

Identification and Categorization of the Influencing Fac-tors on the Purchase of Dairy Products (Case Study: Cus-tomers of Dairy Companies)

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify and categorize the influencing factors on the purchase of dairy products among customers of dairy companies in Mashhad city, Iran. This study is mixed research (qualitative and quantitative), conducted to identify and categorize the influencing factors on consumers' purchase. Therefore, the theoretical foundations were examined in the initial step, after which the customers and their needs and demands were addressed in terms of the company and its products. In the qualitative part, interviews were conducted in focus groups (23 people in 5 groups) to identify and extract these factors using the theme analysis technique. The reliability of the interviews was confirmed by retesting and the reliability between two encoders. Sixty themes (factors) that affected the purchase of dairy products were collected. In the quantitative part, 517 questionnaires were collected from 13 regions of Mashhad city to perform statistical tests. A questionnaire was designed using the extracted themes in the previous (qualitative) stage to assess customers' feedback. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by content and structure validity (exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis), and its reliability was checked by Cronbach's alpha. Fourteen components were obtained by exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, after which the variables were labeled as intrinsic, psychological, and personality factors, the identity of the company, production power of the company, competitive power of the company, competitive prices, social awareness, and store capabilities. The construct validity was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. This research will greatly help the marketing and product managers of the dairy industry in identifying the needs of customers.

Keywords: Influencing factors on purchase, Purchase of dairy products, Exploratory factors, Mixed methods research, Structural validity

1. Introduction

Successful marketing starts with understanding how and why consumers show a behavior [1]. Environmental changes, especially economic crises, and the growing influence of digital technologies have led to many changes in consumer behavior and shopping habits [2]. Thus, the study of consumer needs, the priority of these needs, and the analysis of consumer behavior are among the target topics [3]. Some studies state that consumers' desire to purchase a product or service reflects their understanding of the purchase. A number of studies show that purchase decisions are largely influenced by consumers' need for a product or service to be unique. stated that when people buy, they are involved in psychological, emotional, and physical processes and expect their choices to influence the creation and promotion of their status and power. One of the most important manifestations is the perceptions of buyers in their decisions to choose a brand of a product, because the brand is one of the studies conducted in the field of identifying

individual factors affecting customer attraction [3].

Based on the available evidence and criteria, customers review and compare market brands and finally choose the brand that meets their needs. Therefore, the first attempt of the marketer is to extract the features and characteristics of the product considered important by the target market and to check the extent the brand has those features, the percentage of buyers who consider these factors in their purchase, and whether there is such an attitude toward its production, marketing, and sales policy makers or not [4]. Dairy industry is one of the most important and advanced conversion and complementary industries in the agricultural sector, ranking first in the consumer market and value added among other conversion and complementary industries in this sector. This shows the lucrative investment in this sector and the importance of its future policies, among the food industry subgroups, with the highest share of value added (22%). Accordingly, given the importance of dairy products in the nutrition and health of society, policy makers and planners in the country have always considered the production and consumption of these products.

Hence, it is important to investigate the relationship between dairy consumption and consumer behavior because of the contribution of these products to health and economy [5]. In a study conducted by, Khorasan Razavi province was introduced as having the highest rate of development in the dairy industry. This province produces 10% of the country's milk, with an average annual production of 900,000 tons of milk per year. It has more than five thousand industrial, semi-industrial, and small rural farms with 320 thousand productive and non-productive heavy livestock, of which 100 thousand are productive cattle. There are a total of 14 million and 600 thousand livestock units in Khorasan Razavi, and 1.2 million tons of products are produced annually in the field of livestock and poultry in this province. There are also 35 dairy production units in Khorasan Razavi . Meanwhile, reports indicate that there are a total of 104 dairy factories in Khorasan Razavi, of which 8 have completely revoked their licenses and 47 are closed.

The rest of the factories are operating at 30% of their capacity, and yet about 20% of their products remain in warehouses and have no customers. On the other hand, there is no market for exporting products. The head of the Khorasan Razavi Dairy Manufacturers Association says that the only export destinations for dairy producers in Khorasan Razavi are Iraq and Afghanistan. People's livelihood problems have reduced their purchase from the market, and this problem together with the loss of export markets has made it difficult for dairy units to continue operating.

