

The Influence of 'Free' Marketing Websites on the Brand Equity from the Perspective of Major Manufacturing Entities

Dr. Diana "Moh'd Adnan" Homsí

Isra University , P.O Box 22, code 11622, Amman – Jordan

Abstract

Technology and internet seems to control the processes of the business environment specifically through the last two decades. Now, most organizations are depending on technology and internet to reach to its goals and ambitions through focusing on online marketing with all its aspects and potentials. There are many types of online marketing among them is the idea of free marketing which an approach that is used to promote goods and services without any financial demands. Usually this type of marketing takes place through the social media websites and other websites that involves social interaction. The results of the study indicated that there is a positively significant influence of free marketing on brand equity also; free marketing appeared to be influential in a positive way not only for regular brands but also for luxurious brands as it helps the brand reaches for as many customers as possible. However, the study results noted that there appeared to be a good level of awareness of the importance of social media marketing among the sample of the study and the industrial sector in Jordan appeared to be reliable to a certain degree of the idea of free marketing through social media websites including (Facebook, twitter, Google+, instagram and LinkedIn).

Keywords: Online marketing, free marketing, brand equity, B2C business, Marketing Strategy

Introduction

It is widely known that when it is free then it is available for everyone anytime and with no limitations, just like when someone wants to write down a review about something specific then there is no doubt that this person would put their view point without any external drivers that could change their mind into something else, they would use social media and other free websites that enable free reviewing and commenting. With the massive technological development and the fact that the world is a small village now; organization - regardless of their field of interest- tend to find different ways and approaches to go on with their marketing strategies and plans. There appeared a lot to tools and applications that can help the organization go on with the already put strategic marketing plans. There appeared the idea of free marketing.

Free marketing in general refers to the tools and application on which the organization can go with its marketing plans without paying any fees or money, it means that the free marketing is a type of marketing that is free, with no financial demands and any organization can use such type of marketing to promote its goods and services (Cockrum, 2011)

Problem Statement

Online marketing has become one of the main tools that organizations use in order to promote its goods and services, in addition to being easy to use; online marketing appeared to be cost effective, it doesn't require big amounts of money based on the fact that there are lots of online marketing portals and the competitiveness in that field is fierce so these websites tend to appear competitive through the prices and amounts of money an organization require to use any type of online marketing through its marketing strategies. According to Welner (2011) the idea of free marketing has opened the doors for many organizations to come to the surface and appear in order to make more profit and utilize its ability to use the internet so as to have a share of the market. On the other hand, Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder (2010) saw that with the increasing spread of the internet around the globe and the ongoing development in its tools and equipment; internet became no longer that expensive and costing tool to use within business, it became available all around the clock and any organization, firm, and even individuals are free to use this tool whenever and wherever they want.

From Moise (2011) perspective, the idea of free internet and free marketing tools through the internet has made it easy for any organization no matter of its size and interest to enter the environment and have a share of the market, it enabled it to be part of the business world and grab the attention of the customer through its continuous appearance on the internet. The fact that anyone in any place on earth can market an item or a service even if it was a scam have made it hard for the organizations to build its trust, credibility and authenticity in the market. Based on that, the current research study seeks to understand and examine the influence of free marketing on tools and equipment on the internet in the brand equity, and how can the idea of costless marketing influence the status of a certain brand before its customers.

Review of the Literature

Online Marketing

Online marketing has increasingly become a hot today in today's business sector. Many companies are embracing this new and innovative form of marketing products and using in their multi-channel marketing strategy (Babac, 2011). This form of marketing allows marketers to deliver promotional messages to customer via the internet. It involves the advertiser, the publisher, advertising agents, ad server and advertising affiliates. The publisher's work is to publish the advert on an online platform. The advertisers offer the advertisements that are displayed by the publisher on the online content (Angella, & Eunju, 2012). Advertising agencies generate the ad copy and place it on the requirement platform. Lastly the ad server delivers the ad technologically and follows up the statistics. The promotional work is done by advertising affiliates (Mangold, & Faulds, 2009).

Online marketing utilizes various marketing tools, including display advertising; web banner advertising; frame ad (traditional banner); pop-ups/popunders; floating ad; expanding ad; interstitial ad; text ad; search engine marketing (SEM); sponsored search; and search engine optimization (Mersey, Malthouse, & Calder, 2010).

Display advertising uses logos, text, photographs, videos, and other graphics to convey an advertising message. These ads are often targeted at users who are characterized by particular traits. Web banner ads are graphical ads in a web page. They make use of rich media to incorporate audio, buttons, forms, animations, videos, and other interactive elements, including Adobe flash, HTML5, Java applets and other programs (Moise, 2011). Frame ad is a form of web banners that is incorporated in websites thus creating a web page. Popunders or popups often appear in a web browser window above the initial browser window of a website visitor. Floating ad is an overlay ad or a rich media ad that become less obtrusive or disappears over time. Expanding ad is a form of a rich media frame advertising that changes dimensions under a predefined condition. This type of online advertising allows marketers space in the restricted ad space to fit more information (Babac, 2011). Interstitial ad is an interruption marketing which shows up before the user accesses the requested content. Text ads either display displays text-based hyperlinks separately from the primary content of the web page, or is embedded by phrases or hyperlinked individual words to the website of the advertiser. It can also be delivered to the customer as text message marketing or via email marketing (Moise, 2011).

