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Investigation into the Effective Factors Involved in Personal Brand Equity of University Professors

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Abstract

Purpose: Nowadays personal branding is considered a very important issue for specialists like the university professors, as one of the important classes of experts in the society, and the success criteria of personal branding activities is their perceived brand equity by the students. The purpose of present study is to investigate the effective factors involved in personal brand equity of university professors.

Methodology: This is an applied study in terms of purpose and it is a survey-analytical study in terms of method. The statistical population consists of the students at Azad University Central Tehran Branch in Iran, Faculty of Management and the data were collected from 275 students using probability convenience sampling method. Structural equation modeling and SMART PLC has been used to test the hypotheses.

Findings: The results show that competence of professors, the students' awareness of them and the instruction perceived quality by the students affect the professor brand equity through affecting the extent of attachment between the students and professors and the effect on the communicative variables such as commitment, trust and loyalty.

Conclusion: Today being good in what we are doing as an expert doesn't pay off enough and we can't expect others to know our competencies and respect that while we are not communicating that thing properly through personal branding. Findings show that university professors must take a good care of their awareness, competencies and perceived instructional qualities which all let them have higher brand equity through communicative variables and benefit a lot from that.

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1. Introduction

From the academic standpoint, the creation, development and assessment of brand equity is considered as an indicator of the success in branding (Arai, Ko and Ross. 2014). Aaker and Keller have conducted extensive researches into brand equity and they may be known as the best experts in this field. The framework provided by Aaker (1991) emphasizes the brand equity including brand name, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations that differ according to the type of goods and services. On the other hand, Keller (1993) developed customer-based brand equity model showing that when the customers are highly aware of the brand and the brand associations are strong, unique and desirable in their minds, indicating positive brand equity Anyway, both models name the key variables of brand awareness and brand associations as the fundamental tools to develop brand equity. Nowadays, the concepts of brand and branding has become much more widespread than what was originally introduced and it is not restricted to the services, goods and even the companies any more, but a new trend has been created known as personal branding. A personal brand is a combination of all expectations, images and perceptions striking one's mind upon hearing or seeing the name of a person (Rampersad, 2009). Personal brand shows the values, beliefs and abilities and it reveals the type of your character, what you do, what distinguishes you or how you create value for your target market (Montoya, 2003)". The individuals have some features as viewed by their audience like the brands of goods and services where the audience can attribute some certain features to them. Tom Peter (1997) believes, as the first scholar to propose the subject of personal branding, that we should all be aware of the importance of personal branding regardless of the age, position and what we do. In fact, we are the managing directors of our own company. Our main task in this company is to market the brand named "ourselves", and this is both easy and difficult while inevitable. Nowadays, the experts compete to offer their own services just like the competition going on among the companies offering brands of goods and services. However, like the difficulty lying in selecting the brands, now it is very difficult to find the distinctions among the services offered by the individuals because they usually have the same skills and experiences. Perhaps it was sufficient for the experts to have only some skill and experience to succeed considering the large number of demands from the market, but supply exceeded demand gradually along with the increase in the number of experts in different fields, so the experts had to seek new ways to succeed in their own field of expertise. If the experts continue to work in the same way as before and do not think of new strategies to make their work distinct and to make themselves more recognized by the audience than other experts in the same field, others will take this opportunity to win greater recognition of the audience minds and make themselves be recognized as a personal brand in their areas of expertise (Ekhlasi, 2017).

Personal branding has been experienced a lot in different fields and by different individuals including artists, athletes, and politicians. However, one of the important fields of personal branding possibly not addressed enough is branding of professors. It is obvious that the growth and prosperity path of each community somewhat relates to education and the professors play an irreplaceable role in this regard as an important part of the education system. Building a strong personal brand includes some various advantages for the professors including the fact that the students are more loyal to the professors with strong personal brand and feel more attachment to them because these professors give more help to the students in attaining their goals, inspire them to learn and arouse their curiosity. Also, according to the customer-based brand equity model developed by Keller (2011), the students always support these professors to a greater extent and the classes held by these professors are full of active students who are passionate to learn and achieve success such that these students always seek to enroll in the classes held by the professors with strong equity brand (Jillapalli, 2014).