These problems and challenges for the leading province in the field of dairy industry are a warning signal for this industry in this province and the country. Therefore, efforts should be made to improve the current situation with proper planning and a careful look at the issues. It can be said that increasing the competitiveness of the dairy industry at home and in domestic companies and achieving a good competitive position at the international and domestic levels requires identifying the influencing factors on the operational success of companies in today's dynamic environment. Such assessments can help to better understand consumer behavior, which can be a useful indicator of market orientation to increase the consumption of dairy products [5].

There is little information on consumer behavior, especially their choice towards buying and consuming dairy products in developing countries. Therefore, this study aims to understand the factors that affect consumer behavior towards dairy products in Iran [6]. Thus, a full understanding of these factors, both in the dairy industry and in the corporate market, is crucial. On the other hand, it is important to pay attention to customers in order to meet their needs and expectations from companies. Identifying these factors will lead to a better understanding of the market and intelligence for dairy companies and is crucial in designing competitive marketing strategies.

2. Customer Decisions

Consumer behavior involves a set of psychological and physical processes that begin before purchase and continue after consumption. This behavior aims to satisfy the needs and desires of different individuals and groups by examining the effective processes during the selection, purchase, and use of products and services, ideas, and experiences [7]. Selection models provide a valid approach to analyzing consumer preferences, as these models provide an opportunity to examine many influencing aspects of consumer behavior [8]. In this process, the decision stage is one of the most important steps through which the consumer passes according to the criteria and options available. In other words, the consumer's decision-making and the style of decision-making indicate the mental and cognitive tendencies used when choosing and making decisions [4].

consumer decision-making styles are a mental orientation determining the consumer's approach in the decision-making and product selection stage [9]. Researchers have focused on three approaches to build a model for better identifying consumer decision-making styles, including the lifestyle, the consumer typology, and the consumer characteristics approaches [10]. The consumer typology approach seeks to define consumer attitudes and purchasing motivations by categorizing consumers into a limited number of types that differ from one another. Psychological research assumes that the interests and activities of consumers can be very effective in measuring their personality and thus predicting their behaviors [11]. Consumer lifestyle emphasizes how consumers live; in other words, it is a patterned way of life that fits different consumer products, activities, and resources.

It also determines how individuals spend their time and financial resources on activities, interests, and ideas. Consumers' lifestyle characteristics affect their acquisition, consumption, and disposal activities in daily life. A consumer-based approach has been widely used to examine consumer tendencies and decision-making styles. In other words, this approach tries to categorize consumers based on their buying behavior, rooted in their different characteristics. This approach focuses on emotional and cognitive tendencies that are particularly relevant to consumer decision-making [10]. In the literature on identifying consumer buying decision-making styles, which has a long history in consumer behavior research and marketing, the approach based on consumer characteristics is more comprehensive, has been used more widely, and has had a stronger and clearer effect on consumer buying tendencies. This approach assumes that consumers follow certain decision-making characteristics such as quality sensitivity or brand and store loyalty in the implementation of their purchasing duties [10].

3. Research Background

prioritized the factors and explained the model in their study titled "Prioritizing Effective Factors on Kaleh Company Customer Loyalty[12]." Among the factors effective on customer loyalty, the quality of services, customer satisfaction and innovation in presenting the products, maintaining customers' trust, the relationship with customers, and fast and easy servicing to them, the variety of products, positive proceeds of the company, and superficial characteristics of the products ranked first to seventh, respectively, in respondents' views. The authors suggest that managers of Kaleh Company should pay more attention to the quality of their productions and study more on ways to improve customer satisfaction.

They also emphasize that customers are the vital forces of all organizations and meeting their satisfaction is one of the most important aims of each company. showed that food quality (in dairy products) is generally perceived by consumers through the attributes of freshness, naturalness, production method, appearance, taste, smell, availability, nutritional value, and health benefits. identified the most important socio-economic variables explaining individual differences in consumer behaviors as taste, trust, health benefits, packaging, type of shop, brand, the origin of the product, and publicity [5]. found that female consumers showed high acceptance for some functional dairy products, such as yogurt enriched with calcium, fiber, and probiotics [13].

