

Sarah Osama Adam

Teaching assistant
Business administration
faculty of commerce
Cairo University

The Effect of Brand Performance and Industrial Brand Image on Brand loyalty in Liberalized Egyptian Energy Market

تأثير أداء وصورة العلامة التجارية الصناعية على الولاء للعلامة التجارية
دراسة تطبيقية على السوق الحر للطاقة في مصر

Abstract

This paper aims to study the effect of brand associations on brand loyalty of Joint sector companies in liberalized Energy Market in Egypt. A model which examines the relationship between brand associations and brand loyalty is proposed to provide insights into key brand associations elements that allow private Egyptian supplier companies for successful industrial brand positioning and which in turn contribute to joint sector companies loyalty. A single cross-sectional descriptive research was employed. Data is collected via questionnaire using a representative sample of 300 personnel from the buying center in the joint sector who are involved in the purchase decision making of products and services, exploring their perceptions and feelings towards Egyptian private suppliers brands. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the scales validity, and to test the hypotheses of the research, structural equation modeling was used. The results showed that brand performance dimensions represented by product and service quality have a direct significant impact on brand loyalty. On the other hand, industrial brand image has partial impact on brand loyalty in which corporate social responsibility has no direct impact on brand loyalty while, innovation dimension only has a direct significant impact on brand loyalty.

The findings suggest that Private Egyptian supplier companies can differentiate their product and service offerings and establish strong corporate brands through brand associations. This research adds up to the industrial brand equity literature, which is mostly conceptual or qualitative and thus witness limited conclusive evidence particularly in terms of brand associations benefits and practical implications.

Keywords Liberalized Energy market, Industrial brand equity, Brand Associations, Brand performance, industrial brand image, Brand loyalty.

Paper type Research paper

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى دراسة تأثير الانطباعات الذهنية على الولاء للعلامة التجارية لشركات القطاع المشترك في مجال السوق الحر للطاقة في مصر. ويقترح نموذجًا يفحص العلاقة بين الانطباعات الذهنية والولاء للعلامة التجارية لتقديم رؤى لعناصر الانطباعات الذهنية الرئيسية التي تسمح لشركات التوريد المصرية الخاصة بتحديد العلامات التجارية الصناعية الناجحة والتي تسهم بدورها في ولاء شركات القطاع المشترك لها. تم توظيف البحث الوصفي. تم استخدام استبيان لجمع البيانات من عينة تمثيلية من مركز الشراء في 13 شركة تعمل في مجال القطاع المشترك وخاصة (المهندسين والمحاسبين والجيولوجيين) الذين يشاركون في عملية اتخاذ القرار بشراء المنتجات والخدمات، واستكشاف تصوراتهم تجاه شركات التوريد المصرية الخاصة في السوق الحر للطاقة في مصر. تم استخدام تحليل عامل التأكيد لاختبار صحة المقاييس، واختبار فرضيات البحث تم استخدام نمذجة المعادلة الهيكلية. أظهرت النتائج أن أبعاد الانطباعات الذهنية المتمثلة في جودة المنتج والخدمة لها تأثير كبير ومباشر على الولاء للعلامة التجارية. من ناحية أخرى، فإن صورة العلامة التجارية الصناعية لها تأثير جزئي على الولاء للعلامة التجارية، حيث لا يوجد تأثير مباشر للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الولاء للعلامة التجارية، بينما يؤثر الابتكار تأثير مباشر على الولاء للعلامة التجارية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن شركات التوريد المصرية الخاصة يمكن أن تميز عروض منتجاتها وخدماتها وتبني علامات تجارية قوية من خلال الانطباعات الذهنية. يضيف هذا البحث إلى أدبيات العلامة التجارية الصناعية، التي هي في الغالب نوعية أو نظرية، وبالتالي تعاني من أدلة قاطعة محدودة، لا سيما من حيث فوائد الانطباعات الذهنية والآثار العملية.

1. Introduction

Business-to-business products differentiation is fading as firms competing just on pricing and personal relationships, as a result, decreasing companies profits. As firms adoption of the cost reduction policy such as technology and low-cost production, arouse the problem and allow for minor differentiation in such markets (Alwi et al. 2016). Thus, to face such fierce competition, suppliers shift to branding through applying strategies of differentiation to implement a sustained competitive advantage (Alwi et al. 2016). Brand equity research is featured by two approaches. First approach, where brand value is determined by customers evaluation of customer-based brand equity (product brand), the other approach, reflects financial evaluation by stakeholders of firm-based brand equity (corporate brand). The customer perspective is more essential for marketers for brand equity drivers understanding in various markets (Leek and Christodoulides, 2011). Thus, the current research framework builds upon Keller's (2003) model of customer-based brand equity which prove the emotional attributes of industrial buyers existence toward a brand. Keller (1993) indicates that brand equity represents the brand knowledge differential effect upon the response of consumer to the marketing of the brand. Customer-based brand equity can be classified into rational and emotional brand evaluations (Leek and Christodoulides, 2011). Until now, several studies investigating branding in a business-to-business context focus on the customer-based brand equity model (Elsaber and Wirtz, 2017; Taylor et al., 2007; Van Riel et al., 2005).

However, most industrial branding cannot presents aspects at the brand corporate level as it address the brand at product level (Webster and Keller, 2004). In this respect, Mudambi et al. (1997) and Kuhn et al. (2008) frameworks includes the brand performance attributes, however, neither of them integrates the emotional attributes. As a result, brand associations in B2B context was formerly recognized as being purely rational. As such, previous studies over-reliance on performance attributes only doesn't completely explain the logic behind purchase decisions in business-to-business context (Mudambi et al., 1997). In this respect, a more integrative framework combining both rational and emotional attributes brand loyalty does not exist (Elsaber and Wirtz, 2017). Moreover, there exists a gap in the literature with respect to future-based and uncertain industrial products branding, in particular, hybrid offerings which incorporate aspects of both goods and services (Marquardt, 2013). Thus, industrial branding in the B2B context remains to a large extent a new area (Leek and Christodoulides, 2011). So far, most of branding research have been applied in consumer contexts (Alwi et al., 2016)

The context of the current study which is Liberalized Energy Market in Egypt is of particular interest, as recently, deregulation in energy market has opened previously monopolistic environments which in turn allow for free market competition (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2017).

