, Qeshm, IRAN, Email: Ghavamishiva@yahoo.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5851-0092.
2 Faculty member of Business Administration Azad University Tehran Central Branch, Tehran, IRAN, Email: vrmirabi@yahoo.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2861-7494.
3 Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Islamic Azad University Qeshm, Qeshm, IRAN, Email: branch,mohebi.abcd@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4310-0963.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing managers are interested in being aware of the purchase intention of customers to increase sales of their current or new products or services (Karami, 2016). Therefore, information concerning purchase intention can help managers in marketing decision-makings that are related to the demand for a product (current and new products), market division, and the advancement and promotion of strategies (Kheiri & Fathali, 2015).

The current world is the world of advertisement that is constantly exposed to the eyes of audience through mass media such as television, radio, newspaper and other media and lead him towards the desired products and services. For this reason, many organizations in today's competitive world have to use media advertising tools to introduce their products and services, so that they do not fall behind other competitors.

An advertisement, whether through radio, television or press, should be able to place itself among other advertisements and communicate with the audience so that it can gain access to the audience' thought in the crowd and attract his attention. Various factors such as audience characteristics, music, color, type of advertising slogan, and the repetition ratio of a message can impact on the effectiveness of an advertising message, that obviously, the impact ratio of each one based on the type of media and the type of audience will be different (Khorramrad, 2016).

Among the modern marketing tools, social media-based marketing can be named. The purpose of social media-based marketing is the process of attracting public's attention to a particular person, topic, or a brand. Social media-based marketing measures usually focus on two axes: (1) the production of content that can attract the attention of social media audience, (2) the production of content that, in addition to attracting viewpoint, stimulates the audience to share it.

One of the important secrets of this style of marketing is the trust that people attending in the social networks have on each other, and this point makes the purpose and message quickly spread over the length and width of social networks. Social networks-based marketing relies on the word-of-mouth and viral advertising. In the current world, social media has been changed to a very influential, and of course low-cost tool for marketing, that the leading companies in the world have never given up the important role of this media and this style of advertising, and have paid special attention to it (Azami, 2016).

The impact of advertising on the growth and survival of organizations in the competitive environment of the current world is undeniable. By increasing

membership in the electronic social networks, advertising in these networks has been changed to the most important and the most effective marketing activity. Virtual social networks are considered among the most important communication and marketing tools at the community and the world level, which have a significant ascending trend in attracting audience. This topic provides a huge source of potential customers from the electronic social networks that makes the identification of factors affecting advertisements acceptance in these networks important (Shafiei, Zarei & Asghar, 2017).

In the current competitive world, organizations are looking for better and simpler strategies to introduce themselves and their products, which in addition to efficiency, and informing and creating communication with customers, can reduce costs. Social networks are one of these ways. The value and the usage of social networks media for organizations, like all other media, depend on the approach of organizations against them and the ratio of proper utilization from them, rather than depending on the nature of that media itself (Rezvani, 2017).

Effectiveness of advertising presented in the social networks can directly affect the attitude of customers towards the brand and the attitude of customers towards the advertisement, and following this effectiveness the purchase intention of customers will also be affected (Toler, 2017).

In designing advertisement (in general) and social networks-based advertisements (in particular), the content marketing topic is very important and essential. Content marketing has been a kind of marketing that has a process for creating and distributing valuable contents to attract customer and obtain the audience and more interaction with the customer. In content marketing, the contents that are produced should be fully related to the products and services so that the users by reading them can understand the cases such as advantages, services, disadvantages and other explanations necessary to sell products and to provide services, and hence decide for their use or purchase (Vosugh & Andalib, 2016).

Content marketing is in fact the process of producing, publishing, informing and sharing content that is created with the aim of attracting customer and increasing his willingness to purchase and use the product. This process will ultimately create revenue increase for the content producer. Your content should be valuable for the audience. When advertisements provide less value, they are easily ignored and deleted. But if the provided content is valuable, it will make the audience read, watch or listen to the content (Dostishakib, Ansari, 2016; Behdadmanesh, 2017).