They found that brand familiarity motivated consumers with low interest in health to increase their acceptance and preference for health-enhanced dairy products, such as probiotic yogurts or those with a general functional claim. indicated that functional, social, emotional, and epistemic values have a positive impact on the selection of dairy products, but conditional value did not have a positive impact[6]. indicated that yogurt, milk, and cheese were the most preferred dairy products among consumers, and there was a greater tendency towards low-fat options than full-fat dairy products[8]. The results indicated that price and family cost decreased the probability of product selection, while factors such as age, education, and attention to exercise increased this probability. Marketing mix variables (4Ps) also had a significant effect on the choice of dairy products. indicated that most consumers strive to maintain a healthy lifestyle and a rational diet, which includes the consumption of milk and dairy products [14]. The main factors determining the consumption of milk and dairy products, among which quality, composition, price, durability, and nutrition data can be mentioned.

Indicated that mostly the young population (18-25 years) does not consume goat milk. The study identified odor (42.3%) and taste (22.5%) as the main barriers for consuming goat milk [15]. Regarding the purchase, more than half of the interviewed respondents did not buy goat milk and dairy products (67% and 70.5% respectively), while the rest of the respondents expressed very low purchasing frequencies. Health benefits represent the most important reason for potential consumption of goat milk and dairy products (66.5%). On the other hand, the main motives for purchasing cow milk and dairy products are taste and quality (55.5%). In particular, the oldest surveyed population (40-55 years) seemed to be the most positive group toward goat milk and also the most interested in the product's nutritional value and its health impact. indicated that there was a correlation between awareness and interest, interest and desire, while desire had no correlation with action[16]. indicated that factors such as packaging, quality, and health safety were found to be non-significant factors for the purchase decision of packaged milk [17].

4. Research Methodology

The current research falls under the category of mixed methods research, beginning with a qualitative approach followed by a quantitative one. The research methodology involves theme analysis of focus group interviews during the qualitative phase and a survey during the quantitative phase. This study aims to identify and assess the factors influencing the purchase of dairy products in two distinct stages. Initially, the results from the focus group sessions and the themes extracted from these interviews were presented. Subsequently, in the quantitative phase, these factors were categorized and labeled through exploratory analysis. Finally, the confirmatory factor analysis validated the exploratory analysis findings.

The first phase addressed the research question: 'What are the influencing factors on the purchase of dairy products by customers in Mashhad?' This section aimed to identify significant factors impacting consumers' purchases. Accordingly, theme analysis was employed to extract factors from the interviews and gather insights from the focus group sessions. In the second phase, conducted quantitatively, data were collected through a questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis was then conducted based on customer performance data, and the themes (indicators related to the theme analysis process) were classified and labeled within the identified structures. These structures were subsequently confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis, followed by an examination of the factors influencing customers' purchasing decisions.

5. Qualitative Section (Focus Group and Theme Analysis)

In this study, information saturation was achieved after conducting 5 focus groups, leading to the conclusion of the focus group sessions. The focus group method was utilized to gather participants' opinions on the influencing factors affecting the purchase of dairy products. During these sessions, participants were briefed on the objectives of the meeting and subsequently asked to discuss various dimensions of the issue. Note-taking, the use of a blackboard, and voice recording were employed as data collection tools during these sessions. The findings from this stage were categorized as output themes, laying the groundwork for the subsequent quantitative research phase. Data collection using the aforementioned tools continued until information saturation was reached. The table below presents the demographic information of the respondents.

Family income		Age status	Gender		
Under two million	6	Under 30 years	10	Male	9
2 to 4 million	9	31 to 40	6	Female	14
4 to 6 million	4	41 to 50	5	marital status	
6 to 8 million	2	51 years and older	1	Single	8
Over 8 million	2			Married	15

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents of the First Stage of the Qualitative Study

In the present study, the test-retest reliability method was employed to assess the reliability of the interviews conducted. A subset of interviewees (the third group) from the focus groups was selected to calculate the test-retest reliability. Each participant in this group was coded twice by the researcher, with a 15-day interval between the coding sessions. A total of 30 codes were obtained from the interviews conducted with this group over two 15-day intervals. The number of agreements and disagreements between the codes in these two intervals was found to be 16 and 7, respectively. The reliability of the interviews was calculated using the formula mentioned, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 1 for the entire interview process. This indicates a high level of reliability in the coding process, given that the reliability coefficient exceeds 60% [18].