In this respect, differentiation becomes an afterthought due to high levels of complexity and intangibility in such context in which customization is frequently low owing to two reasons;

first, the product (fuel) is the same with minimum variation in the quality and second, packaging is naturally not possible in oil and gas business. Hence, there is little differentiation in the manufactured products with little opportunity of becoming unique (Alwi et al. 2016).

In this respect, many energy companies are concentrating on branding, seeking to improve customer loyalty in which Energy brands with brand associations more pleasing to customers will have the capability to impose a premium price (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2007). In particular, the specific role of brand associations with respect to energy brands is still largely undetermined (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2007). Hence, energy managers in supplying firms need to identify brand associations dimensions that are suitable for brand successful positioning from a customer's perspective (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2007).

An exploratory study is conducted with members from buying center in customer companies operating in the joint sector in which the joint sector is chosen as it deals to a huge extent with various Private Egyptian Supplier companies competing under their area of specialization. Therefore, Private Egyptian Supplier companies is going to be evaluated by customers (members in the buying center responsible for making purchasing decisions) in the joint sector. In this respect, exploratory study findings reveals the lack of significant brand associations adopted by Private Egyptian Supplier companies and thus, these supplier companies faces a significant attrition rates due to their inability of to maintain industrial customer loyalty. Consequently, customer companies shift most of their pur-

chasing decision to international companies that apply associations more pleasing to them which in turn harm the Egyptian Economy.

In this sense, based on previous studies in industrial brand equity and the exploratory study findings, a comprehensive model is developed which is build upon Keller's framework of customer-based brand equity in general, and in particular its brand associations dimensions to examine how brand performance (product quality and service quality) and industrial brand image (innovation and corporate social responsibility) classified under brand associations construct influence industrial customer loyalty in liberalized Energy Market in Egypt. Thus, the purpose of our paper is to "explore how do brand performance (tangible) and industrial brand image (intangible) associations of industrial brand influence industrial customers brand loyalty in liberalized Energy Market in Egypt".

Hence, problem statement can be stated as follows; "What is the role of brand associations in reducing attrition rates, achieving successful positioning and brand differentiation to maintain customer loyalty in liberalized Energy market in Egypt?"

In this respect, the research has three main objectives:

1. To investigate how private Egyptian suppliers in liberalized Energy Market can maintain customer loyalty through specific brand associations (functional and emotional) positioning.
2. To investigate the impact of brand performance (product and service quality) on loyalty.

3. Examine the impact of industrial brand image (innovation and corporate social responsibility and) on customer loyalty.

Based on "The Social exchange theory" we hypothesize that brand performance and industrial brand image (brand associations) are antecedents of industrial customer loyalty, in which hypotheses on their direct effect is presented, and important implications for managers in the liberalized Energy Market is introduced. The hypothesized model is tested on a representative sample of 300 members in the buying center from joint sector companies occupying positions of (engineers, accountants, geologists) who are involved in the purchase decision making of products and services and exploring their perceptions and feelings towards Egyptian private suppliers brands in liberalized Energy Market. The paper is organized as follows. First, a literature review is presented. Then, the paper develops the model based on the literature review. Next, the hypotheses empirical test is presented. Data collection and analysis for hypotheses testing is introduced. This is proceeded by discussion of research results. Finally, limitations and future study directions are presented.

2. Literature Review

Brand equity concept was developed originally in B2C market in which the same concepts of branding are probably to be applied in business to business context (Zhang et al. 2015). Therefore, many studies in several business contexts also depends on brand equity concepts developed in the literature of B2C marketing (Elsaber and

Wirtz, 2017; Kuhn, Alpert, & Pope, 2008; Zhang et al. 2015).

Industrial brand equity is defined as "customer/buyer perception of the overall industrial brand image, created through brand associations" (Bendixen et al., 2004; Michell et al., 2001). More specifically, brand associations is associated with brand information in the mind of customers either positive or negative which is linked to the brain memory node (Sasmita and Suki, 2015). In this sense, Kim and Hyun (2011) indicated that brand associations have direct influence on the overall value of brand equity

Studies investigated the industrial brand equity antecedents. For example, Van Riel et al. (2005) in Specialty chemical context suggests a model that differentiate between corporate brand equity and product brand equity, and examine their antecedents. Findings show that the main antecedents of product quality and brand loyalty is distribution and value for the money while the antecedents of perceived service quality, corporate image and brand loyalty are personnel and promotion. Additionally, corporate image positively influence brand loyalty.

Also, Cretu and Brodie (2007) in hair salons context, examine the relationships between antecedents and dimensions of brand equity. Results show that price impact loyalty of customer, directly and indirectly via customer value. The image of the brand have indirect impact on customer loyalty through service and product quality. Also, it has a direct impact on customer value. Whereas, corporate image has a direct impact on both of them. Roberts and Merrilees (2007) examine the

relationships between brand equity dimensions and their antecedents in a market of mall tenant contract. The brand trust and repurchase intention reflects brand equity dimensions, while associations of service quality, mall center responsive behavior, and empowerment to tenants represents their antecedents. The brand attitude of consumer's toward mall is suggested as a mediating variable between brand equity dimensions and their antecedents. Structural model results show that customer behavior response directly influence trust and intention of repurchase while service quality has indirectly impact both of them through consumers brand attitude to the mall.

Biedenbach and Marell (2010) examine experience of consumer's influence on awareness of brand, brand associations, quality perceived and loyalty of the brand, in which a hierarchical effect among the four dependent constructs is confirmed. Baumgarth and Binckebanck (2011) examined the sales force and classic marketing instruments on perception of brand, strength of brand and loyalty to the brand. Also, Leischnig and Enke (2011) examined the relationship between perceptions of the brand and responses of customer in a business-to-business context.