Presenting digital content in various industries has been expanded to promote business through cyberspace and the Internet. But the level of provided service or content has not reached an acceptable level for the users in customer relationship

management yet. In the real world, customer relationship management strategy is used to attract actual customers and to continue relationship with old customers, but it has never been talked about the combination of content marketing and customer relationship management strategy that is the most urgent need of today's online business. While the use of Internet media to influence consumers' purchase intentions has attracted much attention, the content of these ads has not yet reached the level required. Accordingly, this study was conducted to offering a process model of content marketing with the aim of strengthening the purchase intention of the customers of the retail industry by focusing on social media.

RESEARCH LITERATURE

Advertising is the most powerful informing tool in identifying a company, product, service or thought and vision. The expansion of advertising field is remarkable. If advertisements are constructive and impressive, they can create an image in the audience, and even make him to some extent interested in the subject matter, or at least make him accept and recognize the product and its commercial name. The technologies of operating system related to social interactions have attracted the attention of marketers who want to analyze the media as an advertising tool. In fact, the revenue models of social networks are mainly based on advertising (Shafiei, *et all* 2017).

Meanwhile, the retail industry of the country suffers from the lack of a comprehensive model concerning content marketing with the approach of social networks advertising affecting the purchase intention of customers, and the activists in this industry do not have a comprehensive and guiding model in social media to align their activities with it. Theoretically, conducting this research can, to a large, extent cover the mentioned study gap about the absence of a comprehensive content marketing model with the approach of social networks advertising affecting the purchase intention of customers in the retail industry.

Social networks are group-based structures that connect individuals or organizations through different kinds of relationships (financial relationship, business relationship, emotional relationship, entertainment, etc.). Nowadays, a huge volume of information is available in various social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, etc.) and is shared among members (Karami, 2016)

Social networks-based marketing means marketing through social networks. Any activity performed in the social networks that leads to customer attraction is called marketing through social networks (Azami, 2016).

Content Marketing is the process of producing, publishing, informing and sharing content that is created aiming to attract customer and increase his willingness to buy and use the product. This process for the content generator will ultimately increase revenue. Your content for the audience should have value. When advertisements provide less value, they are easily ignored and deleted. But if the provided content is valuable, it will make the audience to read, watch or listen to the content (Dostishakib & Ansari, 2016).

Vosugh, Farshid, Andalib, Azam, (2016) published an article entitled as "Investigating the Effect of Content Marketing on Customer Relationship Management Strategy to Improve Customers' Satisfaction Level in Electronic Business in Social Network and Websites". It has been mentioned in the abstract of this article that: "The presentation of digital content in various industries has been expanded to promote business through cyberspace and the Internet".

But the level of provided service or content has not reached an acceptable level for the users in customer relationship management yet. In the real world, customer relationship management strategy is used to attract actual customers and continue relationship with old customers, but it has never been talked about the combination of content marketing and customer relationship management strategy that is the most urgent need of today's online business (Ferdowsi & Azarpeyma, 2016).

With the growth of social networks, e-commerce activities have entered a new stage, the relationship between visitors and service providers as well as buyers and sellers has been increased, and the relationship between organizations and companies has improved too, and thereby, modern marketing campaigns such as social networks marketing have been created (Fallah & Najafi, 2016).

Meghdadi (2015) published a research in the form of a master thesis entitled as "Investigating the Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Effectiveness of Advertising and Attracting Health Tourists". It has been mentioned in the abstract of this thesis that:

> Determining the marketing strategy and effective advertising with regard to the emergence, influence and effects of internet and then the social media around the world and Iran, as well as the effects and changes that have been created in the current life of people and marketing knowledge. It is an inseparable and integral part of attracting health tourists.

