

The Effect Of Competitive Advantage On Purchasing Intention: The Mediating Role Of Consumer Behavior: A Field Study Of The Iraqi Consumer Of Ready-Made Clothing

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ABSTRACT

The current study endeavors to accomplish a set of objectives, the most important of which is the extent to which the competitive advantage factors contribute to support the consumer's behavior. The intellectual basis of the study is pivoted on manifesting the influence of the competitive advantage on the consumer's behavior and his/her intent of purchasing. The present study was conducted by investigating the opinions of a sample of garments consumers in Iraq as (500) questionnaires were distributed to the individuals who covered all the male and female age groups.

The study tested the relationship between the two variables in the field in question. The study depended on the descriptive and the analytical methodologies as the researcher employed the questionnaire form in the practical aspect of the study and the researches and studies that are relevant to the study in the theoretical aspect and also used, in terms of analyzing the results, the statistical analysis (SPSS V26) and (AMOS V23) to test and to analyze the hypotheses concerning the study variables. The study drew a set of conclusions throughout testing and analyzing the hypotheses that were involved within the study and the study was concluded with a group of recommendations.

Keywords: *Competitive advantage; Consumer behavior; Purchase intent.*

INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, the business organization began to confront great challenges including the acceleration of changes in the various fields including the emergence of globalization, increase in the technological changes and the transformation to the cognitive economy as well as considering the knowledge as the tool that is responsible for generating the ability to continue, instability of the political, economic and social circumstances in the whole world and other factors that entail finding the necessary ways for confrontation and managing them in the best way.

The competitive advantage is regarded as very important in daily life as it modifies some behaviors and changes the personal preferences for many without knowing about that and also because it has a remarkable effect on developing the organizations and getting profits. Organizations investigate the effect of the competitive advantage and seeking the best means of propagation and circulation for their products and finding out their future success or failure. It can be noticed that there is a study domain and specialization that deals with the competitive advantage and its effect on the consumer's behavior.

The attitudes and behaviors of the consumers are considered the cornerstone of understanding the marketing process, i.e. the behavior patterns of the consumers in their search for the products that meet their needs and tendencies. Therefore, organizations endeavor to specialize in the marketing process to study the consumer's behavior and identifying the hidden determinants of his character. So, it is necessary for the organizations to draw the attention of the consumer to a certain product and invoking his desire to buy it and then urging him/her to buy it by means of mentioning the good characteristics of that product.

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The problem of the study

The problem of the study is manifested by the abstaining of the Iraqi consumer from buying the local products and the importance and the effect of the competitive advantage in determining the purchase behavior of the Iraqi consumer towards the local products in Iraq and the problem of the study can be identified through the following questions:

- 1- To which extent the importance of the variables (competitive advantage, consumer's behavior and the intention to purchase) are important?
- 2- To which extent the Iraqi consumer realize the importance of achieving the competitive advantage?
- 3- To which extent the competitive advantage affects the behavior of the Iraqi consumer?
- 4- What is the attitude and the behavior of the Iraqi consumer and what are the factors that affect it?

Objectives of the study: After identifying the problem of the study, the following objectives were set forth:

- 1- Identifying the competitive advantage, the consumer's behavior and the intention of purchasing in the Iraqi local environment.
- 2- The availability of database for the top management of the local industry contribute to develop its strategic vision in terms of studying the consumer's behavior through the competitive advantage in the market.
- 3- It is necessary to study the status quo of the local industry and identifying its potential in terms of adopting or applying the competitive advantages and the possibility of finding the solutions and remedies through the results.
- 4- It is essential to submit a set of recommendations to the local industry of garments in an attempt to achieve the competitive advantages compared to the imported products.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to theoretically cover the variables and trends of the study in competitive advantage, consumer behavior and purchase intention, the following was addressed:

The concept of competitive advantage

The concept of competitive advantage is one of the important concepts that has received great attention from most researchers and specialists for a long time, Through the above, it is possible to discuss various concepts of competitive advantage.

(Al-Otaibi, 2008) pointed out That competitive advantage is the work that an organization can do better than its competitors and in a different way. Both (Al-Tawil and Ismail, 2009) explained that it is the ability That the organisation possesses to do something better than competitors and enables it to gain competitive advantage over them in the market, that is, its ability to produce products and present them to customers in a way that is distinct from what competitors offer. (Al-Bakri, 2008) believes that it is the company's ability to attract customers and build its mental standing as an organization or for its products, increasing their perceived value and achieving their satisfaction. (Al-Qahtani, 2010) pointed out that it is the advantage that the organization has that distinguishes it from competitors and thus leads to an increase in its profitability and may last for a short period or continue for several years. (Pietersen, 2010) explained that competitive advantage is achieving a larger area than competitors through the value that customers get from the product and the cost that they bear from that product.