However, the aforementioned studies (Baumgarth and Binckebanck, 2011; Biedenbach and Marell, 2010; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Leischnig and Enke, 2011; Roberts and Merrilees, 2007; Van Riel et al., 2005) which examine brand equity dimensions antecedents did not consider the separation between rational and emotional elements.

Other studies examines the consequences and interrelationships among brand equity dimensions. For example,

Taylor et al. (2007) examine the relationships between brand equity dimensions as well as relationships among dimensions of brand equity and their consequences in professional liability insurance service. Brand equity in their model involves brand value, perceived quality, brand uniqueness, brand attitude and brand satisfaction and loyalty. Brand equity overall value is represents their consequence. Chen et al. (2011) examined the impact of service and product quality, awareness of brand, loyalty to the brand and country-of-origin on brand equity. Results reveals perceived service quality and country-of-origin insignificance. Chen and Su (2012) tested the influence of information services, country-of-manufacture, service personnel, value of product on brand loyalty and brand equity. However, the distinctive nature of industrial brand and the separation of brand associations elements is not considered in the aforementioned studies (Chen et al. 2011; Chen and Su 2012; Taylor et al. 2007).

Studies examining the rational and emotional factors evaluation by industrial buyers for industrial goods was made by Jensen and Klastrup (2008) in which they identify rational factors as (service quality, product quality and price) and emotional factors including (promise, differentiation, credibility and trust). Findings indicated the emotional factors existence in industrial brand equity. Also, Kuhn et al. (2008) adapted the Keller's (2003) pyramid of customer-based brand equity and confirmed the presence of emotional feelings regarding industrial buyers toward a brand. Consistent with this, Cassia and Magno (2012) examined the emotional hedonic antecedents contribution ver-

sus rational functional antecedents with respect to preferences of industrial buyers. In addition, Alwi et al. (2016) examine tangible and intangible associations and their impact on brand loyalty and commitment of industrial buyers. Their Results indicated that brand image directly affect brand trust. Based on the aforementioned discussion. However, these studies (Cassia and Magno, 2012; Jensen and Klastrup, 2008; Kuhn et al., 2008) did not assign a recognized emotional factors (Elsaber and Wirtz, 2017). Also, Alwi et al (2016) examine industrial image in its general term and did not examine dimensions underlying it individually.

Thus, the aforementioned studies stress the importance of emotional brand attributes to be taken into consideration in industrial branding context (Kuhn et al. 2008). In this sense, industrial brands that communicates only rational values fail to accept the reality that both performance and imagery attributes contribute to the purchase decision making in B2B (Johansen, 2009). In particular, brand associations role in liberalized energy brands is still to a large extent undetermined (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2007). For example, Johansen (2009) conducts a qualitative study applied on biomass heating plant industry, the study classify brand associations into brand performance (price, quality, reliability, innovative performance and service) and imagery related associations (trust, ease of doing business, competence, references, aesthetics and environmental initiatives). The study ends up with brand associations classification into category points of parity (innovative performance, quality products, environmental initiatives, competence and references) and

category point of difference (reliability, ease of doing business and trust).

In a similar context, Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) study analyses associations of brand and the switching costs influence on satisfaction and loyalty of customer in liberalized energy markets. However, brand associations have not been classified in their study but determined in more general terms such as: value-added services, technical service quality and service process quality, innovation and dynamism, environmental and social commitment, trust and price. Findings reveals positive effects of service process quality and social and environmental commitment on loyalty via customer satisfaction.

Based upon the aforementioned discussion, there is a need for the development of empirical model that comprises brand associations dimensions under each of (brand performance and brand image) in Liberalized Energy Market. In this respect, Leek and Christodoulides (2011) indicated the importance of identifying buyers brand perceptions in B2B context and the significance of the rational and emotional elements that will allow marketers to deliver a more effective message. Thus, the present research is designed to fill these gaps by contributing to existing literature through examining the role of brand associations (brand performance and industrial brand image) on industrial buyers' brand loyalty in liberalized Energy market context which is characterized by hybrid offering (products and services). The cornerstone of this research is the means end theory which is applied to the present study industry to determine brand equity sources. In marketing literature, the means end theory was pre-

sented by Gutman (1982) and aims to explain purchasing behavior as a means for satisfying various levels of needs. The most essential principles about the means end theory as indicated by (Johansen, 2009) can be summarized as follows; first, consumers search for alternatives that provide either consequences which are positive or avoid negative consequences. Second, consequences can be either rational or emotional. Third, between both alternatives the consumer will select the alternative which is more likely to avoid risks or provide benefits associated with his or her most essential values.

3. Research framework and hypotheses

The current research framework is based on customer-based brand equity model developed by Keller's (2003) which prove the presence of emotional associations regarding industrial buyers toward a brand. In this sense, section 3.1 conceptualizes constructs under brand performance and their impact on loyalty, whereas, section 3.2 conceptualizes constructs under industrial brand image and their impact on loyalty.

3.1. The effect of brand performance on brand loyalty

Brand performance in the present study is conceptualized as tangible, functional and rational brand attributes in which brand performance is measured by product and service quality dimensions. With respect to product quality, Ulaga (2003) define product quality as "the extent to which the supplier's product meets the customer's specification". Alwi et al., (2016) in B2B context measure product quality as the ex-

tent to which company product brand is a; reliable, durable, consistent in quality and is synonym to high quality product in overall. In B2B context, Carter and Cater (2010) study results show that quality of product affects loyalty.

Another important brand performance dimension is service quality. In the context of liberalized energy market, Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) noted that service quality associations are viewed as a critical element of the brand's promise in which Gronroos (1984) defines service quality as "the result of the perceptions of what they get (technical service quality) and how they get it (service process quality)". In this respect, Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) mentioned that technical quality of service reflects both energy supply (core service technical quality), i.e. energy supply reliability, and (peripheral services technical quality), i.e. information about energy saving, maintenance, adaptable contracts, etc. On the other hand, Perceived service process, reflects employee interaction with customers, e.g. promptness of service, politeness, courtesy, etc.