Only a limited number of studies have been conducted into personal branding in Iran most of which are related to the art, sports and politics celebrities. For example, a study conducted by Safar, Azimzadeh and Kafashpour. (2016) titled "Analysis of the Effective Factors in Shaping the Brand Image of Professional

Athletes", investigates the associations coming into the audience minds through athletes' brands; or a review research conducted by Afshani (2014) investigates different models of brand and personal branding in foreign journals. Now, considering the large number of the universities and educational institutes, and the increasing population of the professors who are experts in different fields, the necessity of personal branding is greater than before. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the effective factors involved in personal brand equity of university professors. In fact, we seek to answer the question: which key factors have a role in building a strong brand equity for the professors? In the following sections of this study, we investigate the theoretical foundation and literature review concerning brand equity and personal branding, and then we will test the 15 hypotheses of the provided conceptual model through structural equation modelling. Finally, the test results and their applications will be discussed.

The brand equity is defined as the value added to the brand name or other brand elements (Aaker, 1996) including both aspects of financial value and customer-based value (Arai et al. 2014). On the other hand, Keller (1993) defines the customer-based brand equity as the different effect of brand knowledge on consumer's response to brand marketing. The customer-based brand equity is built when the consumer is familiar with the brand and he has relevant desirable, strong and unique associations in mind. Brand equity appears particularly when a certain result is obtained from marketing the product or service through brand's name, while this result will not be obtained in the absence of the brand name. The brand equity model developed by Keller (2001) includes four steps each of which depends on the preceding steps. The four steps are: building brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and brand relationships. These interconnected steps have been conceptualized as the customer-based brand equity. Also, Keller has conceptualized a pyramid to build a strong brand including six main blocks corresponding to the four steps mentioned as follows: brand salience in the first level corresponding to the brand identity, brand performance and imagery in the second level corresponding to the brand concept, customer's judgement and feeling in the third level corresponding to the brand responses, and finally brand resonance in the fourth level corresponding to the customer relationship with brand. Thus, at first the personal identity of the professor should be created corresponding to the brand salience to build a strong personal brand for the professors and according to the brand equity model developed by Keller (1991).

Brand salience is related to the aspects of brand awareness. For example, how often and easily does the professor brand come into the students' minds in different conditions and situations? And to what extent is the brand the first priority of students' minds to be recalled and recognized easily? In the following, we address the second level of pyramid consisting of two main groups of brand associations that are connected with the performance and imaginations in customers' minds. These associations, as related to the university professors, indicate that the extent to which the given professor can meet the performance, scientific-based, ethical etc. needs of the students. Therefore, the variables of instruction quality and competence of the professors manifest themselves (Jillapalli, 2014). In the third level of the pyramid where the customers' (students) responses are formed, the students' judgement and feelings about the given professor are considered to be important where the judgment of the students is the same as their opinion about the given professor and also their feelings are the attachments to the professor which is developed based on their awareness of the professor's competence and instruction quality (Jillapalli, 2014).

Finally, in the fourth level of the pyramid developed by Keller (2001), resonance or brand relationship is formed. The extent to which the customers feel the good brand relationship and keeping pace with the brand is determined within the subject of professors personal brand and based on the theory of relationship marketing developed by Morgan & Hunt (1994) and brand equity pyramid developed by Keller (2013) concerning the relationship between the professors and students based some factors including trust, attachment and loyalty. Thus, only the professors who have passed the levels of the above pyramid are considered to have a strong brand. The present research seeks to test the relationships and extent of the

effect of the variables involved in building professor brand equity based on the customer-based brand equity model developed by Keller (2001).

