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Identifying Customer Eye Catching Behavior Patterns Based on Ethical Marketing (Cosmetic Industry)

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Abstract:

Nowadays, to retain and attract customers, the primary goal is identifying the best customers and their purchasing behavior. Hence, the present study identifies the customer purchasing behavior pattern based on ethical marketing (case study: cosmetic industry). The method of this study is a quantitative survey. In this study, data are collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. Its face validity is confirmed by the expert professors and its factor validity is confirmed using a confirmatory factor analysis test. Its factor load is obtained higher than 0.3. Its reliability is validated through Cronbach's alpha test, yielding a value above 0.8 for both marketing components and customer purchasing behavior patterns. The statistical population of this study consists of approximately 100 managers from Iran's cosmetic industry. They are selected using convenience random sampling. A sample size of 80 people is selected to answer the research questions. The data analysis tool is SPSS 23 and Lisrel 8.5 software. The results revealed that ethical marketing positively (by about 0.38) affects the purchasing behavior pattern of cosmetic industry customers with 99% confidence. Among the components of ethical marketing, the empathy component had the highest impact on the development of frugal behavior patterns and the complex purchasing behavior pattern of cosmetic industry customers. The results also showed that the dominant patterns of purchasing behavior of cosmetic industry customers in Iran are frugal purchasing behavior, analytical behavior, and variety-seeking behavior patterns, respectively.

Keywords: Pattern, Purchasing behavior, Customers, Ethical marketing.

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Introduction

In today's competitive environment, business managers should develop their capabilities to determine the significant factors of product selection for production in the market sectors they want to attract and serve (Farida, 2022) and (Yuan, 2020). Managers of these businesses should identify what is crucial to their customers in their target market and how to compare the firm's strengths with their competitors' strengths. Nowadays, organizations and businesses are facing increasing competition. Both domestic and foreign organizations and businesses seek to increase sales and gain a larger share of the market (Muhonen, 2017). Paying attention to marketing in companies is vital

to increase sales and continuing the company's activity. In a competitive structure, the market requires the knowledge and understanding of the management of the customer's opinions and preferences, and the evaluation of how to use the marketing mix in the market to achieve a certain amount of sales and the desired market share. The key to success in this area requires wisely using the results of marketing research (Ebrahim, 2020) To attract the attention of purchasers toward purchasing the company's products sustainably, companies should induce a kind of confidence in the way of marketing to the purchasers about the correctness and honesty of product advertisements. Today, this widely debated topic in management and market science

is known as ethical marketing (Pittz, 2020). Also, to retain and attract customers, the primary goal is identifying the best customers and their purchasing behavior. The second goal is to classify the purchased products. The third goal is to identify the hidden patterns among purchased products (Lee, 2019). Nowadays, purchase intention represents consumers' anticipated behavior in future buying decisions. It plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and, consequently, their behavior (Xiao, 2018).

Several studies have indicated that observing the ethics in marketing affects the variables such as loyalty, satisfaction, trust, commitment, amount of sales, and purchaser behavior. It also leads to better performance and sustainable growth of the organization (Sofla, 2024). Achieving balanced and sustainable growth in the organization requires promoting ethics in marketing and social responsibility of the organization (Mojekeh, 2019). For example, domestic studies have shown that ethical marketing affects the sale rate of Pegah milk companies in Isfahan (Nasr Isfahani, 2018). Additionally, (Hosseini et al., 2022) conducted a study titled "Identifying and Measuring the Components of Ethical Marketing in Selected Industries of Iran: A Case Study of the Food and Cosmetic Industries"(Hosseini, 2022). They showed a significant difference between the levels of observing the components of ethical marketing in the two industries (Hassani, 2024). The mean of observing these components in the food industry was higher than in the cosmetic industry. It was superior in all the main themes. However, among 32 components of ethical marketing, in 5 components, the cosmetic industry obtained a lower score. Ethical marketing affected the loyalty of bank customers (Feizi, 2024).