In a service context, several studies findings reveals a positive relationship between quality of service and loyalty (Bidenbach et al. 2011; Giovanis et al. 2014; Rasheed and Abadi, 2014). In a business context, many studies support the direct positive relationship between quality of service and loyalty (Kim and Hyun, 2011; Van Riel et al., 2005).

Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Product quality is positively associated with loyalty

H2: Service quality is positively associated with loyalty

3.2.Theeffectofindustrial brand image on brand loyalty

Brand image is more critical in situations where differentiation of product is complex based upon tangible attributes, industrial brand image is concerned with the overall attitude or intangible (emotional) attributes of the brand which is essential as it guide firms in positioning its brand to be able to achieve sustainable differential advantage particularly in the B2B context (Alwi et al.2016). Industrial brand image in the present study is measured by innovation and corporate social responsibility.

With regard to innovation dimension, Alwi et al. (2016) mentioned that innovation allow firms to detect brand differentiation in their branding strategies thus, innovation capability allow firms to build brand equity (loyalty) through providing differentiated product or service offerings, communicating corporate image that is attractive to customers and designing appealing marketing program (Zhang et al.2015). He and Wong (2004) define innovation as the capability to; introduces a new generation of brands, expand ranges of current product, open up new markets, improve current product quality and decrease production costs.Foroudi et al.(2016) study results indicated that innovation capabilities enhances the impact of complex demographics on loyalty.

Corporate social responsibility(CSR) association reflects the activities and status of the company regarding its social obligation. It has appeared as a key strategic instrument for differentiation achievement (Fatma et al. 2016). Moreover, Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) noted that offering green energy products witness a pivotal importance worldwide in energy markets (Hartmann and Ibanez, 2007). Furthermore, Arikan and Guner (2013) indicated that the socially responsible behavior perception reinforce commitment toward the firm in which customers are more motivated to purchase products from firms participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR) aspects as these efforts are valued highly by customers and thus augments customers loyalty toward the firm. In this sense, Fatma et al. (2016) study findings applied in Retail banks in India reveals that CSR associations have indirect impact on loyalty of the brand via brand identifications. Hence, **based on the above illustration, we posit that:**

H3:Innovation is positively associated with loyalty

H4:Corporate social responsibility influences loyalty

Based upon the above discussion, relationships between the research variables are presented in Figure (1) below;

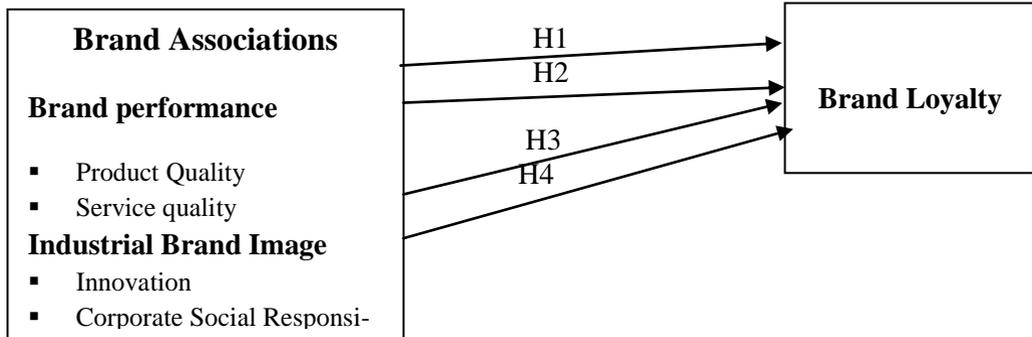


Figure (1): The conceptual Model

4. Research Methodology

The research adopt a mixed design (Exploratory and descriptive research design). First, an exploratory study is conducted with members from buying center in customer companies operating in the joint sector. Second, descriptive research design is conducted.

4.1. Exploratory research

An exploratory research was conducted in which five customer companies working in the joint sector were selected to be the subject of the exploratory phase by interviewing total of twenty personnel from the buying center of those companies (ten engineers, five accountants and five geologists). This stage was taken in order to explore the context of the study, to identify relevant brand associations in such context, the extent to which brand associations attributes found in the literature are also taken into consideration by members in the buying center and whether there are other associations to be proposed by them and also to explore new associations identified by members from buying center. The main findings of the exploratory research reveals the following;

First, the joint sector deals to a huge extent with various private Energy suppliers companies competing under their area of specialization. Therefore, the joint sector companies (customer companies) is going to be the focus of our study. In this respect, the Egyptian private (liberalized) supplier companies is going to be evaluated by customer companies in the joint sector specialized in oil and gas exploration. Also, exploratory study findings reveals that the buying center group in the joint sector companies (customer companies) involves personnel from various departments; drilling and exploration, operations management, purchasing, contract and finance department.

Second, technical personnel in the buying center focus mainly on evaluating determinants of product and service quality in which they represent both of them as (performance attributes). For instance, continuance maintenance with respect to supplies (equipments, devices, buildings, ----). Also, they foster quality standards for both product and services. Third, members in the buying center prefer suppliers perceived as having "corporate social responsibility" who use waste efficient-

ly in a way that don't pollute the environment. Also, they prefer those suppliers who can serve new markets and thus perceived as (innovative) as such when any sudden unexpected problem encountered, the supplier company should be innovative enough to handle it.

4.2. The population and sample

The sampling unit involves members in the buying center who are responsible for purchase decision making in which these members involves; engineers, geologists and accountants in various purchasing, drilling, operations, contracts and finance departments operating in the joint sector companies. According to the (Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation, 2018) the number of Egyptian Energy companies operating in the joint sector is 41 operating in Cairo, Giza and Alexandria with members in the buying center in each company consists of 20 or more persons based on the type of purchase so, population average is 1,025 member in the buying centers. A sample of 300 is taken as according to Hair et al. (2010, P.637) a minimum sample size of 300 is appropriate for models with seven or fewer constructs.