The important and significant point in this regard is that any change in the mentioned dimensions can cause change in other dimensions of the research variables. In general, the answer to all three main questions of the research is

positive; meaning that social media marketing completely has impact both on the effectiveness of advertising and on attracting health tourists. According to the results of this research, it is worthwhile that the organizations responsible for the management and development of health tourism in Gilan province and the country put the supports, strategies, policies, financial, human, hardware and software programs and resources at the agenda of the health tourism informing, advertising, and marketing programs. They are necessary to create evolution and moving from mass media based traditional marketing (one way (one to one) communication system) to reach social media based modern marketing which their obvious feature is bilateral interactive conversations and receiving feedback (a bilateral (several to several) communication system).

Emadi (2018) published a research in the form of a master thesis entitled as "Investigating the Function of On-Line Social Networks on the Purchase Intention with the Mediation of Brand Awareness and the Desire to Use On-Line Social Networks (Mobile Phone and Laptop Products)". It has been mentioned in the abstract of this thesis that: "In this research, the investigation of the function of online social networks on the purchase intention with the mediation of brand awareness and the desire to use social networks has been addressed". In today's world, social networks play a highlighted role and they cannot be ignored. The sites affect the various dimensions of individual and social life of people across the countries and even internationally, and for this reason, they are expanding; therefore, it is predicted that the role of these networks become more and more important in the future.

So far, numerous studies have been conducted to find out why people use these networks. The research model presented in this research has been developed on the basis of uses and pleasures model. The number of the members of population of this research was unlimited, that by using a sample size estimation formula, 386 people were studied. Snowball sampling method was used and in order to analyze the data collected in the present research, two descriptive and inferential statistics methods were employed. After collecting data, it was analyzed and investigated by a questionnaire. The results showed the positive impact of social networks on purchase intention, social networks features on the desire to use social networks, the desire to use social networks on brand awareness and the absence of a positive impact of the desire to use social networks on purchase intention and brand awareness on purchase intention.

Rezvani (2017) published a research in the form of a master thesis entitled as "Investigating the Impact of Internet Advertising on Iranian Consumer Behavior in Social Networks (Case Study of the Users Residing in Shiraz)". It has been mentioned in the abstract of this thesis that: "In this research, by explaining the concept of social networks and examples of them and some types of possible

advertising and marketing in these networks, we investigate the impacts of these concepts on each other".

Marketing through social networks begins with communication and interaction, and this interaction must be established continuously between the company and its potential and actual customers. This is where satisfied customers, in addition to purchase and loyalty, themselves act as an active marketer. In these networks, one should be careful about his behavior.

METHODOLOGY

In the following, practical research background has been presented in two domestic and foreign sections:

Shafiei, *et all* (2017) published an article entitled as "The Effectiveness of Social Electronic Networks Advertising". It has been mentioned in the abstract of this article that: "The impact of advertising on the growth and survival of organizations in the competitive environment of the current world is undeniable". By increasing membership in social electronic networks, advertising in these networks has been changed to the most important and effective marketing activities.

Virtual social networks are regarded among the most important communicating and marketing tools at the community and the world levels, which have a significant ascending trend in attracting the audience. This point presents a huge source of potential customers from social electronic networks that make the identification of the factors affecting advertisements acceptance in these networks important .

The present research is applied research type that is located in the category of non-experimental research. Therefore, it is applied in terms of purpose, and descriptive survey of correlation type in terms of data collection method that has been performed on a sample of 188 users .

In this research, cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used for investigating reliability, and content analysis, structure analysis and predictive validity have been used to investigate the validity. The indicators of advertising effectiveness were introduced in nine dimensions, then a conceptual framework was presented and indicators were confirmed through factor analysis technique. Analytical software included SPSS and SmartPlS .

According to the research findings, entertainment in advertisements, feelings of resentment and distraction, and informing of advertising are influential on users' attitude towards advertisement, and the attitude toward advertisement also affects the acceptance of advertising as a basic factor in the effectiveness of advertising.

The present research is applied in terms of purpose and in terms of approach it is exploratory-survey.

In this research, a group of experts in the field of marketing management were selected and in-depth interview was carried out. This selection and conducting the interview continued to reach the theoretical saturation, and then stopped.