Search engine marketing (SEM) is aimed at increasing the visibility of the website in SERPs (search engine results pages). Search engines offer advertisers organic (non-sponsored) results and sponsored results depending on the query of the web searcher. SEM marketing is aimed at making the website to be featured prominently based on topical keywords (Xiang, & Gretzel, 2010). Sponsored search, sponsored ads or sponsored links allows marketers to be featured in the sponsored results as part of the selected keywords. They allow advertisers to bid on key search words. Lastly, search engine optimization (SEO) are aimed at improve the organic search rankings of a website in SERPs. This is achieved by increasing the relevance of the website content to search terms (Xiang, & Gretzel, 2010). There are many forms of online marketing, including mobile advertising, various forms of display advertising (e.g., web banner advertising), social media marketing, search engine marketing, and email marketing (Williams, & Williams, 2008).

Social Media Marketing

Any B2C or B2B organization that seeks to effectively compete in the today's market must consider to include social media as a marketing strategy. In this context, social media marketing involves creating links between customers and brands with personal currency and channel being offered to facilitate social interaction and user-centered networking (Chi, 2011). This digital marketing platform is aimed at increasing brand awareness and increasing website traffic using social media site. This is achieved by creating unique content aimed at attracting the users' attention and encouraging them to create contacts in order to share and communicate with friends via social networking sites (Kalyanaraman, & Sundar, 2003). These social networking sites utilize various applications and technical terms to enable customers to

“post”, “dig”, “tag” and “blog” content, which is made available for users and spending and used by people who desire to market their brand, products or services (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Digg, LinkedIn and Google+.

Organizations that compete effectively with others in today’s marketplace are making use of these popular social media as part of its digital marketing strategy and using it to market the content, build customer engagement; increase leads, grow awareness and managed brand reputations. Retailers are using these social networking sites as avenues to extend and reach out to the wider range of customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These social media marketing can be paid or organic (free).

Paid social media marketing involve the use of money to market a product or a brand. On the other hand, free marketing or organic social media marketing which is the focus of the present study, involve using tools offered by social networking site to create a social community, share posts, interact with the social community and respond to customer comments. This means that unlike the paid social media marketing, organic social media do not charged. Example of free or organic social media marketing include: reputation; reviews; B2C Attraction, customer loyalty etc.

Free Marketing

Reputation

Reputation is a free marketing strategy in which a marketer focuses on Good public relations to market itself online. The focus is on creating an online reputation that sells out a company’s brand accurately, positively to customers. It focuses on reputation that is created when prospective customer search for the company/brand online.

As noted by Xiang and Gretzel (2010) the content that come up when a customer searcher a company can reveal what the company engages in and its reputation as long as it is accurate, timely, accurate, compelling and comprehensive. This content can be created by a company’s PR team when it builds out its social networking media or empire: Pinterest; Twitter; Tumblr; YouTube; Blog; Slideshare; WordPress.com; LinkedIn; Facebook Pages; About.me; Google+ Business Pages; or YouTube.

As such, good reputation can be created through maintaining a good public relations in these social media site. This good reputation may translate into general social acceptability, personal career advancement, and increased sales. An online Reputation Management (ORM) can be used to monitor, mitigate or address Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs) or mentions in Web content or online media. It is important for organizations to monitors how something and someone is perceived by consumers based on the internet search. The growing of the user-generated content online may affect the search results on the internet and make it more meaningful to change those results.

Reviews

Thousands of brands and companies are competing for promotion and sales every day. These companies are using customer reviews a marketing strategy to attract customers and follower via Facebook, Google+ for Business, Instagram and other social media sites. Through customer reviews customers tell a lot about how they view a product or brand (Berselli, Burger, & Close, 2012). It is a means via which customers reveal their interest. These reviews are important for customer growth and customer loyalty. Potential customers use these reviews to understand the brand and its reputation. Through these reviews, customer gain trust about a product or brand. Babac (2011) agrees that many customers often use online marketing recommendations and reviews before seeking services or buying products. Reviews shows can help customers to drop negatives about a product or service and the company to overcome product defects.

Social media platforms provide platforms for posting reviews. Companies understand that customers often spend time online and this makes it easy for them to write comments or reviews. For this reason, companies are using reviews as a marketing tool to understand their customers. They use these reviews to find feedback about the products/services (Kim, & Ko, 2010). They analyze customer reviews on popular social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter to understand customer attitudes towards their products. Through these reviews, companies can understand why customers prefer their service or products. For example, Facebook allows customers to share their experience by allowing star rating system option. They can test services and products and share their opinions. Reviews on these social media platforms are the most effective and sincere feedback. They help attract targeted traffic, increase customer loyalty and reach out to their customers. Nice reviews attract new readers’ attention (Bushelow, 2012).