In light of the previous concepts, the following can be concluded:

- A. Competitive advantage is an indicator of the organization's uniqueness in providing the best products.
- B. It represents an indicator that the organization's occupies a distinguished position in the market.
- C. It represents the ability to provide better products than its competitors.

The importance of competitive advantage

The importance of competitive advantage can be explained through the following:

- A. Creating value for customers that meets their needs and desires, ensuring their loyalty, and supporting and improving the organization's image in their minds. (Samlali, 2007).
- B. It means many things to organizations, i.e. organizations that aspire to build a lasting competitive advantage must seek to support advantages through multiple, overlapping, and interactive capabilities that constitute a basic purpose of their strategy (Bashir & Verma, 2017).
- C. T. It occupies a strong position in the market by obtaining a larger market share than its competitors, which means that it will have more satisfied and loyal customers than its competitors. (Al-Rubaie and Abbas, 2015).

- D. Th. It is the most powerful weapon for organizations to confront current and potential competitors (Saleh, 2017).
- E. Achieve market power by obtaining a market share for the products that are offered and introduced in the target markets (Bou Issa, 2018).
- F. It is an essential factor for the work of organizations, as it is the basic foundation through which their comprehensive competitive strategy is formulated (Al-Zaidi, 2008).
- G. The speed factor is very important for the organization in its search for competitive advantage in order to maintain it and continue to grow. This requires it to innovate faster than competitors in order to remain for a longer period (Koch & Windsperger, 2017).

Dimensions of competitive advantage: Viewpoints differ in determining the dimensions of competitive advantage, but the current study relied on the following dimensions:

The price :

(Shanavi, 2017) That the organizations that seek to obtain a larger market share as a basis for achieving their success and superiority are those organizations that offer their products at a lower cost than their competitors, and that reducing costs can be achieved by optimally using the production capacity available to them, in addition to the continuous improvement of product quality and creativity. (Le & Lei, 2018) confirmed that low cost reduces customer pressure to lower prices so that customers do not find a better alternative source, Low cost does not only mean a model of offering products at a lower price, but this cost must be coupled with good quality.

Perceived quality:

The concept of quality is one of the concepts that has received great attention from researchers of different specializations. Therefore, the view of this concept differs according to the researcher's specialization. Therefore, most researchers often find it difficult to accurately define the meaning of quality. This is due to the extent of its use in a general, absolute, or specialized sense (Jablaq, 2021). Perceived quality refers to the image and impression the customer has of the product, which is formed by the customer's use of it, It also comes from the product's reputation and advertising campaigns (Al-Najjar and Kamel, 2022).

Reputation and brand image:

(Dubli, 2011) stated that no matter how impressive the outer packaging or the striking shape of the brand, it cannot compensate for the quality of the product, Reputation is what makes consumers buy from you, and it is what they know about the seller through, and it controls their feelings towards him. Thus, the mission of the marketing model is to create a relationship between the organization and the consumer.

(Isoraite, 2018) defined brand image as the sum of the perceptions that consumers hold about a particular brand, which in turn is reflected in a set of associations that consumers make with the brand name in memory.

Consumer Behavior

1. Concept of consumer behavior :

The concept of consumer behavior is used to explain the method that consumers follow in making their decisions about how to spend and exploit their available resources, whether material, time or effort, in order to satisfy their needs and desires, The secret to the success of any marketing process in any organization depends on the extent of its interest in its customers, Man, by nature, lives in his environment, influencing it and being influenced by it, and he must adapt to this environment, Thus, different types of activities arise from him in order to satisfy his needs and desires and achieve his goals. Among these activities is what is called behavior. Both (Maliki and Balil, 2017) stated that behavior is all the actions and behaviors that a person practices in his life in order to adapt to the requirements of life. The consumer is the person who feels or perceives an unmet need and purchases the product and disposes of it after consumption. (Al-Majni and Ammar, 2020).