The sample of 300 members in the buying center is collected from thirteen companies in the joint sector as the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) approval was restricted to fifteen companies operating in Cairo and Alexandria in which members in the buying center in thirteen companies cooperate in completing the questionnaire while only two companies refuse to cooperate despite the approval letter obtained from EGPC directed to them. The reason is that such sector is

a very sensitive sector to obtain information from it in which the researcher is obligated to fill the questionnaire under the EGPC permission through an approval letter obtained from EGPC directed to specified joint sector companies identified by the EGPC.

In this respect, a convenience non probability sample is used taking into consideration the percentage of specialization for engineers, accountants and geologists in which all data are collected offline from buying center members in various departments (drilling, production, finance, contracts and purchasing). Only 235 members in the buying center from thirteen companies in the joint sector responds representing a response rate of 78 percent. A total of 109 responses (46.4 percent) could be assigned to accountants, whereas, 90 responses (38.3 percent) came from engineers. While, a total of 36 responses (15.3 percent) came from geologists.

4.3. The measures

Brand performance is represented by two constructs product and service quality. Product quality was assessed by three items selected from Van Riel et al., (2005) in addition to some modifications were made to product quality measurement based on pilot study to fit the current research context under study. While, service quality items in the present study were adapted from Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) in addition to the development of some measures developed during pilot study. On the other hand, industrial brand image represented by innovation and corporate social responsibility in which innovation was assessed by four items adapted from He and Wong (2004). Wh-

ile, corporate social responsibility in the present study was measured using four items adapted from Maignan et al. (1999). And loyalty items were adapted from scale items of Han and Sung (2008). In this respect, Appendix (1) presents the definitions of the research variables adopted in the current study, illustrating how the variables are measured (operationalized). It also, lists

the scale items and clarifies the reference sources of these items. Also, Appendix (2) includes the distributed questionnaire.

4.4.Data analysis and results

Descriptive statistics were done for all demographics variables. Sample characteristics with respect to specialization and company activity are shown in table (4.1)

Table (4.2) sample characteristics

Sample Description	Frequency	Percentage %
1- position:		
Accountant	109	46.4
Engineer	90	38.3
geology	36	15.3
2- Company activity:		
petroleum company	72	34.4
Gas company	5	2.4
petroleum and gas company	132	63.2

As can be seen from table(1) almost half of the sample are accountant, this means that accountants are more involved in the purchase decision making process as they are more knowledgeable in such area and thus represented the

majority of the buying center. As well as, most of the sample are from petroleum and gas companies. This reflects the new trend focus in the joint sector. Also, table (4.2) shows the sample classified by specialization and managerial level.

Table (4.2): sample classified by specialization and managerial level

	Accountants	Engineers	Geologists
Upper -level management	20	16	8
Middle-level management	33	25	11
Lower- level management	56	49	17
Total	109	90	36

In order to test the proposed relationships depicted in figure (1), Structure Equation Modelling (SEM) has been adopted. Using Smart PLS

v3.2.7, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structure Model were tested (Ringle et al.,2015) using Bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples

(Hair et al., 2010). Table (4.3) shows the results of Multicollinearity, validity and reliability analyses for the proposed relationships'' variables. Table (4.3) illustrates that there is no multicollinearity problem among the four independent variables as the range of VIF is between 0 to 5 and minimum Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is 1.505 and the maximum VIF value is 4.128. Moreover, all constructs are convergent valid since each Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is higher than 0.5 and the minimum AVE value is 0.683. As well as, all constructs are discriminant

valid. Based on Fornell Larcker criterion, the square root of a construct's AVE should be higher than the correlation between this construct and each other construct. Therefore, discriminant validity is established. In addition to that, all valid constructs are reliable based on internal consistency and composite reliability since each reliability coefficient for each construct is higher than 0.7. Lastly, all valid and reliable variables with the proposed relationships explain the change in loyalty by 42.1%.

Table (4.3) CFA results

Construct	Inner VIF Values to Loyalty	Construct validity						Construct reliability		R2
		Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Discriminant validity					Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	
			Corporate social responsibility	Innovation	Loyalty	Product quality	Service quality			
Corporate social responsibility	2.529	0.706	0.840					0.863	0.906	
Innovation	1.505	0.751	0.479	0.867				0.702	0.856	
Loyalty		0.787	0.508	0.477	0.887			0.867	0.917	0.421
Product quality	2.963	0.781	0.657	0.537	0.582	0.884		0.860	0.914	
Service quality	4.182	0.683	0.774	0.555	0.617	0.806	0.826	0.922	0.937	

After CFA was deployed, research tested the structural model as seen in figure (2). Table (4.4) illustrates the results of hypotheses testing.

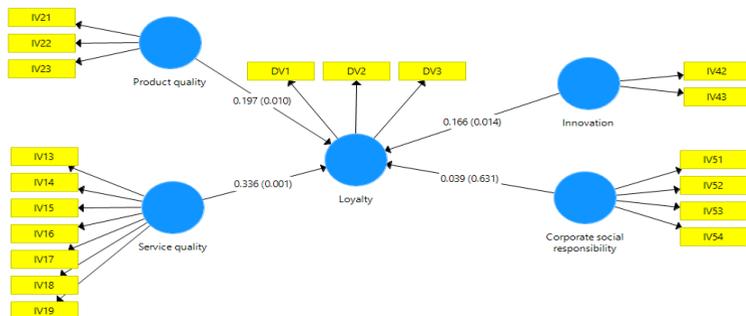


Figure (2): measurement model

Table (4.4) hypotheses testing results

Hypothesis		Beta	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H1	Product quality -> Loyalty	0.197	2.589	0.010	Accepted **
H2	Service quality -> Loyalty	0.336	3.372	0.001	Accepted ***
H3	Innovation -> Loyalty	0.166	2.455	0.014	Accepted *
H4	Corporate social responsibility -> Loyalty	0.039	0.480	0.631	Not supported

* Significance level is 95%, P value < 0.05, t value ± 1.96

** Significance level is 99%, P value < 0.01, t value ± 2.58

*** Significance level is 99.9%, P value < 0.001, t value ± 3.21

As can be seen from table (4.4), H2 is significantly supported with confidence level 99.9%. H1 is significantly supported with confidence level 99%. H3 is significantly supported with confidence level 95%. While, H4 is not supported with confidence level 95% .