Consumers use online review site, including TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google, and Angie's List to evaluate and discover companies, services and products. Consumers tend to trust what is said by other consumers and trust such views (Bushelow, 2012).

B2C Attraction

Attraction marketing also referred to as a reverse marketing is a concept commonly used among network and internet marketers. Its primary goal is to naturally draw customers into a business by igniting their interest and thus influencing them to join the business or purchase a product or service. It constitutes three parts: prospects of customers to finding a website; enter their email or name on the company's lead capture page; and including them on their email list. This provides them with value of the offer and influencing them to join the business (Kim, &Ko, 2010).

Online attraction marketing increase the prospects of customers allowing the company to send them information and emails. By entering their email address and name in the company's lead capture page, customer become aware that they will be send information from the company. This lessens instances of individuals who want to unsubscribe from the company's email list. Online attraction marketing offer much or same results than print, television or radio advertisement. It allows a company to access the entire world and increases the possibility of the business expanding overseas (Bushelow, 2012).

Business-to-Consumer (B2C) marketing is a form of online attraction marketing strategy used to market products and brands. The success of this marketing strategy depends on the marketer's ability to demonstrate value and invoke emotional responses from customers. Marketers seeking to create a B2C marketing strategy that is effective needs to create an actionable and solid plan that is in line with the business. It must focus on social media platforms that offers the best Return on Investment for a brand (Fischer, &Reuber, 2011).

Benefits of Free Marketing

Free marketing has its advantages. First, increase customer engagement with the company's content via social networking site. Secondly, it reaches unique customers who perceive a post pop-up in the company's news feeds. Thirdly, can be used to maintain the presence of a brand, help the company to create and maintain strong contact and bond with customers; and feed information to customers. Again, content marketing which is a feature of free social media marketing can enable a company gain visibility to customers. Lastly, a valuable free marketing is cheaper than the paid marketing. A solid free marketing can also help a company to improve online reputation and presence. In addition, with free marketing, a marketer invests effort and time for long-lasting but slower results. It is less tightly than paid marketing as it keeps the company working over the long haul. Free marketing is also as important to a business and paid marketing (Bushelow, 2012).

Free social media marketing, primarily involves utilizing free tools available via various social media site to create a social community to interact with on a regular basis. It is aimed at getting customer eyes on the company content, which ultimately converts to leads, sales, new customers and sing-ups. Additionally, free marketing has a sustainable power compared to the paid marketing (Kotler, & Keller, 2006). Ads on a paid marketing run for a specific time period. However, those on the free platform such as a high-quality article or blog keep getting shared. These ads can be rattling on the company's web indefinitely earn leads, today, tomorrow and forever (Arens, Schaefer, &Weigold, 2009).

In addition, organic social marketing has staying power far beyond that of paid. Ads are run for only a set time period, but those links in your tweets to that high-quality article on your website keep getting shared. They can keep rattling around the web indefinitely, earning you leads today, tomorrow, and five years from now (Erdo, &Çiçek, 2012).

Pitfalls of Free Marketing

Free social media marketing has distinct pros. However, it can only be effective when implemented together with the paid marketing. In fact, it is argued that is almost impossible to achieve great result by solely relying on free advertising and that if a marketer wants to grow the business by getting customers' eyes on a post, it must begin by investing in paid marketing (Safko, & Brake, 2009). This explains why popular social media platforms have both the free and paid elements. Secondly, free marketing faces challenges similar to those faced by SEO. It takes a lot of strategy for a marketer to successfully execute a free social media campaign as it requires the utilization of multiple creating minds working together to identify ways to keep customers engaged and create shareable original content and feature varied content collateral (Maggie, &Joeri, 2004).

Unlike, paid marketing, it is difficult for a marketer to define and target specific customers with a carefully designed and crafted advertisement to engage those with interests in a service or product. Free marketing is also less likely than the paid ones to get better and faster results (Jobber, 2007).

Free marketing is also believed to lack the necessary built-in analytics such as Facebook website that makes it ideal for launching and testing new services and products. Free marketing is also labor-intensive and time-intensive (Gay, Alan, & Rita, 2007; Chaffey, 2009). However, like paid marketing, it get results. Finally, a solid free marketing improve a company's reputation and online presence. However, it does not increase its brand's awareness and reach to target customers like a paid marketing strategy (Bushelow,2012).

Brand Equity

A brand is term, name, symbol or design or any other feature used to identify a company's goods, service or products as different from others produced by other companies in the market (Bradley, 2005). It represents the feelings and perceptions of consumers about a product/service, and its performance. A brand is a key elements as far as the relationship between the company and its consumers is concerned. On the other hand, as defined by Jobber (2007) brand equity is a marketing and multidimensional asset that exist in the mind of a consumer. It is an intangible entry of a financial balance sheet and brings value to its owner as it influences future purchases done by a buyer (Keller, 2002). It defines brand value and can infer the understanding of brand of strategic brand value and subjective brand value (Aaker & Biel, 1993).