Ethical marketing improves the performance of companies(Zarei, 2016). (Lee & Jin, 2019) stated that the performance of ethical marketing and the quality of the brand loyalty relationship affect the improvement of transactions in the B2C field (Lee, 2019).

Ethical behavior in sales increases customer satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty (Ou, 2015).

Moreover, many studies have shown that unethical behavior in the marketing of organizations damages the company's reputation in the mind of purchasers through its negative effects. It can also negatively affect the sales and financial performance of the company due to non-repetition of purchases, consumer sanctions, and payment

of fines(Chae, 2020). Accordingly, the issues of not paying attention to ethical marketing in identifying the customer's purchasing behavior pattern are:

- Lack of customer trust
- Lack of customer loyalty on re-purchases
- Sanction
- Payment of fine
- Lack of re-purchases by customers

The cosmetic industry in Iran holds great significance as it is closely linked to two major aspects: health and beauty. The consumption rate of cosmetics in the country is remarkably high. According to the head of Iran's Food and Drug Organization, Iran's per capita consumption of cosmetics is 2.5 times the global average. In recent years, this industry has been strongly accused of ethical accusations such as hoarding, underselling, exaggerated advertising, etc. Thus, this study investigates the level of observing the ethical marketing components from the customers' point of view and its impact on the purchasing behavior pattern of customers. Accordingly, this study seeks to identify customer purchasing behavior patterns based on ethical marketing within the cosmetic industry. The Concept of Ethical Marketing Various researchers have defined ethical marketing, with the most notable definitions outlined in) Table 1(. As seen, the primary theme of these definitions is ethical behavior based on a specific situation.

Ethical marketing components

There are several theories to determine the components of ethical marketing. In the present study, the components of value-based ethical marketing based are used. This theory was proposed by (Murphy et al., 2016) (Murphy, 2016). Accordingly, the components of virtue-based ethical marketing are as follows:

- Correctness, honesty, and integrity: Adhering to ethical principles and perfection, providing complete, and precise information to customers
- Fairness: characterized by equality and free from bias or partiality, selling and pricing products at a level appropriate with their benefits.
- Trust: Ensuring that sales staff or suppliers completely fulfill their obligations without a need to monitor them
- Respect: Changing products to meet cultural needs and avoiding selling unsafe products
- Empathy: Avoid selling products to customers who cannot

Table 1. Some of the most significant definitions of marketing ethics

Authors	definitions of marketing ethics
(Murphy et al., 2016)	Ethical marketing refers to practices and procedures that highlight marketing policies and actions, whether personal or organizational, that are transparent, trustworthy, responsible, and fair to both consumers and other stakeholders.
(Emamverdikhan et al., 2024)	Ethical marketing is the process by which companies address customer interests in producing products and services, building strong customer relationships and interests, and creating value for all stakeholders by incorporating social, and environmental considerations into products and advertising.
(Lee & Jin, 2019)	Marketing ethics: It is the systematic use of ethical criteria in the decisions and behaviors of marketing institutions.

purchase them.

Customer purchasing behavior pattern:

The most common types of purchasing behaviors in the latest survey of 2021 are as follows:

Habitual behavior

When customers make a habit purchase, they little think and research their purchase. Many customers who follow habitual purchasing behaviors often make quick decisions when selecting and purchasing products. Some may quickly prefer one brand over another since it is more recognizable or familiar to them. Others select certain products since they have a lower price tag, or they have already purchased from that brand and are loyal to it (Valaskova, 2021).

Complex behavioral pattern

Complex purchasing behavior usually occurs when a customer is purchasing an expensive product or service. Since it imposes high costs for him, he may research it and its features before making a big purchase. They may spend time online reading views about the product and its benefits. Customers may also consult with friends, family, or coworkers to obtain additional views and opinions on this significant purchase decision (White, 2019).

Variety-seeking behavioral pattern

This type of purchasing behavior occurs when consumers often purchase the same product but want to try another new product. They primarily purchase different products to add variety to their daily routine and decision-making. When these consumers see new products in advertisements, they may purchase them to see how it differs from the product they purchase regularly. In other words, while these people are loyal to your product, they like to purchase another product and compare its strengths and weaknesses with yours. Also, these people have the potential to become new customers of another brand's loyalty program. This behavior is called variety-seeking behavior (Brandtner, 2021).