Concerning professor branding, the perceived quality of a professor originates from the general instruction quality of the professor and the assessment and perception of the students in comparison with similar cases (Keller and Aaker, 1992; Zeithaml, 1988). The students' perception of professor's instruction quality originates from the comparison drawn between the former perceived expectations and their experience of reception, assessment and use of the educational services. Instruction quality of the professors is measured using some indicators such as high passion, experiential and practical learning (Myers, 2010) and active learning (Laverie, 2006). When the professors provide the students with quality education, the students experience a strong emotional response to professor brand demonstrated through the expression of personal opinions and one's feelings about the professors. These positive and desirable judgement and feelings act as the tools employed to develop attachments between the students and professors (Keller, 2001). Also, it can be concluded through the development of Aaker's idea (1991) that the perceived instruction quality of the professors can influence the selection of the professors by the students and the students' loyalty to the professors. Therefore, considering the above-mentioned analyses, the following hypotheses are considered:

Hypothesis 1: The perceived quality of the professors has a positive effect on the students' attachments to professor brand

Hypothesis 2: The perceived quality of the professors has a positive effect on the students' loyalty to professor brand

Professor competencies considered one of the important features in the student-professor relationship. The professor's knowledge of the instruction materials and the self-confidence of the professors required to present them make up professor competence (Jillapalli, 2014). Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) have conceptualized the operational and core (knowledge) competence in the service-related interactions. They define operational competence as proper exhibition of observable behaviors showing the available services. They also explain the necessity of operational competence in the service-related interactions due to the need for the translation of core (knowledge) competence into the observable behaviors. Thus, a professor should not be perceived merely as a person having some knowledge (core knowledge), but they should show some behaviors demonstrating the knowledge (operational knowledge). In other words, the professors should increase their competence connected with instruction. These behaviors of the professors stimulate the feelings of success, challenge and curiosity in their audience and increase the feelings of attachment (Keller, 2001 & Tomson, 2006); while according to the brand equity pyramid developed by Keller (2013) professor competence can be considered as a feature and a component of the professor's associations that will have a considerable effect on loyalty to professors according to Aaker (1991). Thus:

Hypothesis 3: Professor Competence has a positive effect on the students' attachments to professor brand

Hypothesis 4: Professor Competence has a positive effect on the students' loyalty to professor brand

In general, brand awareness means the ability of an individual to recognize and recall a brand, that is, to be able to recognize the brand and recall its features upon seeing it. The other issue is the extent to which the customer can recall the brand in different conditions of consumption. Brand awareness extends far beyond the fact of knowing the brand and having seen it before, but it is considered to be the ability of relating the brand i.e. logo, symbol etc., to a group of associations in the individual's mind. Therefore, brand awareness consists of the confidence in the fact that the audience knows the set of goods and services for which a given brand competes, and in the fact that the audience knows which needs can be met by the a certain brand (Keller, 2001). In fact, the first important step in achieving customer loyalty and building a strong brand is to increase the brand awareness or salience (Aaker, 1991). On the other hand, the high level of brand awareness will gain the commitment of the customers (Aaker, 1991). The logic behind this view

may be the idea that a brand enjoying high level of brand awareness of the customers will probably have a strong presence in the market, wide distribution and place widespread advertisements resulting in the greater success of the brand.

Keller (2001) believes that high level of brand awareness can lead to strong attachments to it. In fact, concerning the present study, the students' awareness of professor brand increases the students' attachments to the professors. According to this analysis, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

Hypothesis 5: The students' awareness of professor brands has a positive effect on the students' loyalty to professor brand

Hypothesis 6: The students' awareness of professor brands has a positive effect on the students' commitment to professor brand

Hypothesis 7: The students' awareness of professor brands has a positive effect on the students' attachments to professor brand

According to the brand equity model developed by Keller (2001), awareness of professor brand, high quality perception of professor's instruction and competence converts the judgement and feelings of the student into a type of attachment in the students. However, the strength of this attachment is determined by the reactions of the individual when dealing with the real conditions of detachment or loss for a long time (Berman & Sperling, 1994). The relationship strength of an adult individual is assessed exclusively through his reactions at the time when losing the relationship (Berscheid, 1982), the study into human brand (Thomson, 2006) shows that the stronger relationship is the requisite for forming a satisfactory, reliable and committed relationship. As experience shows, the respondents have reported greater satisfaction and commitment when their attachments and connections to the human brands are stronger. Focusing on strength of attachments is defined as the strength of emotional bonds of an individual to a human brand. Stronger attachments will lead to multiple results that are desirable for the marketers. For example, customer attachments in marketing may prevent the loss of customers (Liljander & Strandvik, 1995), lead to the increase in winking at the negative information about the brand (Ahluwalia, Unnava and Burnkrant. 2001) and finally to the prediction of the extent of loyalty and inclination to pay the costs of services (Thomson, 2005). If the marketers find out the factor determining attachment strength, they will be in a better position to promote the better relationship with the customers.