In this research, snowball sampling method was used. The first expert was selected on the basis of careful investigations and after completing the interview with the first person, he was asked to introduce other expert(s) who can have opinion in the field of content marketing of social networks and contributed to the richness of the research model. This process continued until reaching the researcher's theoretical saturation. Eventually, nine experts were interviewed.

In this research, since Grounded Theory was used, the main tool for collecting data were in-depth and unstructured interviews with the experts in the field of marketing. In these interviews, the researcher by entering the discussion softly and attracting the initial trust of interviewees, attempted to propose questions completely and indirectly about the backgrounds and areas of the content marketing of social networks in the retail industry, the environmental factors affecting it. The consequences of this phenomenon, and so on, and thereby achieving the primary concepts for designing the model.

RESULTS

This stage of analysis was dedicated to the identification and extraction of the primary concepts from the content of interviews. Accordingly, after conducting each interview, the researcher by investigating several times extracted and encoded the concepts existing in the interview text.

Totally 9 interviews were carried out; 109 primary concepts were extracted, that after investigating and putting them together and eliminating repetitive concepts, 42 final concepts were identified, which can be observed in (Tables 1, 2 and 3).

(It should be stated that the codes beside the concepts include a Latin word and a number, the Latin word (in alphabetical order), indicates the interviewed person, and the number next to this word indicates the number of extracted concept from that particular interview).

Table 1: The finalized concepts after analyzing interviews and deleting repeated cases in the open encoding stage

Code	Concept
$A_{1,}$ $B_{4,}$ E_6	In designing the content of advertising messages, the point should be considered that whether it can be used as a lever to push a customer to buy the product or not.
A_2, $B_{9,}$ G_5	Customer purchase behavior should be strengthened positively to become a habit.
A_3, $B_{1,}$ $F_{8,}$ I_7	In the content of advertising messages, the associative should be considered so that by using them the brand can be associated in the mind of audience.
A_4, F_2	The ultimate goal of designing the content of an advertising message should be to establish loyalty in the customer.
$A_{5,}$ E_4	Sometimes the content of advertisement is so smart that it creates need in the customer.
G_{10}	If the content of message is long it will be boring for the audience.
A_6, $C_{10,}$ I_4	The process of making customers loyal in this highly competitive market of retail industry can begin from the content of advertising message.
B_2, D_8	Sometimes the economic conditions change the needs of customer.
$C_{1,}$ $F_{9,}$ $G_{4,}$ H_4	In content marketing, firstly, it should be understood the point that how the customer's desire and internal intention to purchase a particular product is formed.
A_7, D_7, G_3	It should be noted that the content of the advertising message is to be designed for which community with which culture.
$A_{8,}$ C_8	In a community where purchase decision is often influenced by advertising, the role of the content of advertising messages becomes much higher.
B_3	Green marketing should be taken seriously in content marketing.
$A_{9,}$ $C_{11,}$ E_{10}	In designing the content of advertising message, the principles of using colors must be observed.

Source: Authors 2019

Table 2: The finalized concepts after analyzing interviews and deleting repeated cases in the open encoding stage

Code	Concept
A_{10}, G_2, H_9	If content marketing acts well, it brings customer loyalty and long-term profitability with itself.
B_5, F_4, I_6	The proper content of the advertising message should have the power to create and stimulate the customer's need.
A_{11}, B_6, F_6	The shorter the advertising message is; it is more likely to be observed completely.
A_{13}, C_6, E_3	Now in the retail industry, social networks are considered as a powerful advertising tool.
D_{11}, E_2	By using the viral marketing techniques, many products of the retail industry can be advertised.
B_7, E_{13}	The music of advertising messages is like a double-edged sword, which can have both positive and negative effect.
D_1, F_3, H_7	Advertising messages should also include discount programs or sales festivals and so on in their content.
C_3, F_{10}, G_8, H_1	Sometimes even the content of the message is more effective if it is without sound and music.
A_{14}, D_4	Always the simplicity of advertising message has more self-expression with itself.
B_{11}, D_6	In the effectiveness of advertising topic, the purchasing power of community should also be considered.
F_1	The content of an advertising message should be so powerful that encourages a person to buy a particular product.
E_1, G_9	Promotions are always regarded as an important stimulus that a role should be considered for them in designing advertisement.
A_{12}, C_9, H_3	The incompatibility between the content of advertising message and the dominant culture of the community is regarded as a risk and a downfall.
B_8, C_2, G_7	Social networks such as Instagram, Telegram, etc. can transfer a message at the lowest cost and in the shortest time to the actual and potential customers.