Impulsive behavior

People who make impulsive purchase decisions usually set aside little time or planning to select the product to purchase. Some people may purchase a product without doing research or obtaining information about its features. They may make these decisions owing to factors such as celebrity endorsements, slogans, logos, or promotional content. They may be people who have left your loyalty program after staying in your loyalty program for a while due to an impulsive decision they made (Ahangar Sole Boni, 2024).

Analytical behavior pattern

These purchasers often use information, data, facts,

and logic when making major business decisions. They usually do extensive research on the success rate of certain products and the possible outcomes they may receive after purchasing a product. They may spend a considerable amount of time comparing the products. They often spend much time before making a formal decision about the products they select. Use descriptions, case studies, and success statistics about your products when targeting these purchasers (Valaskova, 2021).

Frugal behavior pattern

These types of purchasers focus strongly on saving money and purchasing products within their budget limits. They may care more about product price than factors such as brand reputation, product features, or consumer benefits. You can usually attract these customers by using competitive pricing and details of the return on investment that purchasers can earn after purchasing your product or service. Regarding your loyalty programs, explain to them in detail that their money will be returned to them in other ways, such as a gift card or a discount on the next purchase, etc. after a certain amount of spending (Valaskova, 2021).

Methodology

The present study is quantitative research. It is also a survey type of explanatory-descriptive research. In this research, the researcher explains the situation and the effect of ethical marketing components on the purchasing behavior patterns of cosmetic industry customers. It is also applied research in terms of aim, in which the researcher examines the relationship between the variables of ethical marketing components and the purchasing behavior patterns of cosmetic industry customers.

Statistical population, estimation of sample size, and sampling method

The unit of analysis in this study is cosmetic industries in Iran. The statistical population of the current study consists of approximately 100 managers from the cosmetic industries in Iran. The convenience random sampling method is used in this study. The sample size is determined at 80 people using Cochran's formula. Finally, 80 people are randomly selected among 100 people to answer the questions of the questionnaire.

$$n = \frac{\frac{Z^2pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left(\frac{Z^2pq}{d^2} \right) - 1} \quad (1)$$

In this formula, N represents the population size, which is 100 people.

The p-statistic represents the percentage distribution of

Table 2. The results of Cronbach's alpha test of the research variables to determine the reliability of the research tool

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Ethical marketing components	0.95
Customer purchasing behavior patterns	0.86

the trait in the population, indicating the proportion of individuals who possess the studied trait. The q-statistic, on the other hand, represents the percentage of individuals who do not have the studied trait.

If the p and q values are unknown, their maximum value of 0.05 should be used. The statistic is $z=t$, meaning there is no issue in using t instead of z. At the 5% error level, the z-value is 1.96, and the Z^2 value is 3.8416.

The d-value represents the difference between the actual proportion of the trait in the population and the researcher's estimate of its presence in the population. This factor affects the accuracy of sampling. To achieve the most precise sampling, the maximum d value of 0.05 should be used.

Data collection tool

This study is a part of library research in which the researcher collects theoretical data about the components of ethical marketing and purchasing behavior patterns of cosmetic industry customers by studying Persian and English specialized books and magazines and articles extracted from the Internet. Also, the data are collected using a researcher-made questionnaire regarding the identification of customers' purchase behavior patterns based on ethical marketing. The face validity of the questionnaires is approved by supervisors and advisors. After determining the face validity, factor validity is calculated, the results of which are presented in the results section in (Table 2). The reliability of researcher-made questionnaires is approved using Cronbach's alpha test (at about 0.8).

The method of measuring research variables in the researcher-made questionnaire is as follows.

The components of ethical marketing (independent variable) are determined in 5 questions using a Likert scale (very low to very high).

The purchasing behavior patterns of cosmetic industry customers (dependent variable) are determined in 6 questions using a Likert scale (very low to very high).