2. The importance of consumer behavior :

Studying consumer behavior is of great benefit to the individual by providing him with all the information that helps him in making the best choice of goods and services offered to him according to his capabilities, inclinations and tastes, In addition to determining his needs and desires according to the priorities determined by his financial resources on the one hand and the environmental conditions surrounding him from the family and the customs and traditions of society on the other hand, The importance of consumer behavior can be explained through the following:

- A. It increases the organization's knowledge of buyer reactions that benefit the success of the marketing strategy, which enables achieving better consumer satisfaction. (Al-Bakri, 2011).
- B. Studying consumer behavior enables the organization to use its marketing resources more efficiently and find appropriate solutions to marketing problems. (Al-Taher, 2004).
- C. T. It is considered one of the most important marketing activities in the organization and one of the foundations on which contemporary marketing activity depends. (Abu Jalil et al., 2013).
- D. The consumer is able to understand the purchasing decisions he makes daily and the ability of researchers and marketers to identify the consumer's personal factors and external environmental factors that affect purchasing behavior and decisions (Maftuh, 2013).

DIMENSIONS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer attitude:

(Perreault & McCarthy, 2005) defined attitude as a person's view of some things, You may be a product, advertisement, sales man organization, Or an idea. Consumer attitudes and behaviors are the basic pillar that you must rely on to understand the marketing process, Any behavioral patterns that consumers follow in their search for products that meet their needs and desires. Therefore, organizations seek to specialize in the marketing process to study their behaviors and adapt the dynamics of their needs and desires, And the possibility of knowing the hidden determinants of their personality, On this basis, organizations must work to draw their attention to a specific product, And arouse the desire to buy it, Then he urged them to buy it by mentioning the benefits of the advertised products (Bou Ali and Shatwan, 2018).

Consumer personal criteria :

(Yousaf et al., 2015) indicated that personal standards are individual perceptions of what the individual will think about when performing the behavior, i.e. the person's application of a certain behavior and the extent to which others see that behavior and their expectations of the individual, In addition to the motives that lead the individual to comply with their expectations and move towards their vision, in addition to the social pressures that motivate individuals or reduce their ability to do any specific work, When family or friends have a positive attitude towards a certain procedure, When an individual expects to take any action, their expectations will increase to meet them, and vice versa. Therefore, personal standards can be determined through the following:

1. The individual's perceptions about the necessity or non-necessity of performing a behavior or action.
2. The individual's motivation to comply and respond to specific references that are important to him.

Perceived Control Over The Consumer

The concept of perceived control consists of two basic elements: self-efficacy, which is expressed by how one deals with the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior, or the extent of confidence in the individual's ability to perform a behavior, And the possibility of control expressed by beliefs about the extent to which the performance of the behavior is due to the actor. (Rhodes et.al, 2013).

(Ajzen 1991) pointed out that the perception and knowledge of the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior may reflect previous experiences as well as potential and expected obstacles (Al-Joud, 2015). Perceived control over behavior is due to the extent to which the individual perceives the ease or difficulty of the behavior he previously performed, This variable combines two concepts, the first of which means the general perception of the individual as to whether he can influence the course of his life, The second refers to the individual's awareness of his ability to perform a behavior while enhancing his self-confidence, This indicates that the two concepts combine the locus of control and the feeling of effectiveness. (Alexander & Honig, 2016).

Purchase intent

1. Definition of purchase intent

Purchase intention is defined as the willingness of an individual to purchase the same products or a particular brand again after making some evaluations based on his personal experience, His perceptions, His positions, Also, self-behavior standards. (Hair, 2017). (Abbas & Afshan, 2018) defines it as the probability of the customer purchasing the product or planning to purchase in the future. Both (Abdul Karim and Hamid, 2019) stated that it is identifying what purchasing patterns might be in the future. (Hussein, 2020) pointed out that it is one of the most important behavioral

factors, and it is the possibility of the consumer planning to purchase a specific product within a specific period of time. (Juma, 2021) defined it as the probability that a consumer plans to purchase a new or specific product within a specific period of time.

2. The importance of purchase intention

It is clear to us that the importance of intention in predicting the behavior of individuals is due to the interest of more researchers in the field of social psychology, including: Ajzen, Fishbein, Davis To pay attention to this dimension and the factors affecting it, which resulted in a group of behavioral models that play an important role in predicting behavioral intentions among individuals, including:

Ajzen and Fishbein's (1975) TRA model of logical action

According to this model, it is clear that perceived attitudes and social norms provide the ability and will to control the behavior of individuals, This means that behavior is voluntary and under the control of the individual who wishes to adopt it as a decision for his actions. This model aims to predict and understand voluntary social behavior on the assumption that behavior is determined by the intention to implement this behavior.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen (1991) explained several years later that voluntary behavior has some contradictions, because there are some behaviors that are beyond the scope of the individual's voluntary control, And the intention cannot be established unless it is under the control of the latter's will, because this researcher added a third variable to the logical behavior model, which he called the awareness of control over behavior, and this is what became the name of his new model, the theory of planned behavior.