5. Discussion

H1 which stated that "product quality is positively associated with loyalty" is supported ($t= 2.589$, $p= 0.010$) which is consistent with previous research in other industries in B2B context. for example; Alwi et al. (2016) study findings reveals that product quality categorized under brand performance influences loyalty. Lee and Bellman (2008) findings reveals a positive influence of quality of the product on customer loyalty. Also, in the B2B context, Cater and Cater (2010) study findings indicates that product quality influences positively behavioral and attitudinal loyalty.

H2, which stated that "service quality is positively associated with loyalty" is also supported ($t= 3.372$, $p= 0.001$) which is consistent with previous research in other industries

in B2B context. for example, Alwi et al.(2016) study findings reveals that service quality category-zed under brand performance influences loyalty. In Malaysia service sector (banking, insurance and telecommunication industry) the results of Rasheed and Abadi (2014) study shows that service quality improvement increase customer loyalty among various services subscribers. Giovanis et al.(2014) study results show that service quality has a positive impact on loyalty of the customer.

H3, which stated "Innovation is positively associated with loyalty" is also supported ($t= 2.455$, $p= 0.014$) which is consistent with Alwi et al. (2016) study findings which reveals that innovativeness classified under industrial brand image is a strong driver for brand loyalty.

H4, which stated "Corporate social Responsibility positively influences loyalty" is not supported which contradicts with Arikan and Guner (2013) study applied in Turkish b-ank context in which their study findings reveals that corporate social responsibility positively influence loyalty.

6. Theoretical and managerial implications

The present research theoretical importance lies in the following points;

First; the present study contributes to branding knowledge within industrial context as such area still lags far behind our branding knowledge in consumer context as most of research discussions have been developed in consumer context (Marquardt, 2013). **Second,** most of B2B brand equity research is conducted in the Western context which make their generalization to the east buying context suspicious (Alwi et al., 2016). **Third,** the branding of future-based and uncertain industrial products in particular, hybrid offerings that involves both goods and services needs further research examination (Marquardt, 2013). In particular, prior research in industrial branding concentrate on manufacturing goods while business services are rather ignored (Geigenmuller and Outland, 2012). **Fourth;** studies examining the client loyalty antecedents in the business to business context is still relatively few and needs further examination (Janita and Miranda, 2013). **Fifth,** the separation between rational and emotional factors in the present study responds to the call of research by Leek and Christodoulides (2011) who indicated the importance of determining how buyers in B2B context perceive branding and the significance of the rational and emotional elements that will allow marketers to deliver a more effective message. More specifically, the specific role of brand associations with respect to energy brands is still largely undetermined (Hartmann

and Ibanez, 2007). Thus, our paper fills these gaps.

From managerial perspective, senior management of private supplier companies in liberalized Energy Market may consider the following; First, strategies of marketing for industrial brands shall be built around the rational and emotional attributes as our research has proved this explanation by revealing that both brand performance and industrial brand image are essential for decision makers in B2B purchases. managers should give priority to product and service quality associations to ensure that these brand performance associations are met in their product and service delivery. Second, managers must not ignore the supplementary roles of emotional factors in industrial branding. Incorporating the emotional elements into the marketing plan will allow to strengthen the business-to-business brands (Alwi et al. 2016). Consequently, a strong brand image allow suppliers to; set premium prices, have a lower elasticity of price, have a barrier to competition and expand life of the brand (Alwi et al. 2016). Thus, suppliers have to stop focusing only on customers' functional benefits and try to build measures aiming at tracking emotional benefits evaluated by customer.

7. Limitations

There are three main limitations to this research. First, the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) approval was restricted to fifteen companies in the joint sector so, in case of examining members in the buying center opinions in the remaining companies in the joint sector, other association may be considered but this depends on the Egyptian General Petro-

leum Corporation (EGPC) permission as such sector is a sensitive sector for the researcher to select customer companies in the joint sector to do research with, it depends on EGPC approval letter directed to companies specified by them.

Second, private Egyptian Supplier companies competing in liberalized Energy market context, constitutes one of the industries featured by its hybrid future based and uncertain offerings. Thus, exploring other contexts characterized by these features shall be interesting.

Third, this study relies on industrial customer perceptions however, the use of a single source approach presents limitations associated with having one-way perceptual measures to represent a two-way relational exchanges.

8. Future research

The limitations above do not discredit the results of the study. But, they invite further research on the subject to focus on the following areas;

First, future research can explore the other brand associations impact on brand equity outcomes (brand loyalty) from customer perspective for the purpose of developing strong industrial brands. From this vein, other associations that can influence brand equity outcomes in the liberalized Energy Market shall be examined.

Second, future research needs to consider the buying behavior differences among market segments (Kim and Hyun, 2011). **Third**, studying the role of brand associations in other business contexts shall be highly informative. **Fourth**, future research needs to extend this study to explore both the up-

stream (supplier) and downstream (customer) sides as suggested by (Marquardt, 2013).

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Appendix (1)

Appendix (1) presents the definitions of the research variables adopted in the current study, illustrating how the variables are measured (operationalized). It also, lists the scale items and clarifies the reference sources of these items.