Hypothesis 8: The students' attachments strength has a positive effect on the students' commitment to professor brand

Hypothesis 9: The students' attachments strength has a positive effect on the students' trust in professor brand

Commitment means the belief of the business partner in the fact that the current relationship is so important that they do their best to maintain the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande (1992) define commitment as a constant passion to maintain a valuable relationship. Henning, Gwinner and Gremler (2002) discovered a positive relationship between the consumer's commitment and positive word-of-mouth advertising with brand loyalty that are the strong components of building strong brand equity. Therefore, according to the studies into the relationships between students and their professors, the professor brand equity increases when the students show more commitment to the professor.

Hypothesis 10: The students' commitment to professor brand has a positive effect on the students' loyalty

Hypothesis 11: The students' commitment to professor brand has a positive effect on the professor brand equity

From the customer's viewpoint, trust means the customer's perception of security and reliability of the brand, that is, the belief that the brand serves their best interests (Delgado t al., 2003). Trust is considered a key factor in student-professor relationship that builds satisfaction and committed behavior. The scientific researchers have shown that trust in the relationships decreases concerns and inconsistency in service

transactions that will finally lead to satisfaction (Henning et al. 2002). In addition, when the consumers trust the service providers, like professors, the ground is prepared for a committed relationship. The students feel obliged to be committed to the professor and are satisfied with the professor brand particularly in the relationship that is based on the trust between the students and professor. Furthermore, according to Anderson & Narus (1990), the results perceived from trust amounts to the belief that our partner in a relationship: 1- Does some activities that will produce positive results, 2- Does not do the activities that will produce negative results. If the student feels that the professor brand is reliable, they will do some activities resulting in brand loyalty that finally results in strong and popular brand equity (Keller, 2001).

Hypothesis 12: The students' trust in professor brand has a positive effect on the student's loyalty to professor brand

Hypothesis 13: The students' trust in professor brand has a positive effect on professor's brand equity

Hypothesis 14: The students' trust in professor brand has a positive effect on the students' commitment to professor brand

Brand loyalty has been one of the main variables in marketing right from the beginning of raising the subject of brand and it is considered an indicator used to assess the extent of customer's attachment to a brand showing the odds the customer may choose another brand, particularly when the current brand makes some changes in its prices or other features (Aaker, 1991). According to the model developed by Keller (2001) the most valuable part of building brand equity is brand resonance that is created when all other stages of branding are completed. The customer shows a high level of loyalty in spite of proper resonance in such a way as to form a mutual brand relationship and a shaded psychological relationship is forged between the individual and brand having certain consequences such as increase in brand information search by the individuals and increase in repeat purchase or in the use of brand services. According to the present research, the high level of student's loyalty to the professor includes a strong and popular personal brand. Thus:

Hypothesis 15: The students' loyalty to professor has a positive effect on the professor's brand equity

In sum, the deducible fact in the literature review is that no study has been conducted into the key factors affecting the professor branding within the country. Therefore, considering the importance and necessity of addressing professor branding in obtaining the proposed model to select the independent variables of the study, it has been tried to use the international papers on this subject. The conceptual research model has been adapted from the studies co