Developing hypotheses and presenting the conceptual model of the study

The hypothetical study design involves determining the effect between competitive advantage as an independent variable and purchase intention as a dependent variable through the mediating role of consumer behavior, Through the figure (1).

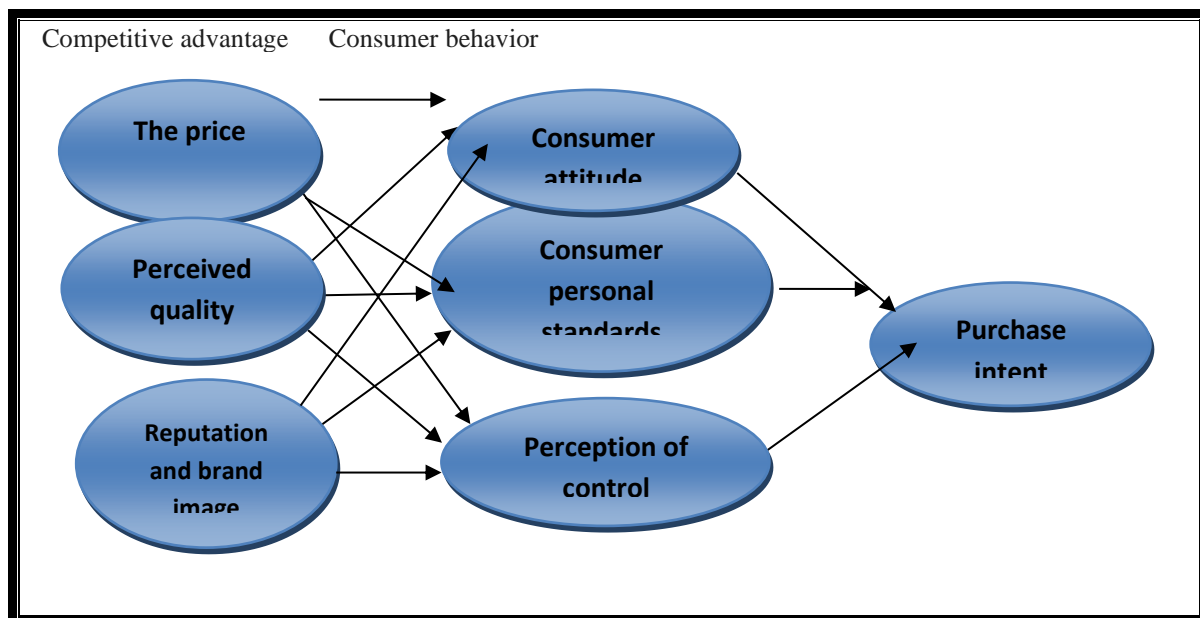


Figure (1) Research outline
Source: Prepared by the researchers .

Study hypotheses : A set of hypotheses specific to the study within the limits of its variables and according to the problem, objectives, and hypothetical study plan, as follows:

1. The first hypothesis H.1: There is a statistically significant effect of competitive advantage on consumer attitude.

The following sub-hypotheses emerge from the first hypothesis:

H.1.1 There is a statistically significant positive effect of price on consumer attitude.

H.1.2 There is a statistically significant positive effect of perceived quality on consumer attitude.

H.1.3 There is a statistically significant positive effect of reputation and brand image on consumer attitude.

2. The second hypothesis H.2: There is a statistically significant effect of competitive advantage on the personal standards of the consumer. The following sub-hypotheses emerge from the second hypothesis:

H.2.1 There is a statistically significant positive effect of price on consumer subjective standards.

H.2.2 There is a statistically significant positive effect of perceived quality on consumer subjective standards.

H.2.3 There is a statistically significant positive effect of reputation and brand image on consumer subjective standards.

3. Hypothesis 3 H.3: There is a statistically significant effect of competitive advantage on the perception of control.

H.3.1 There is a statistically significant positive effect of price on the perception of control.

H.3.2 There is a statistically significant positive effect of perceived quality on the perception of control.

H.3.3 There is a statistically significant positive effect of reputation and brand image on the perception of control.

4. Hypothesis 4 H.4: There is a statistically significant effect of consumer behavior on purchase intention.

H.4.1 There is a statistically significant positive effect of consumer attitude on purchase intention.

H.4.2 There is a statistically significant positive effect of consumer personal norms on purchase intention.

H.4.3 There is a statistically significant positive effect of perception of control on purchase intention.