Dimensions of brand Equity

Brand equity consists of brand associations, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness concerns the strength of the brand as conceptualized by the mind of a consumer (Aaker, 1991). It covers brand recall and brand recognition. The former refers to whether the brand can be recall by consumers with or without receiving help; while the later refers to whether the past exposure to a brand can be recalled by a consumer (Arens, Schaefer, & Weigold, 2009). Brand loyalty is believed to generate predictable profit stream and predictable sale (Arens, Schaefer, & Weigold, 2009). For this case, loyalty is treated as an asset as it encourages the customer loyalty and lead to improved brand equity (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 2000). Perceived quality refers to subjective judgement by the consumer regarding the overall superiority or excellence of a product. It is the perception of a consumer towards the quality of a product given its price. Improvement in perceived quality is predicted to improve other dimensions of brand equity (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 2000). Brand association concerns held by the consumer towards a brand (Wells, Burnett, & Moriarty, 2000), including emotional benefits, organizational benefits, superior product performance and self-expressive benefits. Branding process is, therefore, aimed at creating high perceived quality, recognition, and awareness and ultimately to create strong positive association with the brand.

Methodology

The following section presented the methodological scheme which was followed in building the current research study, the way the raw data was collected and how the researcher will deal with the raw data in order to change it into acceptable and understandable set of results in accordance with the previously presented hypotheses and objectives.

Method

The quantitative approach was followed in the current research study. Quantitative approach was defined by Sukamolson (2007) as "*The numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect*" (p.2). However, it is worth to mention here that where the quantitative approach is used, the research must be deductive in its nature which means that the current research will be "*a valid reasoning by which it is impossible to accept the premises but reject the conclusion*" as according to Zalaghi and Khazaei (2016); (Borrego, Douglas and Amelink, 2009)

Tool

The current research study depended on the questionnaire as a tool of the study; the questionnaire was built by the researcher and is constituted of paragraphs that were related to each and every variable in the model of the study. The used scale in the current research study was Liker 5 scale on which the answers of the sample of the study were based on (strongly agree 5 – agree 4 – neutral 3 – disagree 2 – strongly disagree 1).

Populations and Sample

The sample of the study consisted of marketing and production managers within a group of manufacturing organization in the Jordanian capital Amman, total of (65) individuals were counted to form a sample of the study and the questionnaire was distributed. The researcher was able to retrieve (63) properly filled questionnaires which gave an indication that the response rate was 79% making it as an accepted rate.

Questions and Hypotheses

Questions of the Study

Main Hypothesis

Free marketing positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Sub Hypothesis

H₀₁: Reputation doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

H₀₂: Reviews don't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

H₀₃: B2C attraction doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

H₀₄: Marketing strategy doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

H₀₅: Size doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

H₀₆: Customer loyalty doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Model of the Study

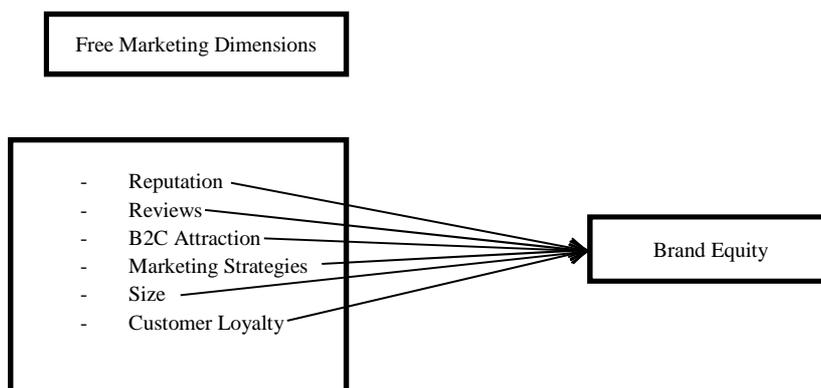


Figure (1): Model of the Study (Built by the researcher)

Results

The current section was divided into two parts; the first part presented the analysis of the demographic variables of the sample of the study while the second part presented the analysis of the questionnaire paragraphs.

A. Demographic Variables

- Gender

Table (1): Sample characteristics according to Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	55	87.3	87.3	87.3
	Female	8	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table (1) shows the analysis results of the sample according to gender, it appeared from the analysis that the majority of the respondents were males with a percentage of 87.3% and a frequency of 55 individuals compared to females who gained the percentage of 12.7% which is seen to be really low. This result indicates that most workers within the manufacturing industries in Jordan are males.

- Educational Level

Table (2): Sample characteristics according to educational level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ba	60	95.2	95.2	95.2
	Post graduates studies	3	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table (2) above shows that most of the sample were individuals who held the bachelor's degree with the percentage of 95.2% and frequency of 60 individuals compared to individuals with post graduate studies (MA and PhD) which came with a percentage of 4.8%.