Source: Authors 2019

Table 3: The finalized concepts after analyzing interviews and deleting repeated cases in the open encoding stage

Code	Concept
B_{10}, F_{11}	Advertising messages should avoid bounce and directly highlight the advantages of product compared to the competitors.
F_{12}, H_8	Sounding on advertising messages should be very intelligently.
C_5, $D_{9,}$ I_5	Unfortunately, one of the weak points of Iranian brands is the lack of attention to the creation and enhancement of associative ones.
C_4, H_6	In this era and time, the audience does not spend much time observing the advertising message.
A_{15}, C_{14}, E_9	The hidden needs of customer should be one of the objectives of content marketing.
E_8, $G_{11,}$ H_2	The content of advertising messages while being simple should be meaningful.
D_2	Profitability occurs when the customer's intention becomes a behavior.
A_{16}, $C_{15,}$ $G_{1,}$ I_2	Correct use of colors can increase the effectiveness of an advertising message.
B_{12}, $D_{5,}$ $F_{7,}$ H_5	Advertising message content should be around the competitive advantage(s) of product or brand.
B_{13}, E_7	The desire and intention of customer is determinant and the turning point of his behavior.
C_7, $D_{10,}$ G_{12}	To design the content of advertising messages, the target community and its purchase habits should be accurately recognized.
C_{12}, $E_{11,}$ F_{13}	Any color is not suitable for any product or brand or message.
C_{13}, $E_{12,}$ I_3	Today, the community expects the brands to pay attention to social responsibilities.
I_1	The type of purchase encouragement in advertising messages should be consistent with the purchase habits of the community.
D_3, $E_{5,}$ $F_{5,}$ G_6	Perhaps today, the use of viral marketing in the retail industry is a requirement than a competitive advantage.

Source: Authors 2019

At this stage, with a deep attention to the identified concepts and recognizing their similarities and differentiate, it was tried to create a more general categorizations called "Categories", and the coherent and aligned concepts are inserted in these more general categories.

DISCUSSION

In this section, each of the dimensions of the paradigmatic model has been discussed and the categories related to each one have been introduced:

Main (Axis) Category: The core of the conceptual model; the concepts and categories are created on its axis. In this research, and with regard to the identified objectives and categories, the concept of "customer purchase intention" was considered as the main and axial category. That is, the core of conceptual model is to focus on the formation of purchase intention in the customers.

Causal Conditions: A set of conditions that cause the creation of the phenomenon, or affect it. The categories related to this dimension are determined as follows:

• Advertising Message Being Simple: This category refers to the simplicity of the content and the form of advertising message.

• Simplicity of Advertising Message: This category refers to the briefness and usefulness of the advertising message.

• The Emphasis of Advertising Message on Competitive Advantages: This category refers to the ratio of the focus and emphasis of advertising message on the competitive advantages of the product and brand (instead of referring to useless cases).

• Observing the Psychological Principles of Color in the Advertising Message: This category refers to observing the psychological principles and standards of color in the content and form of advertising messages.

• The Use of Associative in Designing Advertising Message: This category refers to the ratio of applying creative use of associative of brand in the content of the advertising message.

• Encouraging Power of Advertising Message: This category refers to the ratio of the ability of message content to encourage customer to buy.

• Observing the Psychological Principles of Sound and Music in Designing Advertising Message: This category refers to observing the psychological

principles and standards of the sound and music in the content of advertising message.

• The Power of Advertising Message in Creating Need in the Customer: This category refers to the ability ratio of the content of message to form and create hidden needs in the customers.

Contexts: Represents the specific conditions in which the phenomenon (main category) is located.