5.1 Quantitative Section (Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted in this stage of the research. To this end, a questionnaire was developed based on the themes extracted in the previous qualitative stage and administered to customers of the dairy industry. Customers were asked to respond to the questions provided in the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis was initially performed to identify the underlying components, followed by confirmatory factor analysis to validate these components. The target population of this stage comprised customers of the dairy industry in Mashhad. Given the large statistical population (n=3,057,679), the minimum sample size required for this section was determined to be 384 individuals according to the Morgan Table. Considering the social, cultural, and economic differences across various districts of Mashhad, a stratified sampling method was employed, distributing 700 questionnaires among consumers of dairy products across the city's 13 districts. These questionnaires were distributed using face-to-face methods. A total of 616 questionnaires were collected, of which 99 were excluded from the analysis process due to incomplete or defective responses, leaving 517 usable questionnaires for statistical analysis.

The questionnaire for customers was developed based on the findings of the qualitative stage (focus group). Its aim was to assess the importance of various indicators for customers. The questionnaire consisted of 60 indicators, distributed among dairy industry customers. A Likert Scale ranging from 'completely disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used for rating responses. To ensure the content validity of the measurement tool, the questionnaire was reviewed by 5 management professors to ensure it included the necessary questions to measure the research variables. The divergent validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis, while its convergent validity was confirmed using construct validity (confirmatory factor analysis). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, with the results presented in the table below."

Extractive agent	Cronbach's alpha	КМО	Extractive agent	Cronbach's alpha	КМО
Intrinsic	865/0	821/0	Production power	915/0	849/0
Structure	842/0	777/0	Competitive power	885/0	802/0
External	924/0	866/0	Distribution power	821/0	702/0
Health	92/0	824/0	competitive price	857/0	662/0
Personality	867/0	859/0	Awareness factors	897/0	869/0
Psychological	863/0	824/0	social factors	875/0	716/0
Company ID	834/0	72/0	Store capability	855/0	724/0
The whole questionnaire	951/0	895/0			

Table 2: Cronbach's Questionnaires and Variables

5.2 Findings of the Quality Section: Identifying the Influencing Factors on the Purchase

The data collected by the researcher during the focus group sessions served as the foundation for theme analysis. The primary question posed in this section was 'What are the factors influencing the purchase of dairy products?' Each participant's responses were recorded during the central group session. Subsequently, the notes were documented and provided to the participants for their approval and review. This allowed them to express their views on the accuracy and precision of the data evaluation and code extraction conducted by the researcher and to mention any overlooked points. Following this step, the coding process commenced.

then categorized based on their similarities into 60 main themes, aligning with the thematic framework established from the focus group interviews. The table below presents the results of this analysis. Ultimately, the themes were fully extracted, with 205 extraction codes representing the factors influencing purchasing, categorized into 60 main themes based on their similarities. The extracted themes are presented in the table below."

In total, 205 codes were identified through the analysis of the interview data from the focus group sessions. These codes were

Extractive theme	Extractive theme	Extractive theme	Extractive theme
Taste	Health	Diversity	Durability
Scent	Geographical location of the factory	Eye and Ocular	Novelty seeking
flavor	Being traditional	Being natural	standards
Product quality	Packaging quality	Prestige	Export power
A sense of nostalgia	Product appearance (packaging)	Production and sales volume	Company specialization
Paint color	Relative price	Taste	Expiration dates
Packing size	Fair price	Experience	Company credit
Superior technology	Complete product portfolio	Buy from Familiar	Variety of products
Recyclable container	Seller's recommendation	How to maintain (logistics)	after sales services
Compounds	Oral advertisements	Price stability	Use of others
Preservatives	Company advertising	Store cleanliness	Family
Raw materials used	Awareness of the company's production process	The opinion of those around	Company distribution
Store order	brand	Innovation	Availability
Novelty of products	Ability to reuse the container	Expert and staff advice	Social verification
Company history	Local bias and sweat	fat percentage	Store brand