- Occupation

Table (3): Sample characteristics according to occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Marketing manager	38	60.3	60.3	60.3
	Product manager	25	39.7	39.7	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table (3) indicated that 60.3% of the sample were marketing managers compared to 39.7% of the sample who were product managers. The result here indicated that mostly marketing managers are more aware of the reality of the marketing strategies and plans within the organization and the nature of the marketing tools that best suits the brands they are working on, on the other hand, product managers and product engineers appeared to be less involved in the marketing process.

B. Variable Analysis

Mean and standard deviation are used to describe attitudes toward following questions:

Table (4): Descriptive Statistics of questionnaire paragraphs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Equity					
Brand equity is influenced by the customers' willingness to purchase	63	1.00	5.00	4.3333	.95038
a high equity brand has high value in the marketplace	63	1.00	5.00	3.6190	1.06904
brand has the ability to create some sort of positive differential response in the marketplace	63	1.00	5.00	3.3968	1.10044
brand is one of the first ones recalled when a relevant prompt is used	63	1.00	5.00	3.9524	.90569
individuals would pay a standard commission and feel as if they received a valuable high-quality service from a well-known and trusted brand	63	1.00	5.00	3.9683	.87930
Free Marketing Dimensions					
Reputation					
reputation can be the best base for competition	63	1.00	5.00	3.6032	1.08568
In today's competitive environment, many companies need to project a strong and positive reputation to their stakeholders	63	1.00	5.00	3.3333	.98374
company reputation affects purchase intention directly as well as indirectly	63	1.00	5.00	3.3333	1.28264
Higher brand reputation would lead to more assurance of the Industrial product quality	63	1.00	5.00	3.4286	.92831
Reviews					
Company reviews influences word-to-word attraction	63	1.00	5.00	3.5556	.96349
Many companies depend on its reviews to attract customers	63	1.00	5.00	3.6508	1.04971
Reviews are always taken seriously by customers	63	1.00	5.00	3.6190	1.02278
Online company reviews are mostly bias and bound to personal experiences	63	1.00	5.00	3.8095	1.01373
B2C Attraction					
free marketing attracts B2C deals	63	2.00	5.00	3.5238	.93078
Usually customers reach B2C through social media	63	1.00	5.00	3.5397	.94741
Internet is the # 1 source of B2C	63	1.00	5.00	3.6190	.97432
Business to consumer (B2C) is among the most popular and widely known of sales models	63	1.00	5.00	3.4127	.94417
Businesses that rely on B2C sales must maintain good relations with their customers to ensure they come back	63	1.00	5.00	3.6190	1.02278
Marketing Strategy					
Marketing strategy is a plan to sell products or services in a way that delivers long-term profitable growth	63	1.00	5.00	3.5714	1.05821
Marketing strategy is a brand's road map	63	1.00	5.00	3.5714	.89288
Marketing strategy tells the brand where to go and the best route to get there	63	1.00	5.00	3.6190	1.03843
Great brands use strategy to deliver products and services that will have meaningful impact	63	1.00	5.00	3.9841	1.12869
Every brand decision stems from the marketing strategy, and is articulated at every touchpoint.	63	1.00	5.00	3.8254	1.00867
Size					
Free marketing is useful only for small and medium companies	63	2.00	5.00	3.6984	.90936
The size of the company doesn't matter when it comes to marketing	63	2.00	5.00	3.7302	.91944
Companies have to use every available marketing techniques regardless of its size	63	2.00	5.00	3.7937	.93600
Free marketing is a good approach to develop value for international companies	63	2.00	5.00	3.7619	.92831
Free marketing is cost effective among large companies	63	2.00	5.00	3.7302	.91944

Customer Loyalty					
Free marketing is secondary for companies which enjoy good customer loyalty	63	2.00	5.00	3.7619	.92831
Marketing approach increases the loyalty of customers towards a brand	63	2.00	5.00	3.8889	.95227
A good brand should use every available marketing approach to strengthen its value	63	2.00	5.00	3.5397	.83907
Most strong brands in the market launched through free marketing	63	2.00	5.00	3.6032	.87140
Free marketing is secondary for brands with high customer loyalty	63	2.00	5.00	3.6032	.87140

Above table indicates that there are positive attitudes toward the above questions because their means are above the mean of the scale (3). The grand mean also reflects that there are positive attitudes toward all the questions. The most influential paragraph appeared to be the 1st paragraph of the independent variables articulated "Brand equity is influenced by the customers' willingness to purchase" which scored the mean of 4.33. On the other hand, the least influential paragraph appeared to be the 7th and 8th paragraph articulated "company reputation affects purchase intention directly as well as indirectly" and "In today's competitive environment, many companies need to project a strong and positive reputation to their stakeholders" which both scored the mean of 3.33.

Table (5): Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Equity	63	2.00	5.00	3.8540	.64579
Reputation	63	1.75	4.75	3.4246	.64075
Reviews	63	1.75	5.00	3.6587	.63548
B2C Attraction	63	2.20	5.00	3.5429	.56389
Marketing Strategy	63	1.60	5.00	3.7143	.67558
Size	63	2.00	5.00	3.7111	.76266
Customer Loyalty	63	2.00	5.00	3.6794	.70714

Above table (5) indicates that there are positive attitudes toward the above variables because their means are above the mean of the scale (3). The grand mean also reflects that there are positive attitudes toward all the variables.