Data analysis tools

SPSS 23 and Lisrel 8.5 software were used to perform path analysis in this study. As mentioned, the structural equation test method was used to present the model of customers' purchasing behavior.

Results

Examining the characteristics of the responding managers

According to (Table 3), the highest percentage of respondents is married (75%), have a master's degree (54.69%), and have more than 10 years of employment history (77.5%).

The status of cosmetic industries regarding the components of marketing ethics

(Table 4) shows the components of honesty in marketing (with a mean of 4.55 ± 0.23), fairness in marketing (with a mean of 4.43 ± 1.22), trust in marketing (with a mean of 4.30 ± 0.98), respect in marketing (4.30 ± 0.98), and empathy in marketing (3.99 ± 0.78) were ranked first to fifth, respectively, in the cosmetic industries of Iran.

Determining the factor (construct) validity of ethical marketing components

One of the prerequisites for performing structural equations to test the study model is the fit of the items with the variables. For this purpose, confirmatory factor analysis is used to determine the factor validity and to perform a structural equation test.

Decision-making rule: In this section, a confirmatory factor analysis test is used to confirm the fit of the items with the measured variable. If the factor load of each item on its variable is higher than 0.3, the factor validity is confirmed (Figure 1).

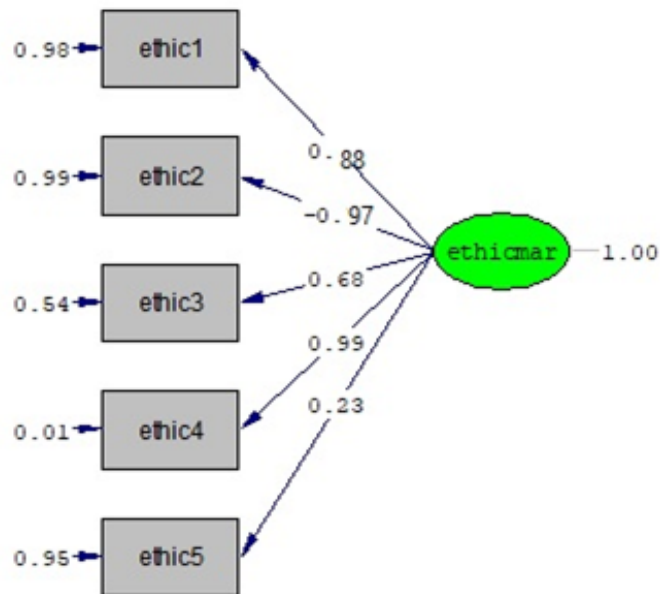
The output of Lisrel standardized coefficients for the ethical marketing variable is reported. All items of the marketing component have higher factor loads than 0.3 and are significant (Table 5).

Table 3. Examining the individual characteristics of the responding managers

Variable	Classes	Frequency	Valid percentage
Marital Status	Single	20	25
	Married	60	75
	Sum	80	100
Education	Bachelor	10	12.5
	Master	50	62.5
	PhD	20	25
	sum	80	100
	Below 5 years	8	10
Employment history	5-10 years	10	12.5
	Over 10 years	62	77.5
	Sum	80	100

Table 4. The current state of cosmetic industries regarding the marketing ethics components

marketing ethics components	Mean	SD	Priority
Honesty	4.55	0.23	1
Fairness	4.43	1.22	2
Trust	4.30	0.98	3
Respect	4.20	0.47	4
Empathy	3.99	0.78	5



Chi-Square=4.82, df=5, P-value=0.0000, RMSEA=0.7586

Figure 1. Standard factor load of ethical marketing variable

Table 5. Fit indices of ethical marketing components scale

Index	Standard	Estimated
χ^2/df	$3 > \chi^2/df >$	1.73
RSMEA	$0.08 > RSMEA$	0.044
GFI	$0.9 < GFI$	0.98
AGFI	$0.9 < AGFI$	0.92
CFI	$0.9 < CFI$	0.96
NFI	$0.9 < NFI$	0.95