CONCLUSION

In this research, and with regard to the identified objectives and categories, the categories of "adaptation of the advertising message to the purchasing habits of the community" and "adaptation of the advertising message to the culture of the community" were considered as the context categories. The adaptation of the advertising message to the purchasing habits of the community refers to the appropriateness ratio of existing suggestions in the content of the advertising message to the purchasing habits of the community. The adaptation of the advertising message to the culture of community also refers to the appropriateness ratio of the content of advertising message to the culture and tradition of the community.

Environmental Conditions: They are the wide structural context and external factors that can affect the main categories and even the strategies. In this research, and considering the identified objectives and categories, the category of "economic conditions governing community" was considered as environmental category. In this sense that the economic conditions governing customers and production and distribution companies can be effective in the process of influencing the advertising message on the purchase intention of customers.

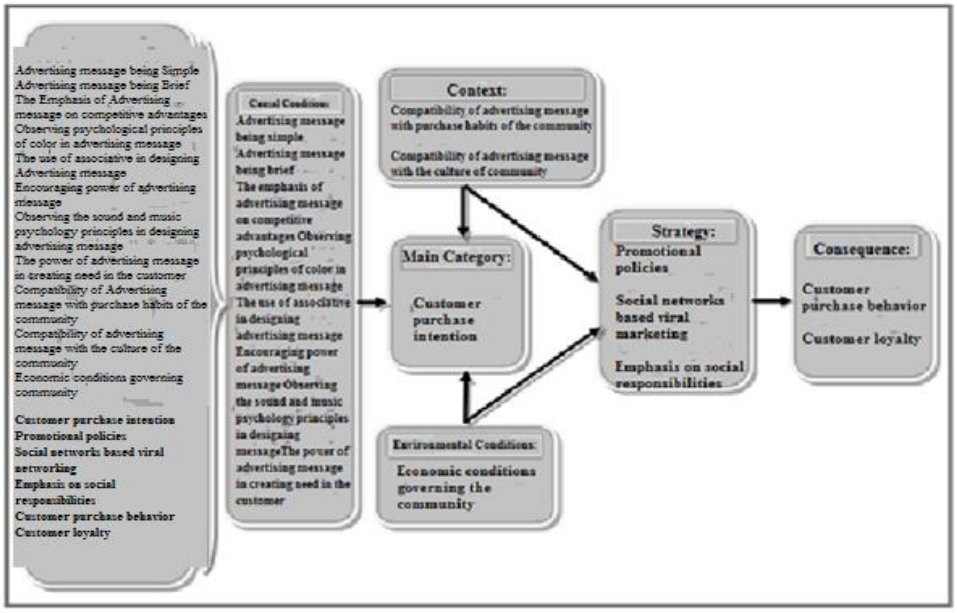
Strategies: In a context and with specific mediating conditions a specific set of strategies or measures becomes possible. In fact strategies are measures that can change the main category to consequences. In this research, and with regard to the identified objectives and categories, the categories of "promotional policies", "social network based viral marketing" and "the emphasis on social responsibilities" were considered as strategic categories. Promotional policies refer to the policies adopted in the field of discounts, special sales, etc., which are published through an advertising message. Moreover, social networks based viral marketing refers the modern, and of course very commonly solution of using social media power such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., in providing advertising messages; and finally, the emphasis on social responsibilities, the use of brand from the

advertising message to demonstrate its commitment to observe social responsibilities.

Consequences: They refer to the consequences of the realization of axial category in the ground of causal, environmental, and context conditions, and through specific strategies. In this research, and with regard to the identified objectives and categories, the categories of "customer purchasing behavior" and "customer loyalty" were considered as consequential categories. It means that, if the causal conditions, contexts, main category, environmental conditions, and strategic conditions are well taken place, it can be hoped that the content marketing process leads to strengthening the customer purchase behavior and customer loyalty improvement.

The next step was to insert the categories into the paradigmatic model that caused the identification of the research conceptual model. The main foundation of this model can be observed in (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model



Source: Authors 2019

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