STUDY METHODOLOGY**Description of the study population and its sample**

The study population is one of the necessities of scientific research, as it is the location and location in which the study is conducted. Therefore, the researcher chose and identified Iraqi consumers of ready-made clothing as a place to test the research hypotheses. The researched individuals represent an ideal work environment and were chosen to apply the practical aspect and to test the research plan and its hypotheses. The research community is represented by Iraqi consumers of ready-to-wear clothing in the researched field. As for the study sample, it was (500) individuals from the respondents of various educational levels and age groups. (517) questionnaire forms were distributed but the number of questionnaires retrieved and suitable for analysis was (500) forms, with an approximate percentage of (97%) of the questionnaires distributed. This method of selecting the sample was random. After completing the data collection process using the research tool, this data was entered into the computer. It was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods.

Measurements

In order for this study to achieve its objectives, the process of collecting data and information relied on a different set of research tools and methods in order to achieve the objectives of this study from a theoretical and scientific perspective. These methods and tools included both the theoretical and practical aspects and were represented as follows:

The theoretical aspect. The researcher relied on the contributions of writers and researchers collected from sources represented by scientific references such as books, journals, dissertations, research and scientific studies in the Arabic and English languages related to the subject of the research, in addition to the use of the World Wide Web of Information (the Internet). All of these methods were for the purpose of enhancing the research in terms of solid scientific importance.

The applied aspect. In order to achieve the research objectives and test its hypotheses, the researcher relied on a number of methods to obtain information, including:

Questionnaire:

The researcher relied on the questionnaire form as a main tool in collecting data and including it on the research variables. It was formulated to serve the research objectives and hypotheses based on the applied aspect, The questionnaire for this research was developed by reviewing previous studies and literature related to the subject of the main variables to obtain standards and design the questionnaire questions, which were prepared by the researcher with their own standards for the main variables, It was modified to suit the requirements of research in an Iraqi environment, The questionnaire in its final form, after making modifications to its initial form, included two axes, as shown in Table No. (1):

The first axis: an initial definition of the respondents, including identifying information about some characteristics of the research sample, which were (gender, age, and educational qualification).

The second axis: It included the main research variables, which are (competitive advantage, consumer behavior, purchase intention), The study variables, which numbered (40) paragraphs, were allocated five paragraphs for each variable, except for the sub-variables (price, consumer attitude, consumer personal standards, perceived quality), which were allocated (6) and (7) respectively, and a scale was used. (5-point Likert) on a scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) with a level ranging between (1-5).

Data analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to confirm the validity of the structure of the study scale and to examine hypotheses related to the factor structure, This analysis also aims to verify the validity of the proposed model and its compatibility with the data derived from the study. Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis is a multivariate statistical tool used to test the quality of a set of observed variables against a number of latent variables. Latent variables represent those that are not directly measured, Rather, it is inferred from the observed variables that appear in the items (questions) used in the scale.

The latent variables in this study are both competitive advantage (price, perceived quality, reputation and brand image) and consumer behavior (consumer attitude, consumer personal standards, perception of control) and purchase intention, While the observed variables were inferred from the latent variables, which are questions, which consisted of 40 questions.