The status of cosmetic industries regarding the purchasing behavior pattern

As (Table 6) shows, the frugal purchasing behavior pattern (with a mean of 4.80 ± 1.23), analytical behavior pattern (with a mean of 4.02 ± 0.98), variety-seeking behavior pattern (with a mean of 3.90 ± 0.97), habitual purchasing behavior pattern (with a mean of 3.90 ± 0.97), complex behavior pattern (with a mean of 3.49 ± 0.18), and impulsive behavior pattern (with a mean of 3.33 ± 1.97) were

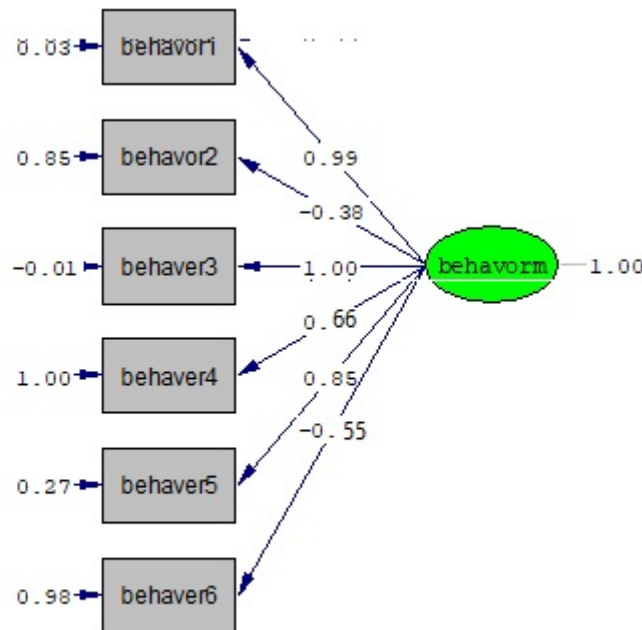
ranked first to sixth, respectively.

Determining the factor (construct) validity of customers' purchasing behavior pattern

(Figure 2) reports the output of standardized Lisrel coefficients for the purchasing behavior pattern variable of cosmetic industry customers. All questions have factor loads higher than 0.3 and are significant. It indicates the fit of the items with the main construct of the customer's purchasing behavior pattern.

Table 6. The current status of the cosmetic industry regarding the purchasing behavior pattern of health industries

Purchasing behavior patterns	Mean	SD	Priority
Frugal shopping behavior pattern	4.80	1.23	1
Analytical behavior pattern	4.20	1.22	2
Variety-seeking behavior model	4.02	0.98	3
Habitual purchasing behavior pattern	3.90	0.97	4
Complex behavior pattern	3.49	0.18	5
Impulsive behavior pattern	3.33	1.97	6



Chi-Square=32.64, df=9, P-value=0.00015, RMSEA=0.291

Figure 2. Standard factor load of customers' purchasing behavior pattern

Table 7. Fit indices of customers' purchasing behavior pattern scale

Index	Standard	Estimate
X^2/df	$3 > X^2/df$	1.43
RSMEA	$0.08 > RSMEA$	0.033
GFI	$0.9 < GFI$	0.95
AGFI	$0.9 < AGFI$	0.99
CFI	$0.9 < CFI$	0.96
NFI	$0.9 < NFI$	0.95

Identifying the customer purchasing behavior pattern based on marketing components

(Table 7) The results show that ethical marketing has had a positive impact on customer purchasing behavior in the cosmetic industry with 99% confidence. Additionally, approximately 38% of customer purchasing behavior is influenced by ethical marketing.

Based on (Figure 3) and (Figure 4), the appropriate paths are determined to determine the customer's purchasing behavior pattern.