Reliability Test

A Cronbach Alpha test was used to ascertain instrument reliability. The value was = 0.869 for the questionnaire. All values are accepted since they are more than 60% (Malhotra, 2004).

Hypotheses Testing

Main Hypothesis

Free marketing positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.625 ^a	.391	.326	.53031

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.108	6	1.685	5.990	.000 ^b
	Residual	15.749	56	.281		
	Total	25.857	62			

Multiple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of free marketing on the brand image among Jordanian customers with moderate Pearson correlation 0.625

Sub-hypotheses

H₀₁: Reputation doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.495 ^a	.245	.233	.56559

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.343	1	6.343	19.828	.000 ^b
	Residual	19.514	61	.320		
	Total	25.857	62			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.144	.390		5.492	.000
	Reputation	.499	.112	.495	4.453	.000

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of reputation on brand equity with moderate Pearson correlation 0.495

H₀2: Reviews don't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Table (11): Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.313 ^a	.098	.083	.61838

Table (12): ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.531	1	2.531	6.619	.013 ^b
	Residual	23.326	61	.382		
	Total	25.857	62			

Table (12): Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.691	.459		5.865	.000
	Reviews	.318	.124	.313	2.573	.013

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of reviews on brand equity with moderate Pearson correlation 0.313

H₀3: B2C attraction doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Table (13): Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.386 ^a	.149	.135	.60061

Table (14): ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.852	1	3.852	10.678	.002 ^b
	Residual	22.005	61	.361		
	Total	25.857	62			

Table (15): Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.288	.485		4.716	.000
	B2C attraction	.442	.135	.386	3.268	.002

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of B2C attraction on brand equity with moderate Pearson correlation 0.386

H₀4: Marketing strategy doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Table (16): Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.456 ^a	.208	.195	.57947

Table (17): ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.374	1	5.374	16.004	.000 ^b
	Residual	20.483	61	.336		
	Total	25.857	62			

Table (18): Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.235	.411		5.437	.000
	Marketing strategy	.436	.109	.456	4.000	.000

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of marketing strategy on brand equity with moderate Pearson correlation 0.456

H₀5: Size doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Table (19): Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.261 ^a	.068	.053	.62842

Table (20): ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.767	1	1.767	4.474	.039 ^b
	Residual	24.090	61	.395		
	Total	25.857	62			

Table (20): Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.033	.396		7.651	.000
	Size	.221	.105	.261	2.115	.039

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of organization size on brand equity with weak Pearson correlation 0.261

H₀6: Customer loyalty doesn't positively influences the brand equity within manufacturing organizations in Jordan

Table (21): Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.311 ^a	.097	.082	.61874

Table (22): ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.504	1	2.504	6.540	.013 ^b
	Residual	23.353	61	.383		
	Total	25.857	62			

Table (23): Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.808	.416		6.747	.000
	Customer loyalty	.284	.111	.311	2.557	.013

Simple Regression is used to test above hypothesis; it is found that a calculated value of (F) is significant at (0.05) level. This means that null is rejected, which means that there is a statistically significant influence of customer loyalty on brand equity with moderate Pearson correlation 0.311

Discussion

According to the analysis of the study, there appeared to be an influence of free marketing along with its chosen variables on the idea of brand equity. All of the paragraphs in the questionnaire were positively addressed by the individuals of the sample which gives the overall conclusion that there is a positive influence of free marketing on the brand equity. The influence of free marketing from the first place did not come from the fact that it a 'free' marketing, the idea revolves around the idea of this type of marketing is online and it happens to be free which managed to raise the popularity of free marketing among organizations.

In analyzing the group of variables which appeared in the model and formed the overall set of variables in regard to free marketing, the most influential variable based on the analysis was customer loyalty. The idea of customer loyalty appeared to be the most influential variable of all variables and dimensions of free marketing; normally speaking, an organization which enjoys a high level of customer loyalty doesn't really depend on marketing, it mainly depends on the loyalty that this organization has among its customers, a customer who is loyal to a certain brand would normally chose to deal with it in attaining any kind of goods and services rather than looking for a new brand to trust and build relations with. According to Pugazhenth (2011) loyal customer are attracted to the brand due to their relation with it rather than the actual level of the brand. They mostly choose to deal with their brand launching from the fact that they are used to deal with this brand even though there might be other brands that are higher in level and much better, but they often go towards the brand they are used to. In that sense, it may appear according to the analysis that free marketing may help the organization reaching potential customers based on the loyalty that its older customers may possess which is seen to be highly effective specifically based on the reputation of the organization that it already enjoys.

The idea of reputation came influential in the second degree after the customer loyalty, the reputation of the organization might be of great help in determine the efficiency of the marketing plans that are being taken into action. Normally speaking and according to many researchers including (Goyal, Bagga and Bansal, 2016); (Alexa, Alexa and Stoica, 2012) highly reputed and luxurious organization don't need marketing in generally, it depends mainly on its reputation, customers' loyalty and the customer base that it already has. From that point, free marketing for such organizations is optional, or as it was stated by (Keller, 2013) it is only utilized to promote itself on a wider range and be closer to the society through the social media websites and other websites that are built on the social interaction between individuals.