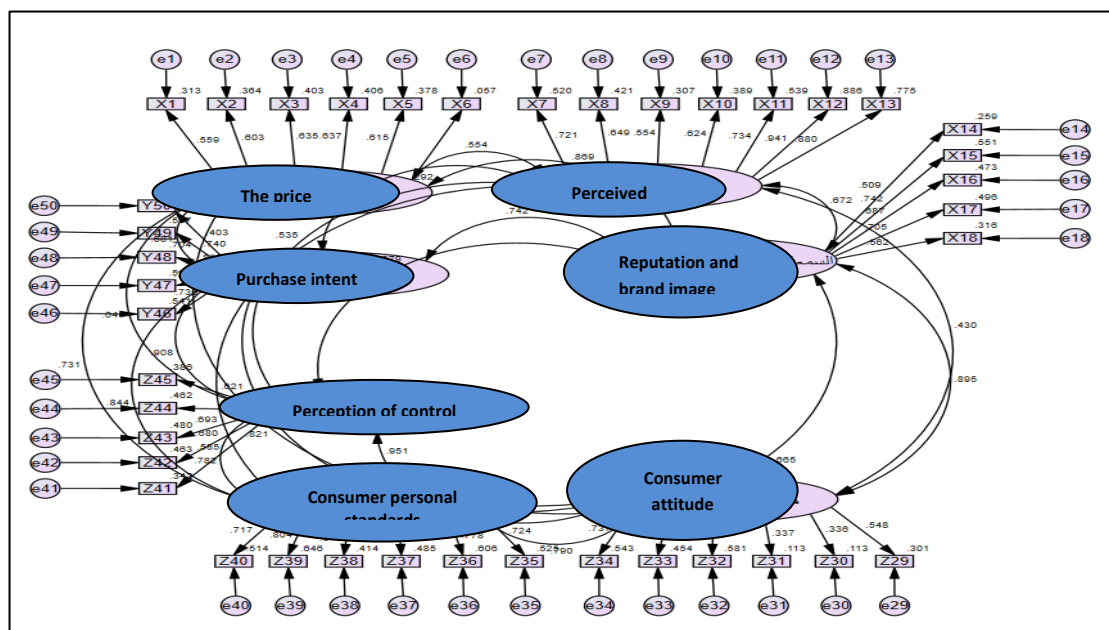


Figure (2) Confirmatory factor analysis of the dimensions of the study variables.
Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program.

Testing the study hypotheses

To verify the hypotheses branching from the first main hypothesis: a structural equation model was developed to prove or deny these hypotheses, Figure (3) shows this case, and Table (2) shows the values of the model's regression coefficients.

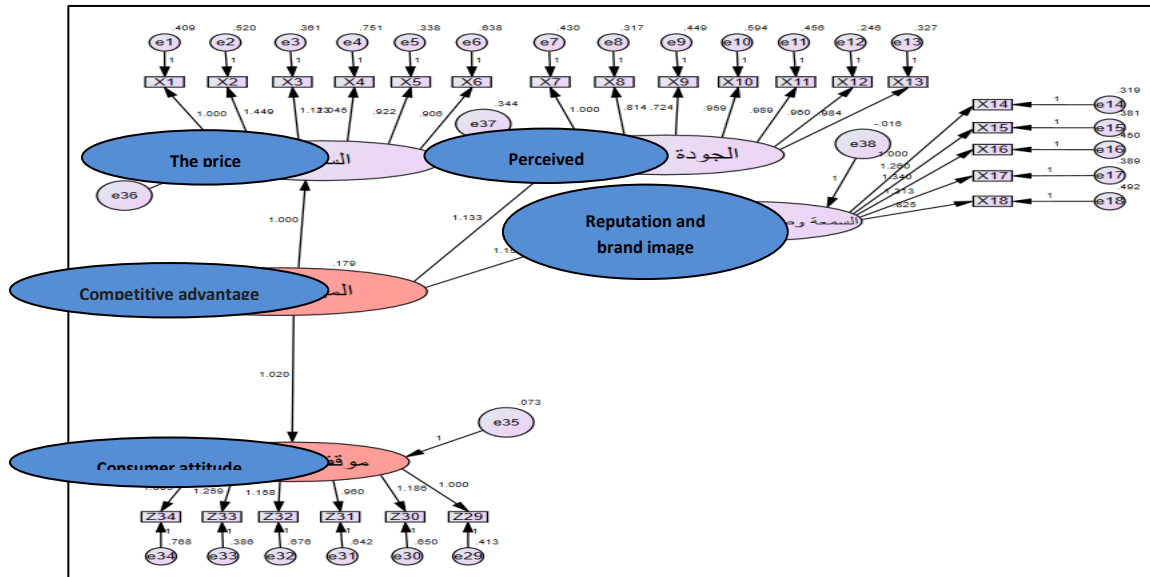


Figure (3) The effect of the dimensions of competitive advantage on consumer attitude

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the AMOS V23 program.

Table (2) Results of the impact of dimensions of competitive advantage on consumer attitude.

Independent variable	The dependent variable	Regression coefficient	Probability value	Connotation
The price	Consumer attitude	1.054	0.000	Statistically significant
Perceived quality		0.304	0.000	Statistically significant
Reputation and brand image		1.32	0.000	Statistically significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program .

We notice from Table (2) that there is an effect for all dimensions of competitive advantage on the consumer's attitude, because the probability value accompanying the value of the regression coefficient is less than the significance level of 0.05.

To verify the hypotheses deriving from the second main hypothesis: A structural equation model was developed to prove or deny these hypotheses.

Figure (4) shows this case, and Table (3) shows the values of the model's regression coefficients.