Table 3: Extractive and Final Themes of the Focus Group Process

5.3 Quantitative Part

In this section, exploratory factor analysis was employed to identify the main factors and to condense and summarize the data. This process involved four steps: (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and conducting Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results of the KMO test yielded a value of 0.895, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7, indicating sufficient sampling adequacy. Consequently, factor analysis was deemed appropriate for the dataset, allowing for the exploration of its underlying structure.

The first step involved determining the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sa	.895	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	23299.117
	df	1770
	Sig.	.000

Tabe 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

The second outcome of the analysis was the initial factor loading table and the extracted factors. These results revealed that all questions (indicators) had a loading score greater than 0.5.

Consequently, based on the established criterion, these indicators were deemed significant, and factor analysis was conducted using them.

	Initial	Extraction		Initial	Extraction		Initial	Extraction
Q1	1.000	.682	Q21	1.000	.723	Q41	1.000	.787
Q2	1.000	.723	Q22	1.000	.810	Q42	1.000	.772
Q3	1.000	.787	Q23	1.000	.886	Q43	1.000	.798
Q4	1.000	.798	Q24	1.000	.687	Q44	1.000	.796
Q5	1.000	.663	Q25	1.000	.794	Q45	1.000	.685
Q6	1.000	.711	Q26	1.000	.688	Q46	1.000	.766
Q7	1.000	.744	Q27	1.000	.759	Q47	1.000	.754
Q8	1.000	.735	Q28	1.000	.692	Q48	1.000	.697
Q9	1.000	.819	Q29	1.000	.636	Q49	1.000	.744
Q10	1.000	.838	Q30	1.000	.733	Q50	1.000	.790
Q11	1.000	.736	Q31	1.000	.702	Q51	1.000	.779
Q12	1.000	.769	Q32	1.000	.728	Q52	1.000	.812
Q13	1.000	.681	Q33	1.000	.673	Q53	1.000	.788
Q14	1.000	.653	Q34	1.000	.725	Q54	1.000	.768
Q15	1.000	.733	Q35	1.000	.754	Q55	1.000	.833
Q16	1.000	.799	Q36	1.000	.706	Q56	1.000	.836
Q17	1.000	.724	Q37	1.000	.658	Q57	1.000	.445
Q18	1.000	.795	Q38	1.000	.615	Q58	1.000	.793
Q19	1.000	.715	Q39	1.000	.759	Q59	1.000	.769
Q20	1.000	.785	Q40	1.000	.869	Q60	1.000	.716

Tabe 5: Communalities

The third outcome was the total variance explained, which indicated that 14 factors were derived from the 60 extracted themes. All factors, numbered 1 to 14, had eigenvalues greater than 1, signifying their significance in the analysis. These factors were

retained for further analysis. The questionnaire indices were then measured based on these 14 factors, which collectively explained over 74.358% of the total variance. This suggests the validity of the questionnaire structure in this domain.

Component	Initial I	Eigenvalues	5	Extraction Loadings	on Sums of (Squared	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	16.105	26.842	26.842	16.105	26.842	26.842	4.544	7.574	7.574
2	4.865	8.109	34.951	4.865	8.109	34.951	4.464	7.440	15.013
3	3.549	5.915	40.866	3.549	5.915	40.866	4.044	6.740	21.754
4	2.963	4.938	45.804	2.963	4.938	45.804	3.776	6.293	28.047
5	2.488	4.146	49.951	2.488	4.146	49.951	3.693	6.154	34.201
6	2.286	3.809	53.760	2.286	3.809	53.760	3.329	5.549	39.750
7	2.180	3.633	57.392	2.180	3.633	57.392	3.204	5.340	45.090
8	1.794	2.990	60.382	1.794	2.990	60.382	2.916	4.859	49.949
9	1.775	2.959	63.341	1.775	2.959	63.341	2.771	4.618	54.567
10	1.561	2.602	65.943	1.561	2.602	65.943	2.588	4.314	58.881
11	1.471	2.452	68.395	1.471	2.452	68.395	2.443	4.071	62.952
12	1.270	2.116	70.511	1.270	2.116	70.511	2.336	3.893	66.846
13	1.225	2.042	72.554	1.225	2.042	72.554	2.304	3.841	70.686
14	1.083	1.805	74.358	1.083	1.805	74.358	2.203	3.672	74.358
15	.898	1.496	75.855						
16	.709	1.182	77.037						