Construct	Operational definition	Measures	Sources of measures
Product quality	Product quality is defined as the extent to which supplier product provided (Whether manufactured domestically or viewed as an agent of a global company) is characterized by; a high quality product, excellent development lead time, its dependency and consistency.	<p>Product quality (Whether manufactured domestically or viewed as an agent of a global company)</p> <p>Brand(X.....) is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A high quality product 2. Excellent in its development lead time 3. A dependable product and consistent product 	Adapted from: Van Riel et al. (2005).
Service Quality	Service quality in the present study is defined as the result of the perceptions of what customers get “technical service quality” and how they get it “functional service quality or service process quality”. In the case of energy brands, “technical service quality” refers to both the energy supply (technical quality of core service), i.e. reliability of the energy supplies, and (technical quality of peripheral services), i.e. maintenance, information on energy saving, adapted contracts, etc.....	<p>Brand (X.....):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gives priority to avoid the following technical problems (damage in pipes used, bad weather, rocky layer appearance through drilling process, others -----). 2. Provides adequate consultation about how to save energy, safety procedures, percentage of radiation, etc..... 3. Offers regular control and maintenance of its installations, equipment, machines, etc..... 4. Service is reinstalled shortly in case of supply interruptions. 5. Offers adequate information about anticipated supply interruptions (due to maintenance, etc.....). 6. Offers flexible contracts, adapted to client’s specific needs. 7. Does not commit billing errors. 8. Provides Prompt customer service . 9. Resolve Customer requests promptly. 	<p>The first three items are adapted from Hartmann and Ibanez (2007) in addition to modifications of the measure developed during pilot study.</p> <p>The last six items are adapted from Hartmann and Ibanez (2007)</p>

<p>Innovation</p>	<p>Innovation is defined as the extent to which innovative brands allow the supplier company to; introduce a new generation of brands, to extend current product ranges, to open up new markets, to improve existing product quality and to reduce production costs</p>	<p>Brand (X:-----)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Innovation encompasses introducing a new generation of brands. 2. Innovation has opened up new markets. 3. Innovation has improved existing product quality. 5. Innovation has reduced production costs. 6. Innovation has extended current product range through innovation in manufacturing stages, which eventually led in turn into innovation in the design and manufacture of drilling and production equipments, pressure vessels, ----- 	<p>The first five items are adapted from He and Wong (2004)</p> <p>The last item is adapted from He and Wong (2004) in addition to modifications to the measure developed during pilot study.</p>
<p>Corporate social respond</p>	<p>Corporate social responsibility is defined as the extent to which supplier is concerned with; local community, environment protection, buyer benefits and actively participating in social initiatives.</p>	<p>Brand (X)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is very concerned with local community. 2) Is very concerned with environment protection. 3) Is very concerned with buyers' benefits. 4) Actively participates in social initiatives. 	<p>Corporate social responsibility items were adapted from the scale items of Maignan et al. (19-99)</p>
<p>Loyalty</p>	<p>Loyalty in the present study is defined as the extent to which customer company; intend to keep buying the brand, will not buy other brand despite other brand(s)are having trade promotions (a sale) and will defend the brand from negative comment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We intend to keep buying the brand (X). 2. We will not buy other brand than brand (X) despite other brand(s) are having trade promotions. 3. We will defend the brand (X) from negative comment. 	<p>Loyalty items were adapted from the scale items of Han and Sung (20-08).</p>

Appendix (2)

جامعة القاهرة
كلية التجارة
قسم إدارة الأعمال

العلاقة بين الانطباعات الذهنية والولاء للعلامة التجارية :
دراسة تطبيقية على السوق الحر للطاقة فى مصر

السيد الاستاذ الفاضل:.....

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

تقوم الباحثة باعداد البحث للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه فى ادارة الاعمال فى مجال " العلاقة بين الانطباعات الذهنية والولاء للعلامة التجارية : دراسة تطبيقية على السوق الحر للطاقة فى مصر"

والباحثة تشركم مسبقا على حسن تعاونكم معها، وكما تعلمون ان قيمة أي استبيان تتمثل بمعدل استجابة عالية، لذلك ارجو مشاركتكم وسوف تحظى اجابتم بالسرية الكاملة كما انها سوف تستخدم فقط لأغراض البحث العلمى. وتفضلوا سيادتكم بقبول فائق الاحترام ،،،،

الباحثة- سارة أسامة عبد الرحمن

مدرس مساعد بقسم ادارة الاعمال -"قسم اللغة الانجليزية"

كلية التجارة- جامعة القاهرة

ملحوظة: سيتم استخدام البيانات لأغراض البحث العلمى فقط

الجزء الأول: معلومات عن الشركة الموردة

برجاء العلم ان الشركة الموردة فى الاستبيان تشير الى المورد المفضل مع العلم ان تكون شركة مصرية خاصة وليست شركة حكومية او دولية وبالطبع هذه الشركة مسجلة لدى الهيئة العامة للبتترول، وللتسهيل على سيادتكم مرفق بالاستبيان قائمة بأسماء بعض الشركات المصرية الخاصة المسجلة لدى الهيئة العامة للبتترول.

ووفقا لذلك تشير الشركة الموردة (X) فى الاستبيان إلى الشركة المصرية الخاصة المفضلة لدى سيادتكم والتي يتم اختيارها من القائمة المرفقة.

نرجو من سيادتكم وضع علامة صح تحت درجة الموافقة التي تعبر عن رأيكم في كل عبارة،

(٥) - تعكس أعلى مستوى من الموافقة "موافق تماما"

(٤) - تعكس درجة "موافق"

(٣) - تعكس درجة "محايد"

(٢) - تعكس درجة "غير موافق"

(١) - تعكس درجة "غير موافق تماما"

جودة المنتج

العبارة	غير موافق تماما (١)	غير موافق (٢)	محايد (٣)	موافق (٤)	موافق تماما (٥)
منتجات العلامة التجارية (سواء كانت مصنعة محليا أو وكيل لشركة عالمية) التي توردتها الشركة (X):					
١. تتسم بالجودة العالية.					
٢. المهلة الزمنية لتطويرها ممتازة.					
٣. تتسم بالاتساق في الجودة وبالتالي يمكن الاعتماد عليها.					