Conclusion

The current research study aimed at examining the influence of free marketing strategies and tools on the idea of brand equity. What is meant by free marketing is the group of websites that gives the organization the chance to market and promote their goods and services free of charge and without any financial demands. The researcher employed the quantitative approach through the questionnaire which was distributed on total of (63) individuals from the industrial sector in Jordan which gathered the marketing managers and product managers in those organizations. Through examining the variables of (reputation, reviews, B2C attraction, marketing strategies, size and loyalty); the researcher was able to find out through the analysis that the main hypothesis of the research was accepted and "free marketing has a positive influence on the brand equity". Among the dimensions of free marketing it was seen that reputation and customer loyalty are the most influential factors that changes the degree of strength of free marketing among organizations. The idea revolves around the fact that organizations which already enjoys a good level of customer loyalty and a good reputation are normally more able to develop a better promoting plans and results even if it was utilizing free marketing techniques compared to those organizations which are relatively new or don't have the needed customer base which need better marketing tools which are costly and expensive.

As for brand equity, it appeared that free marketing helps in many ways other than promoting for the brand itself. Free marketing through the free websites and the social media websites help the brand specifically if it was luxurious brand to reach to the maximum number for those who don't know about that brand either because it is too expensive or it was out of reach. These results rhymed with what Godey (2016) noted in his study that social media marketing and marketing within the websites that are known to be cost-free is beneficial for brand equity in terms of giving it the ability to reach more customers and increase the potential customer base for the organization. On the other hand, the study shows that the reason free marketing is positively influential on the brand equity is attributed to the fact that nowadays more and more people are registered on the social media websites; based on that the brand would be more apparent for more customers and the idea behind the brand would be attainable for the clients, these results also appeared within a study by Al-Hadid and Abu-Romman (2014) who stated that social media free marketing is one of the most beneficial marketing approaches which give great help for brand equity.

Generally speaking, the results of the current study were as follows:

- There is a positively significant influence of free marketing on brand equity
- Free marketing appeared to be influential in a positive way not only for regular brands but also for luxurious brands as it helps the brand reaches for as many customers as possible
- There appeared to be a good level of awareness of the importance of social media marketing among the sample of the study
- The industrial sector in Jordan appeared to be reliable to a certain degree of the idea of free marketing through social media websites including (Facebook, twitter, Google+, instagram and LinkedIn).
- The sample of the study was aware that the fact that the industrial sector in Jordan mainly depends on free marketing as it is cost effective in addition to the fact that the nature of the customer within this sector is more intentional rather than random.

Recommendations

Based on the theoretical review and launching from the results of the study which were presented earlier the study recommends the following:

- A study on the influence of social media marketing utilization within the industrial sector in Jordan and its role in increasing the competitive advantage of the industrial sector is suggested to be carried out
- Organizations shouldn't plead ignorance on the role of free marketing in reaching the maximum number of customers given that social media is a tool that incredibly popular these days.

- Being a free marketing tool doesn't make weak and not beneficial; not every expensive thing is supposed to be good, so organizations within the industrial sector in Jordan should focus more on the communication channels that are attainable through social media

References

- Aaker, A.D., & Biel, A.L. (1993), Brand equity and advertising-advertising role in building strong brands. Lawrence Erlbaum associates, inc. ISBN: 0-8058-1283-0.
- Aaker, D.A. (1991). Building strong brands, the bath press (first published), ISBN: 0-7432-3213-5.
- Alexa, E.L., Alexa, M. and Stoica, C.M., 2012. The use of online marketing and social media in higher education institutions in Romania. *Journal of Marketing Research & Case Studies*, 2012, p.1.
- Amini, A., Darani, M., Afshani, M. and Amini, Z., 2012. Effectiveness of marketing strategies and corporate image on brand equity as a sustainable competitive advantage. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(2), pp.192-205.
- Angella, K., & Eunju, K. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand, *Journal of Business Research* 65 ,pp. 1480–1486
- Arens, W. F., Schaefer, D. H., & Weigold, M. (2009). Essentials of Contemporary Advertising. McGraw-Hill/Irwin Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10020. ISBN: 978- 0-07-128757-9
- As'ad, H.A.R. and Alhadid, A.Y., 2014. The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Equity: An Empirical Study on Mobile Service Providers in Jordan. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 3(1), p.315.
- Babac, R. (2011). Impact of Social Media Use on Brand Equity of Magazine Brands, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Halmstad University, Sweden.
- Baines, P., Fill, C., & Page, K. (2008). Marketing, Oxford University press (First Published).
- Belch and Belch (2009). Advertising & Promotion: An integrated marketing communication perspective, McGrawhill Irwin.
- Berry, LL., & Seltman, K.D. (2007), Building a strong services brand: Lessons from Mayo Clinic. *Business Horizons* 50, pp. 199-209
- Berselli, S. & Burger, S. & Close, J. (2012) .Crisis Mapping Community Social Media Information During and After Large-Scale Disasters, Unpublished master thesis, Victorian Emergency Services Foundation, Victoria.
- Borrego, M., Douglas, E.P. and Amelink, C.T., (2009). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods in engineering education. *Journal of Engineering education*, 98(1), pp.53-66.
- Bradley, F. (2005). International Marketing Strategy, Pearson education limited
- Brogi, S., Calabrese, A., Campisi, D., Capece, G., Costa, R. and Di Pillo, F., 2013. The effects of online brand communities on brand equity in the luxury fashion industry. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 5, p.32.
- Bushelow, E. E. (2012). Facebook Pages and Benefits to Brands, *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 3(2), 5-20.
- Chaffey, D. (2009). Internet Marketing, strategy implementation and practice, Pearson education ltd (Fourth Edition)
- Cockrum, J., 2011. Free Marketing: 101 Low and No-cost Ways to Grow Your Business, Online and Off. John Wiley & Sons. Vancouver
- Erdo, R. E. & Çiçek, M. (2012). The impact of social media marketing on brand Fashion Marketing, 1(3), 164-171.
- Fischer, E. & Reuber, R. (2011). Social interaction via new social media: (How) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behavior? *Journal of Business Venturing* (26), 3-21.