17	.669	1.116	78.153					
18	.660	1.101	79.253					
19	.635	1.058	80.311					
20	.619	1.031	81.342					
21	.565	.942	82.284					
22	.535	.892	83.177					
23	.518	.863	84.039					
24	.494	.823	84.862					
25	.474	.791	85.653					
26	.461	.769	86.422					
27	.451	.752	87.174					
28	.429	.714	87.888					
29	.408	.680	88.569					
30	.393	.655	89.223					
31	.374	.623	89.846					
32	.358	.597	90.444					
33	.348	.580	91.024					
34	.328	.546	91.570					
35	.311	.518	92.088					
36	.305	.509	92.596					
37	.298	.496	93.092					
38	.289	.482	93.574					
39	.284	.474	94.048					
40	.273	.456	94.504					
41	.269	.449	94.953					
42	.258	.429	95.382					
43	.237	.395	95.777					
44	.220	.366	96.144					
45	.217	.361	96.505					
46	.205	.342	96.847					
47	.198	.330	97.177					
48	.183	.306	97.482					
49	.176	.294	97.776					
50	.168	.280	98.056					
51	.164	.273	98.328					
52	.160	.267	98.595					
53	.143	.238	98.834					
54	.133	.222	99.055					
55	.123	.204	99.260					
56	.105	.175	99.435					
57	.102	.171	99.606					
58	.094	.157	99.763					
59	.086	.143	99.906					
60	.056	.094	100.000					
L		1	1	1	1	1	 1	

Tabe 6: Total Variance Explained

The fourth outcome involved the rotated component matrix to achieve a final solution. In this step, the rotated component matrix was utilized to categorize the items based on their factor loadings. This matrix represents the correlation between items and factors after rotation. The researcher examines the highest factor loading of individual items to classify them according to their degree of correlation with each other."