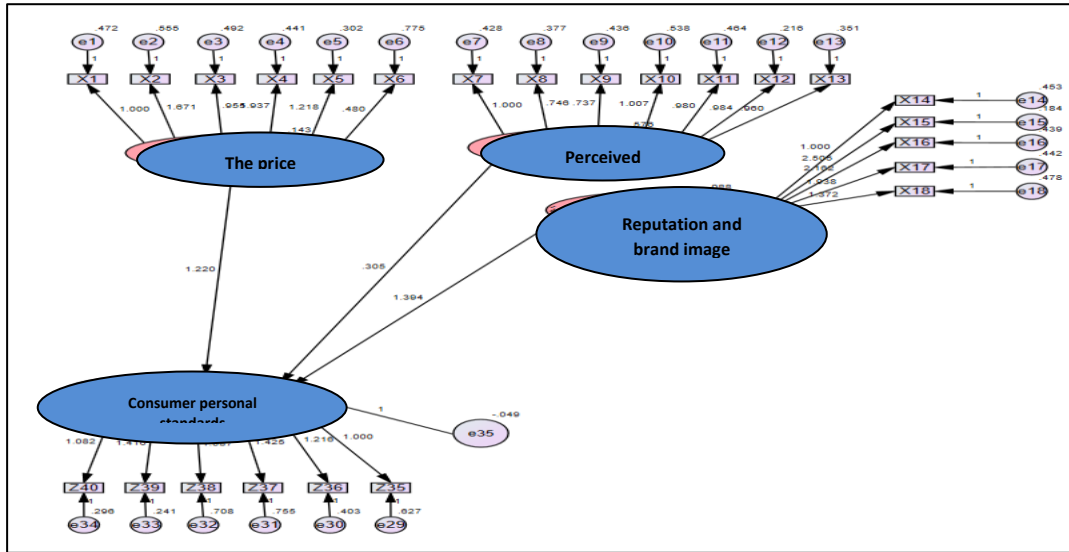


Figure (4) The effect of dimensions of competitive advantage on consumer personal standards.
Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the AMOS V23 program.

Table (3) Results of the impact of dimensions of competitive advantage on consumer personal standards

Independent variable	The dependent variable	Regression coefficient	Probability value	Connotation
The price	Consumer personal standards	1.33	0.000	Statistically significant
Perceived quality		0.333	0.000	Statistically significant
Reputation and brand image		1.519	0.000	Statistically significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program.

We notice from Table (3) that there is an effect for all dimensions of competitive advantage on the consumer’s personal standards, because the probability value accompanying the value of the regression coefficient is less than the significance level of 0.05.

To confirm the hypotheses deriving from the third main hypothesis: a structural equation model was developed to prove or deny these hypotheses, and Figure (5) shows this case, and Table (4) shows the values of the model’s regression coefficients.

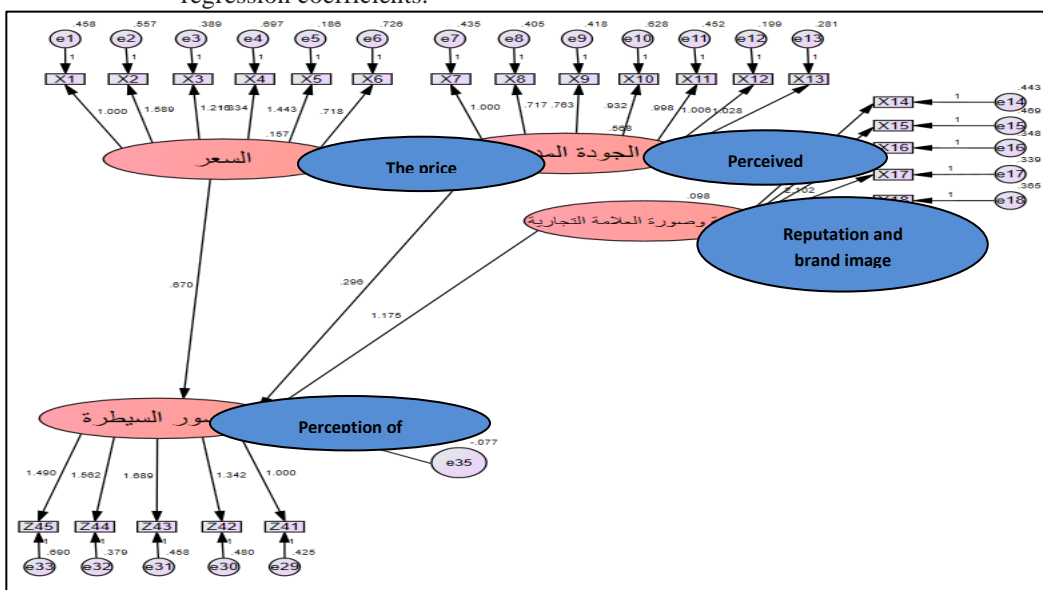


Figure (5) The effect of the dimensions of competitive advantage on the perception of control.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program.