nducted by Aaker (1991), Keller (2001), Hollebeek (2010) and Jillapalli (2014) shown in figure 1.
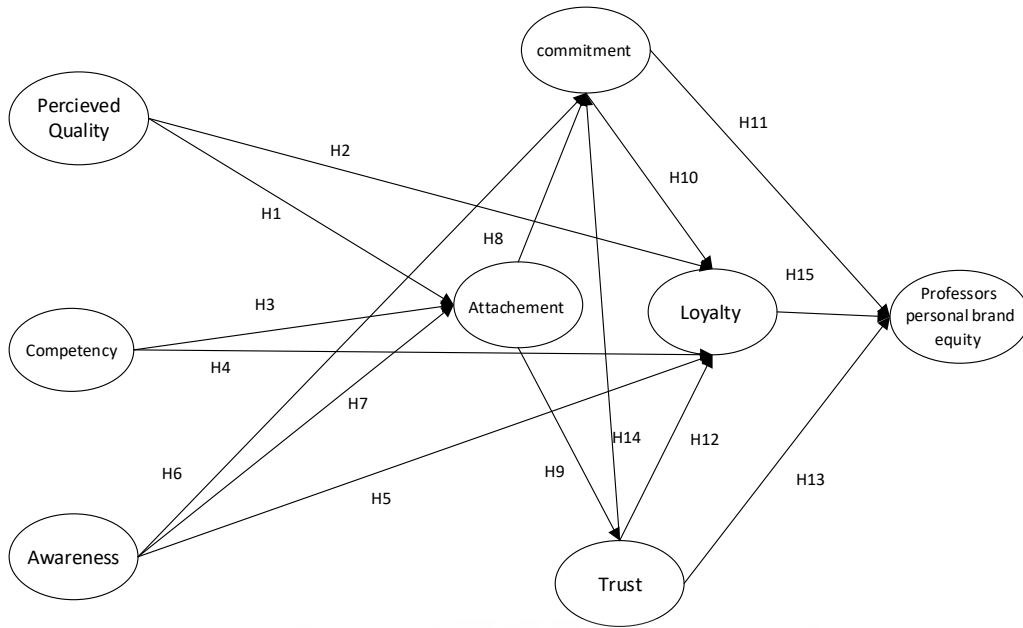
Figure1. Theoretical research model

2. Methodology

This is an applied study in terms of purpose, a survey-analytical study in terms of data collection and a descriptive study in terms of method. The information required by the study has been collected using a questionnaire. The statistical population of the study has been selected using probability convenience sampling. The questionnaire consists of 5-point Likert scale type questions, except for the questions 28 to 30 that have been designed as semantic differentiation scale. The number and source of the questions of the questionnaire have been determined based on table 1. In the present study, the questions were examined and modified based on the ideas of eight experts including the professors and experts in marketing in order to determine the content and form validity. Also, 30 questionnaire pretests were distributed among the students at   Azad University Central Tehran Branch, Faculty of Management to examine the face validity through the questionnaire pretest, and the questions were domesticated based on the answers and the final questionnaire was prepared. According to Halindki and Feldt (1970),   the size of the calculated sample employed to calculate the structural equation analysis was determined to be 10 respondents per indicator, where a minimum number of 270 required respondents were considered and finally 275 qualified questionnaires were employed in the analysis process after the distribution of 290 questionnaires among the students at   Azad University Central Branch in Tehran.

Table1. Problem Solving Training (session 1

Research variables	number of items	source of questions
Brand equity	3	Davis& Mentzer (2008)
Attachment strength	4	Keller (2013)
Competence	3	Jillapalli (2014)
Commitment	3	Jillapalli (2014)
Trust	3	Jillapalli (2014)
Awareness	5	Kim (2018)
Loyalty	3	Kim (2018)
Perceived quality	3	Jillapalli (2014)

3. Findings

According to the results obtained from the total number of 275 students, that is, 275 students, 149 students were male and 126 students were female. The age group range, 28-36 has the highest frequency and most of the respondents are master's and PhD students.