In (Table 8), the components of marketing (respect and empathy) and customer purchasing behavior patterns (frugal, analytical, variety-seeking, and complex) which were significant, are defined and compared as effective

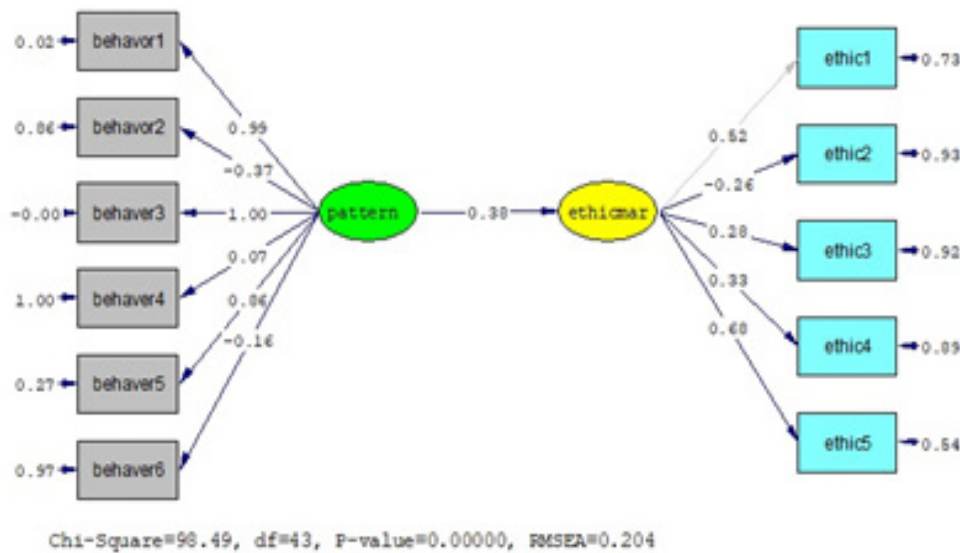


Figure 3. The standard factor load of the effect of ethical marketing components on customer purchasing behavior patterns in the cosmetic industry indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between the ethical marketing components and purchasing behavior.

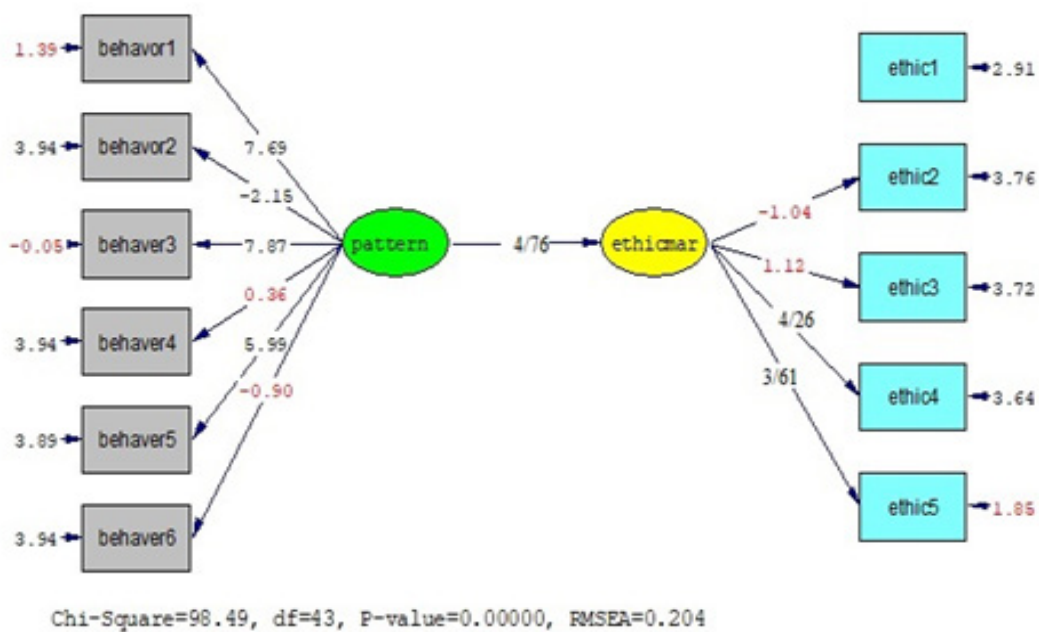


Figure 4. The standard t-value of the effect of ethical marketing components on customer purchasing behavior in the cosmetic industry indicates the significance of the relationship. A higher t-value suggests a more robust and statistically significant effect.

paths and the best path is determined. Eight paths for the effect of ethical marketing components on customer purchasing behavior patterns were defined.