Table (4) Results of the effect of dimensions of competitive advantage on the perception of control.

Independent variable	The dependent variable	Regression coefficient	Probability value	Connotation
The price	Perception of control	0.826	0.000	Statistically significant
Perceived quality		0.356	0.000	Statistically significant
Reputation and brand image		1.419	0.000	Statistically significant

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program.

We note from Table (4) that there is an effect of all dimensions of competitive advantage on the perception of control, This is because the probability value accompanying the value of the regression coefficient is less than the significance level of 0.05.

To verify the hypotheses deriving from the fourth main hypothesis: a structural equation model was developed to prove or deny these hypotheses, Figure (6) shows this case, and Table (5) shows the values of the model’s regression coefficients.

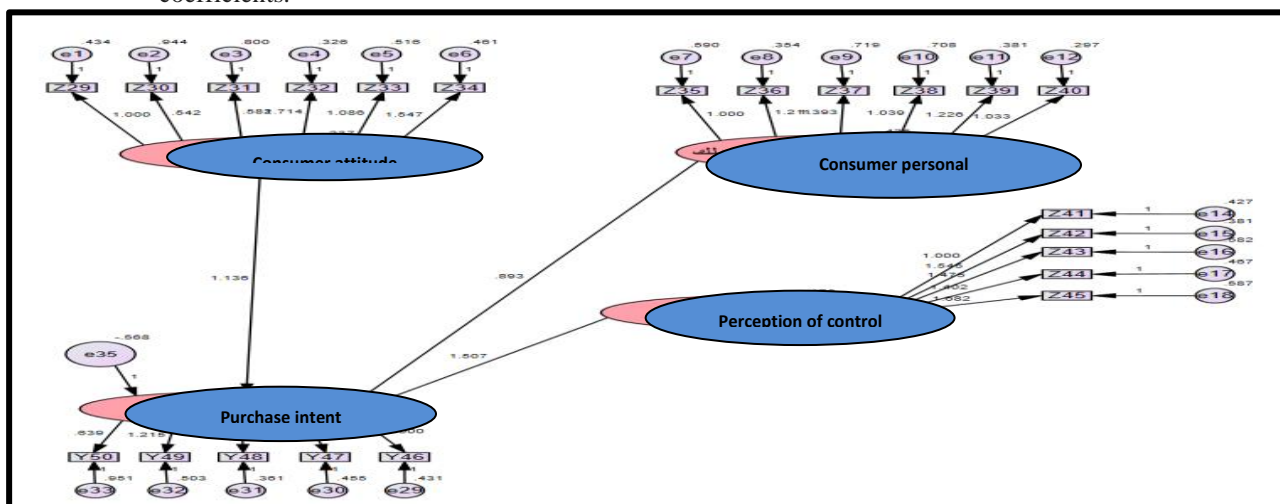


Figure (6) The effect of consumer behavior dimensions on purchase intention.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the AMOS V23 program.

Table (5) Results of the impact of consumer behavior dimensions on purchase intention.

Independent variable	The dependent variable	Regression coefficient	Probability value	Connotation
Consumer attitude	Purchase intent	1.136	0.000	Statistically significant
Consumer personal standards		0.893	0.000	Statistically significant
Perception of control		1.507	0.000	Statistically significant

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the AMOS V23 program.

We note from Table (5) that there is an effect of all dimensions of consumer behavior on purchase intention, This is because the probability value accompanying the value of the regression coefficient is less than the significance level of 0.05.

CONCLUSION

The current study discusses an important topic in the field of the consumer's behavior and his purchase intention and the effect of the competitive advantage on them. The most important theories that assists in understanding the relationship between the consumer's behavior and the purchase intention is the model of the logical action and the theory of the planned behavior. The current study also proved that that the behavioral variables have a great impact through the competitive advantage. Moreover, the study endeavored to introduce a new model concerning the competitive advantage and testing it on the level of Iraq as a domain that is different from other domains.

Based on the findings reached, the following recommendations have been submitted by the study:

This study was conducted on the Iraqi consumer of the ready-made garments and so the future researches can deal, using the same concept, with other fields in Iraq and the future researches and studies can test this conceptual model in various countries and other domains. This study relied upon the dimensions that were previously mentioned in the study chart and other dimensions can also be included in the future studies.

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