Table2. Demographic features of sample

Variable	indicator	number	percentage
Gender	Male	149	54.3%
	Female	126	45.7%
	Not responded	0	0
Age	20-28	58	21.1%
	28-36	99	36.2%
	36-44	80	28.9%
	44-52	9	3.3%
	52-60	11	3.9%
	Not responded	18	6.6%
Degree level	Bachelor's	18	6.6%
	Master's	196	71.4%
	PhD	61	22%
	Not responded	0	0

The present study has employed SMART PLC 3 because of the option the software provides to work on the researches using small sample size, and also the possibility to test the models with variables including less than 3 measurement indices and less initial hypothesis (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedi, 2011). The factor loadings are calculated and the indicators with factor loadings of less than 0.7 are removed according to PLC algorithm, and the results of the indicators can be observed in the measurement model (figure 2). All of composite reliability of constructs are greater than 0.6, and they are confirmed (Bagozzi and Yi, 1998). Also, the convergent validity of constructs are confirmed based on the average variance extracted which are all greater than 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) both of which can be seen in table 3.

Table3. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR)

Variables	Average variance extracted	composite reliability
Competence	0.782	0.878
Trust	0.691	0.870
Attachment strength	0.689	0.869
Awareness	0.571	0.799
Brand equity	0.687	0.863
Commitment	0.726	0.888
Loyalty	0.885	0.939
Perceived quality	0.683	0.866

Also, to examine the convergent validity based on the standard developed by Larcker and Fornell (1981), the square root of average variance extracted for all constructs is greater than the Pearson correlation result for them as shown in table 4. On the other hand, considering HTMT indicator and according to Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) and Hair et al (2016), if this indicator is less than 0.9 for the constructs, the convergent validity is confirmed (Table 4).

Table4. Divergent validity based on Fornell and Larcker standard

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Competence	0.884							
Trust	0.397	0.831						
Attachment strength	0.638	0.410	0.830					
Awareness	0.569	0.298	0.565	0.765				
Brand equity	0.687	0.353	0.682	0.604	0.823			
Commitment	0.624	0.585	0.706	0.454	0.591			
Loyalty	0.701	0.468	0.655	0.521	0.655	0.666	0.941	

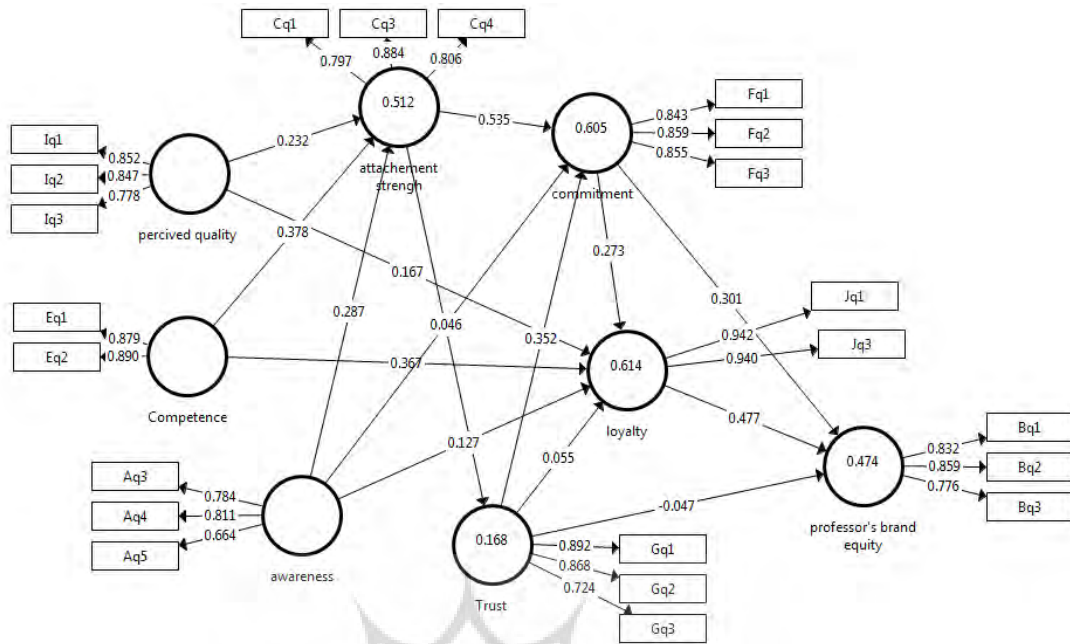| Perceived quality | 0.416 | 0.419 | 0.467 | 0.273 | 0.384 | 0.444 | 0.499 | 0.826 |