- Gay, R., Alan, K., & Rita, E. (2007). *Online marketing-a customer-led approach*, Oxford university press (First edition)
- Goyal, A. Bagga, T and Bansal, S . 2016). Impact of Increasing Trend of Online Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior: FMCG Brands in Indian Scenario. *International Journal of Engineering Technology, Management and Applied Sciences*. 4(5)
- Jobber, D. (2007). *Principles and Practice of Marketing*, 5th ed. Berkshire Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education Shoppe hangers Road. ISBN 10 0-07-7114159
- Kalyanaraman, S. &Sundar, S.S. (2003). "The psychological appeal of personalized online content: an experimental investigation of customized web portals", Paper presented at the meeting of the International Communication Association, San diego, May.
- Kaplan, A., &Haenlein, M, (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media, *Business Horizons*, 53(1); 61
- Keller.K.L. (2001). *Building Customer-Based Brand Equity: A Blueprint for Creating Strong Brands* (2001) Report No. 01-107
- Kim, A. J., &Ko, E. (2010). Impacts of Luxury Fashion Brand's Social Media Marketing on Customer Relationship and Purchase Intention, *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 1:3, 164-171, DOI:10.1080/20932685.2010.10593068
- Kotler, P., &Keller,K, L. (2006). *Marketing Management*.12 ed. Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. ISBN-0-13-145757-8. Scientific Articles:
- Maggie, P., &Joeri, K. (2004). *Marketing communication-a European perspective*, Pearson Education Ltd (Second edition published)
- Malhotra, N. K. (2004). *Marketing Research*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall
- Mangold, G., &Faulds, D. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix, *Business Horizons*, 52, 357-365.
- Mersey, R., Malthouse, E., & Calder, B. (2010). Engagement with Media, *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 7(2), 39 -56.
- Moise, D. (2011). Marketing strategies – strategic context specific to communication in events marketing, *Romanian Journal of Marketing, Ed. Rosetti Educational*, 1, 26.
- Pugazhenth, P., (2011). Factors Influencing Customer Loyalty and Choice of Retailers while buying Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Master's Thesis in Business Administration, Blekinge Institute of Technology
- Pullig, C., (2008). What is Brand Equity and What Does the Branding Concept Mean to You. *Keller Center Research Report*.
- Safko, L., & Brake, D.K. (2009). *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools & Strategies for Business Successes*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN: 978-0-470-41155-1
- Sinclair, R., (2011). The Importance of Brand Equity in Creating Firm Value. URL: <http://www.prophet.com/downloads/whitepapers/sinclair-brand-equity-firm-value.pdf>, *Abruf am*, 10.
- Sukamolson, S., (2007). *Fundamentals of quantitative research*. Bangkok: EJTR.
- Wells, W. Burnett, J., & Moriarty, S.E. (2000). *Advertising principles and practice*, Prentice Hall inc.13-083575-4
- Welner, K.G., (2011). Free-market think tanks and the marketing of education policy. *Dissent*, 58(2), pp.39-43.
- Whitelock, M., &Fastoso, F. (2007). "Understanding international branding: defining the domain and reviewing the literature", *International Marketing Review*, 24(3): 252-270.
- Williams, T., & Williams, R. (2008). Adopting social media: Are we leaders, managers or followers? *Communication World*, 25(4), 34-37.
- Xiang, Z., &Gretzel, U. (2010). "Role of social media in online travel information search", *Tourism Management* 31:179–188.
- Zalaghi, H. and Khazaei, M., 2016. The Role of Deductive and Inductive Reasoning in Accounting Research and Standard Setting. *Asian Journal of Finance & Accounting*, 8(1), pp.23-37.