Path 1: Development of a frugal purchasing behavior pattern through respect to the opinions of customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 60%.

Path 2: Development of a frugal purchasing behavior pattern through empathy with customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 99 percent.

Path 3: Development of the analytical purchasing behavior pattern of customers through respect to opinions of customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 30%.

Path 4: Development of the analytical behavior pattern through empathy with customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 35%.

Path 5: Development of a variety-seeking purchasing behavior pattern through respect to the opinions of customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 79%.

Path 6: Development of a variety-seeking behavior pattern through empathy with customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 99%.

Path 7: Development of a complex behavior purchasing pattern through respect to the opinions of customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 70%.

Table 8. Path analysis of the effects of ethical marketing structures on customers' purchasing patterns

Hypothesis	Variable effect	On variable	Path coefficient	t	sig	Result
-	ethical marketing	customers' purchasing pattern	0.38	**4.76	0.000	Confirmed

**Significance at the level of one percent error

Path 8: Development of a complex behavior purchasing pattern through empathy with customers (ethical marketing component) is appropriate at about 80%.

(Table 8) shows that paths 2 and 6 are the best paths to develop the behavioral pattern of cosmetic industry customers. In other words, among the marketing components, the empathy component has had a positive and significant effect (99%) on the development of the frugal behavior pattern and the complex purchasing behavior pattern of the cosmetic industry customers. In other words, by avoiding selling products that customers cannot purchase due to their price, the sales officials of the cosmetic industry cause complex (research before purchasing) and frugal (at an appropriate price) purchasing behavior patterns at about 99%.

Discussion

The cosmetic industry in Iran is significant due to its connection to two major aspects: health and beauty. The consumption of cosmetics in Iran is notably high. This study aims to identify customer purchasing behavior patterns based on ethical marketing in order to develop strategies for increasing sales and sustaining the activities of the cosmetic industry. A survey was conducted among the managers of the cosmetic industry in Iran. Most of them were married, had a master's degree, and had more than 10 years of employment history.

The results of the study on the status of ethical marketing components among Iranian cosmetic industries showed that the components of honesty in marketing (with a mean of 4.55 ± 0.23), fairness in marketing (with a mean of 4.43 ± 1.22), trust in marketing (with a mean of 4.30 ± 0.98), respect in marketing (4.30 ± 0.98), and empathy in marketing (3.99 ± 0.78) are in a good and very good range. Regarding their status in terms of customers' purchasing behavior pattern, frugal purchasing behavior pattern (with a mean of 4.80 ± 1.23), and analytical behavior pattern (with a mean of 4.02 ± 0.98), variety-seeking behavior pattern (with a mean of 3.90 ± 0.97) were ranked first to third, respectively, and they are at a very good level.

Conclusion

Regarding the identification of customer purchasing behavior patterns based on marketing components, the results of the structural equation test revealed that ethical marketing positively influenced the purchasing behavior patterns of cosmetic industry customers with 99% confidence. Additionally, ethical marketing accounts for approximately 38% of customers' purchasing behavior. Among the marketing components, the empathy component had the greatest impact on the development of the frugal behavior pattern and the complex purchasing

behavior pattern of the cosmetic industry customers. In other words, by avoiding selling products that customers cannot purchase due to their price, the sales officials of the cosmetic industry in Iran cause complex (doing research before purchasing) and frugal (at an appropriate price) purchasing behavior patterns at about 99 percent.

Author's contribution

Sina Taghizadeh and Shadi Azimigohar developed the study concept and design. Sina Taghizadeh and Shadi Azimigohar acquired the data. Sina Taghizadeh and Shadi Azimigohar analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the intellectual content, manuscript editing and read and approved the final manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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