Figure2: Research model along with the indicators and factor loadings

Table5. Divergent validity based on HTMT coefficient

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Competence							
Trust	0.503						
Attachment strength	0.638	0.484					
Awareness	0.837	0.395	0.799				
Brand equity	0.776	0.416	0.884	0.860			
Commitment	0.815	0.710	0.880	0.625	0.744		
Loyalty	0.883	0.547	0.804	0.686	0.796	0.793	
Perceived quality	0.548	0.531	0.594	0.366	0.491	0.536	0.589

After investigating the fitness of measurement models, the research's structural model fitting should be performed. This section is not related to questions (manifest variables) as opposed to the measurement models, and it only examines the latent variables and relationships among them. The results of the hypothesis testing can be seen in table 6.

Table6. Results of hypothesis testing

	Hypothesis	Impact factor	Student's T statistics	Result
Perceived quality> attachment	H1	0.233	3.338	significant
Perceived quality> attachment	H2	0.179	2.857	significant
Competence> attachment	H3	0.378	4.794	significant
Competence> loyalty	H4	0.426	3.701	significant
Awareness> loyalty	H5	0.127	1.596	non-significant
Awareness> commitment	H6	0.046	0.665	non-significant
Awareness> attachment	H7	0.288	3.658	significant
Attachment > commitment	H8	0.560	7.275	significant
Attachment> trust	H9	0.408	5.870	significant
Commitment> loyalty	H10	0.279	2.873	significant
Commitment> brand equity	H11	0.320	2.926	significant
Trust> loyalty	H12	0.055	0.694	non-significant
Trust> brand equity	H13	- 0.047	0.674	non-significant

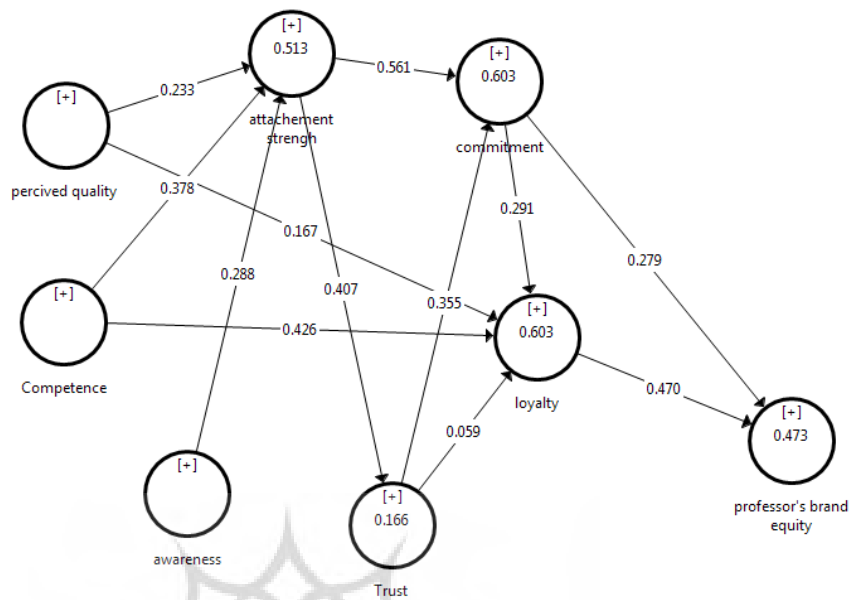| Trust> commitment	H14	0.356	6.318	significant
loyalty> brand equity	H15	0.470	4.560	significant