	Component													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Q1	.141	.241	.145	.212	.009	.093	.019	.654	.098	.075	005	.032	.284	.069
Q2	.102	.091	.055	.071	.009	.057	029	.776	.134	.135	048	.131	.093	.157
Q3	.122	.107	.185	.131	.104	.004	.105	.803	.078	.134	.004	044	.117	049
Q4	.129	.205	.173	.157	.041	.102	.097	.782	.097	.055	.103	010	.072	.154
Q5	.190	.619	.216	.065	.021	.098	.063	.137	.167	.270	003	.095	.161	.155
Q6	.272	.674	.226	.143	.082	.043	.092	.140	.151	.146	.022	.065	.113	.114
Q7	.111	.805	.157	.091	.085	002	.079	.113	.098	.065	.041	.051	.028	.076
Q8	.200	.746	.175	.075	.119	.141	.019	.147	.110	.044	.134	.072	.083	.047
Q9	.219	.826	.148	.059	.071	.080	.122	.086	.123	.005	.045	.053	.090	.041
Q10	.211	.845	.137	.065	.054	.101	.124	.077	.107	.010	.017	.050	.067	.056
Q11	.104	.135	.182	.163	.100	.122	.106	.044	.768	.038	.045	.088	.084	036
Q12	.068	.087	.106	.164	.112	.049	.051	.144	.810	.032	.065	.032	.098	.088
Q13	.061	.269	.142	.077	.192	.103	.101	.133	.676	.012	039	.043	.021	.206
Q14	.087	.201	.023	.058	.201	.027	.175	.094	.669	.015	.012	.072	036	.255
Q15	.768	.204	.114	028	001	.113	019	.037	.088	.105	043	.110	.134	.148
Q16	.846	.165	.072	.060	.014	.051	040	.064	.035	.094	039	.060	.005	.157
Q17	.779	.081	.036	023	.108	.120	076	.139	.100	.134	023	041	.079	.147
Q18	.823	.213	.138	.159	.069	.003	.070	.114	026	.041	.026	028	019	009
Q19	.784	.146	.074	.163	.079	072	.125	.037	.065	018	.106	.035	018	010
Q20	.821	.162	.138	.138	.133	026	.091	.082	.058	.058	.049	052	034	017
Q21	010	.133	021	.030	.046	.092	.109	045	008	019	.805	043	.169	008
Q22	.043	.041	.100	.128	.089	.086	.086	.062	.039	007	.846	.186	006	015
Q23	.028	.002	.115	.120	.043	.071	.040	.025	.051	029	.910	.121	.023	.047
Q24	.195	.070	.070	.733	.071	.112	.141	.080	.136	.038	.037	.144	.126	016
Q25	.124	.160	.097	.794	.083	.121	.096	.134	.054	.126	.096	.076	.174	007
Q26	.073	.046	.042	.720	.139	.241	.151	.060	.071	.033	.046	.003	.075	.205
Q27	.035	.081	.108	.758	.074	.155	.153	.175	.155	.169	.091	.005	.112	.093
Q28	.089	.082	.024	.704	.160	.209	.222	.130	.104	.073	.103	.066	.095	.074
Q29	.023	.203	.008	.236	.117	.178	.567	.000	.261	.073	.077	.181	.035	.243
Q30	027	.145	.020	.240	.150	.185	.707	.087	.180	.112	.099	.037	.120	.136
Q31	.061	.166	.062	.121	.236	.265	.677	.027	.085	030	018	.227	.070	.055
Q32	.065	.055	.081	.241	.198	.119	.750	.072	.031	035	.095	.110	.107	.014
Q33	.029	.031	.161	.068	.149	.199	.732	.031	.054	.030	.080	.162	.051	062
Q34	.030	.071	.061	.155	.127	.774	.070	.135	.048	.164	.064	.062	.101	.073
Q35	004	.116	.007	.275	.099	.756	.157	.074	.112	.145	.012	.031	.131	.046
Q36	.056	.007	.106	.144	.129	.738	.180	.057	.044	040	.035	.198	.088	.148
Q37	.031	.197	.150	.182	.057	.656	.218	018	.123	035	.144	.191	062	.067
Q38	.079	.051	.120	.098	.031	.614	.349	008	.012	.201	.125	.090	.120	.063
Q39	.110	.107	.118	.044	.050	.050	.073	.167	.027	.810	028	002	.113	.110
Q40	.114	.079	.040	.141	046	.106	015	.061	.025	.886	026	.129	.035	.084
Q41	.134	.110	.011	.168	.033	.167	.037	.126	.030	.791	009	.143	.114	.147

Q42	.116	.162	.121	.164	054	.162	.142	.305	.048	.114	.103	.023	.721	.049
Q43	041	.121	.075	.204	.037	.093	.046	.075	.110	.113	.093	.125	.807	.128
Q44	.066	.150	.071	.207	035	.115	.183	.201	.018	.089	.052	.165	.761	.125
Q45	.139	.170	.261	.098	.016	.172	005	.181	.164	.100	.049	.135	.142	.647
Q46	.135	.170	.226	.135	001	.050	.100	.136	.164	.170	.018	.092	.051	.743
Q47	.176	.075	.159	.089	.045	.181	.113	.050	.150	.166	030	.045	.150	.747
Q48	.081	.112	.762	.100	.018	.054	.047	.116	.073	.087	.068	.072	014	.212
Q49	.162	.129	.787	.050	.031	.055	013	.165	.096	.043	.030	.024	.014	.189
Q50	.153	.144	.831	.055	.041	.099	.093	.072	.030	.026	.066	.034	.112	.086
Q51	.102	.213	.827	.020	.072	.093	.106	.041	.075	.048	.031	.021	.061	.004
Q52	.044	.222	.839	.074	.033	.052	.076	.107	.144	003	.028	.046	.073	.029
Q53	.027	.115	057	.130	.844	.069	.109	.029	.062	037	.085	.006	018	.109
Q54	.103	.062	.053	.101	.838	.043	.127	.049	.068	065	010	.082	011	048
Q55	.079	.106	.038	.157	.826	.140	.118	019	.216	.065	.064	.098	.084	042
Q56	.084	.085	.035	.146	.849	.148	.102	017	.180	.038	.036	.085	.062	016
Q57	.067	007	.100	057	.616	.009	.143	.079	.018	.051	.029	077	097	.053
Q58	.006	.125	.070	.216	.096	.114	.212	.042	.020	.167	.133	.780	.043	.023
Q59	.045	.165	.050	.113	.011	.222	.189	.106	.065	.088	.061	.775	.049	.095
Q60	.009	.010	.063	049	.051	.125	.143	033	.120	.046	.098	.775	.183	.099