جودة الخدمة

العبارة	غير موافق تماما (١)	غير موافق (٢)	محايد (٣)	موافق (٤)	موافق تماما (٥)
١. الشركة الموردة (X) تعطي الأولوية لتفادي المشاكل الفنية التالية (تلف المواسير المستخدمة، سوء الاحوال الجوية، وجود طبقة صخرية عند الحفر، أخرى-----).					
٢. في حالة حدوث المشاكل الفنية السابقة، يتم إعادة تقديم الخدمة في فترة وجيزة.					
٣. تقدم الشركة الموردة (X) معلومات وافية عن الانقطاع المتوقع لامداداتها (نظرا لأعمال الصيانة، الخ-----).					
٤. تقدم الشركة الموردة (X) استشارات كافية حول كيفية توفير الطاقة وإجراءات السلامة، نسبة الإشعاعات، الخ-----).					
٥. تعمل الشركة الموردة (X) على المراقبة المنتظمة وصيانة توريداتها (معدات، أجهزة، مباني، وغيرها-----).					
٦. تبرم الشركة الموردة (X) عقود مرنة، تتكيف مع الاحتياجات المحددة للعميل.					
٧. لا تقوم الشركة الموردة (X) بارتكاب الأخطاء في الفواتير الواردة.					
٨. تقدم الشركة الموردة (X) خدمة العملاء الفورية.					
٩. يتم حل متطلبات العملاء بشكل فوري.					

الابتكار

موافق تماما (٥)	موافق (٤)	محايد (٣)	غير موافق (٢)	غير موافق تماما (١)	العبارة
					١ . يتمثل الابتكار لدى الشركة الموردة (X) فى تقديم جيل جديد من المنتجات فى مجال تصميم وتصنيع أدوات الحفر، معدات الانتاج، أو عية الضغط،-----).
					٢ . ساهم الابتكار لدى الشركة الموردة (X) فى فتح أسواق جديدة لها.
					٣ . ساهم الابتكار لدى الشركة الموردة (X) فى تحسين جودة منتجاتها الحالية.
					٤ . ساعد الابتكار لدى الشركة الموردة (X) على تخفيض تكاليف انتاجها.

المسئولية الاجتماعية

موافق تماما (٥)	موافق (٤)	محايد (٣)	غير موافق (٢)	غير موافق تماما (١)	العبارة
					١ . تهتم الشركة الموردة (X) بالمجتمع المحلى بشدة.
					٢ . تهتم الشركة الموردة (X) بحماية البيئة.
					٣ . تهتم الشركة الموردة (X) بمنافع العملاء.
					٤ . تشارك الشركة الموردة (X) بنشاط فى المبادرات الاجتماعية.

الولاء للعلامة التجارية

موافق تماما (٥)	موافق (٤)	محايد (٣)	غير موافق (٢)	غير موافق تماما (١)	العبارة
					١ . ننوي الاستمرار فى الشراء من الشركة الموردة (X).
					٢ . لا ننوي الشراء من شركة موردة اخرى غير الشركة الموردة (X).
					٣ . سندافع عن الشركة الموردة (X) فى حالة وجود اراء سلبية عنها.

الجزء الثانى: بيانات عن الشركة

١. ما هو نوع نشاط الشركة؟
() شركة نفط () شركة غاز
٢. ما هى الاسباب الاخرى التى قد تدفع سيادتكم للابتعاد عن التعامل مع الشركات المصرية الخاصة

بيان بأسماء بعض الشركات المصرية الخاصة المسجلة لدى الهيئة العامة للبترول

١. شركة بيكو انيرجى
٢. شركة غارب لحقول البترول
٣. شركة الهرم للحفر
٤. شركة بيكو اويل
٥. شركة سيبسا
٦. شركة أعماق للحفر والخدمات البترولية
٧. شركة دركسيل لتنمية حقول البترول
٨. شركة البحر الاحمر للخدمات البترولية
٩. شركة صحارى للخدمات البترولية (سابسكو)
١٠. شركة PMS للخدمات البترولية
١١. شركة بتروجيت للخدمات البترولية
١٢. شركة ماراديف للمشروعات البحرية
١٣. الشركة الوطنية للخدمات البترولية
١٤. شركة ايست ايجل للخدمات البترولية
١٥. شركة هاى تك ايجيبت
١٦. شركة اويل اند جاز سيرفيسيز
١٧. شركة اى بى جى للحفر
١٨. شركة الدلتا للخدمات البترولية والهندسية
١٩. شركة جبل غارب للخدمات البترولية
٢٠. شركة دريل تك مصر - مصر تكنولوجيا الحفر
٢١. شركة تارجت لخدمات حقول النفط
٢٢. شركة أمو لخدمات الحفر وخدمات حقول البترول
٢٣. شركة ساكسون ايجيبت للخدمات البترولية
٢٤. شركة بى بى اى تكنولوجيا سيرفيس ميدل ايست ليمتد
٢٥. شركة داسكو للخدمات البترولية (دى بى إس)
٢٦. شركة تكنولوجيا آبار النفط (اس دى اف)
٢٧. شركة جيسكو
٢٨. شركة مصر المتحدة للخدمات البترولية
٢٩. شركة نيو ماستر للخدمات البترولية
٣٠. شركة تراست ببتروليم سيرفيس
٣١. شركة تنمية للبترول
٣٢. شركة اويل اند جاز سيرفيسيز
٣٣. الشركة المصرية لخدمات الغاز
٣٤. شركة بتروزون
٣٥. شركة ابيك فرى زون

Appendix (3)

A list incorporating the responding 13 companies operating in the joint sector is listed below;

١. شركة بتروشهد للبترول
٢. شركة بتروأمير للبترول
٣. شركة عجبية للبترول
٤. شركة بترول خليج السويس "جابكو"
٥. شركة خالدة للبترول
٦. شركة برج العرب للبترول
٧. شركة الواحة للبترول
٨. شركة أمل للبترول
٩. شركة السويس للزيت "سوكو"
١٠. شركة العلمين للبترول
١١. شركة قارون للبترول
١٢. شركة شقير للبترول