Figure3. Tested theoretical Model

Considering the hypothesis testing, the perceived quality of the instruction method of the professor has a positive effect on the degree of student's attachment and loyalty. Professor's competence has a positive effect on student's attachment and loyalty in terms of both core competence and operational competence. Thus, the hypotheses 1 to 4 are significant. On the other hand, the degree of student's awareness of the professor does not have any significant effect on student's loyalty and commitment to the professor, and the hypotheses 5 and 6 are non-significant. Also, the degree of student's attachment to the professor affects the student's commitment and trust in the professor, on the other hand the student's commitment to the professor has a positive effect on student's loyalty and finally on professor brand equity. Thus, the hypotheses 8 to 11 are also significant. However, student's trust in the professor does not have any significant effect on student's loyalty to the professor and professor brand equity and the hypotheses 12 and 13 are insignificant. The student's trust in the professor has a positive effect on the degree of student's commitment and hypothesis 14 will be significant. Finally, considering the significant effect of student's loyalty on brand equity and the significance of hypothesis 15, eleven hypotheses were determined to be significant and four hypotheses were determined to be non-significant from 15 hypotheses of the model. The tested conceptual model has been shown in figure 3. The numbers shown on the lines are the path coefficients.

4.   Discussion

The present study has been conducted with the aim of investigating the factors affecting the professor brand equity based on the brand equity model developed by Keller (2011), considering the importance of personal branding to the experts, in order to prepare a proper ground for their growth and development and to build recognition and awareness in audience and also to create a proper position achieved through the creation and development of the personal brand equity. In the present study, 15 hypotheses were tested considering the theoretical literature. The results showed that loyalty has the greatest effect on professor brand equity in student's minds that align with the findings of Keller (2001), Keller (2001) states that the greatest level in building brand equity is exhibited in the type of customer-brand relationship where the customer's brand loyalty is the greatest level of customer-brand relationship. Confirmation of this theory means that the

professors enjoy a high degree of student's loyalty and they enjoy a high level of brand equity. In addition, according to the findings of the present research, professor's competence has the greatest effect on building student's loyalty to the professor and the significance of this hypothesis align with the findings of Aaker (1991). This means that the professors should enjoy high levels of core competence (knowledge) and operational competence (ability to convey the knowledge) in order to build student's loyalty, and to finally enhance their brand equity (Sirdeshmukh et al, 2002). The confirmation of this hypothesis means that the professors that do not have proper level of expertise in the given knowledge, or are not able to convey their knowledge, can hardly enjoy a personal brand with high level of brand equity. Also, upon the confirmation of the hypotheses 1 and 2, which is in line with the results of the study conducted by Jillapalli (2014) and Aaker (1991), the high level of perceived instruction quality develop student's attachments to the professors, which increases student's loyalty on the other hand. Thus, the instruction quality perceived by the students and the professor's competence affect the degree of professor brand equity through affecting student's loyalty. The trust between the student and professor does not have a significant relationship with professor brand equity while such a relationship has been confirmed by the study conducted by Hollebeek (2011).The mere building of trust through increasing commitment affects the professor brand equity, and this aligns with the results of the research conducted by Jillapalli (2014). Finally, only the hypothesis of the effect on the degree of attachment strength to professor, from among the three hypotheses of affecting the degree of student's awareness on trust, attachment and loyalty, was determined to be significant. This means that the increase in awareness does not have a positive effect on student's trust or loyalty. Thus, some practical results can be taken into consideration considering the examination of the hypotheses. The professors can enhance their brand equity as perceived by the students through increasing the student's awareness of them, managing and promoting of the perceived quality of their instruction, and finally increasing their competence by increasing the student's attachments to them the resultant effects such as the communicative factors such as the degree of trust, commitment and finally loyalty. It is obvious that the enhancement of professor brand equity will bring him some positive consequences. Evaluation of the professors by the students that is considered one of the main factors in promoting professors and the students' competition to enroll in the given professor's classes or the professors' chances of success in expanding their brands to other fields are just some of high level of professor brand equity (Jillapalli, 2014). One of the limitations of the present study is that the respondents were selected only from among the students at Azad University Central Branch in Tehran, and the probability convenience sampling was selected as the sampling method due to the time limitations. It is suggested that the scholars conduct some relevant studies at other universities and cities in the future, and to examine and compare the results. Also, it is suggested to address the issue of professor brand equity and branding through cyberspace that is of great use today, that is, the subject that has not been addressed in the present study.

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