Tabe 7: Total Variance Explained Rotated Component Matrix

6. Factor Labelling

In this section, the analysis of each factor clearly delineates its decisive role in customers' purchases. Consequently, each of these factors has been identified as an effective and key determinant in customers' purchasing behavior of dairy products, categorized based on their significance. The factors are labeled according to the items within each factor, using two general criteria: controllability/ non-controllability and generality/specificity.

Factor 1 encompasses product freshness, hygiene (pasteurization), durability, naturalness, traditionality, and date, collectively explaining 7.574% of the total variance. Given their control by the company and specificity to the production process, this factor is termed "product health".

Factor 2 comprises packaging quality, product appearance (package), color, package size, recyclable and usable container, explaining 7.44% of the total variance. Labeled the "external factors of the product", these components are within the company's control and specific to the product.

Factor 3 includes export power, production and sales volume, company specialization, company reputation, and company technology, explaining 6.74% of the total variance. Termed the "production power factor", these elements are controlled by the company and specific to its production processes.

Factor 4 incorporates seller recommendation, expert and staff advice, word of mouth, company advertising, and knowledge of the production process, explaining 6.293% of the total variance. This factor, labeled "product awareness", is within the control of

the company and customers, specific to product recognition. Factor 5 encompasses complete product portfolio, product variety, innovation, after-sales services, and brand, explaining 6.154% of the total variance. Referred to as "competitiveness", these factors are under the company's control and specific to its competitive strategy.

Factor 6 includes a sense of nostalgia, taste, experience, purchase from acquaintances, and recommendation by others, explaining 549.5% of the total variance. Named "psychological factors", these elements are within customers' control and specific to their mindset.

Factor 7 comprises local bias and prejudice in shopping, novelty, diversity, emulation, and prestige, explaining 5.34% of the total variance. Labeled "personality", these factors are within customers' control and specific to their personality traits.

Factor 8 consists of taste, smell (odor), flavor, and quality of the product, explaining 4.859% of the total variance. Named the "product essence" factor, these components are within the company's control and specific to product attributes.

Factor 9 includes compounds, preservatives, percentage of fat, and raw materials used, explaining 4.618% of the total variance. Labeled the "product structure" factor, these elements are within the company's control and specific to product composition.

Factor 10 encompasses family, social approval, and recommendations of others, explaining 4.314% of the total variance. Labeled "social factors", these components are not

within the company's control and specific to societal influences. Factor 11 comprises a fair price, relative price, and price stability, explaining 4.071% of the total variance. Referred to as "competitive price", these factors are within the company's control and specific to pricing strategies.

Factor 12 includes maintenance (logistics), distribution, and availability, explaining 3.893% of the total variance. Named "logistic capability", these elements are within the company's control and specific to its distribution network.

Factor 13 encompasses store cleanliness, store brand, and store

order, explaining 3.841% of the total variance. Labeled "store capabilities", these factors are not within the company's control and specific to the retailer.

Factor 14 consists of company history, standards, and geographical location, explaining 3.672% of the total variance. Named "company identity (company demographic factors)", these elements are specific to the company.

The categorization of factors and items (themes) was based on the above criteria and labeling. Confirmatory factor analysis was then employed to validate the components.

		factor loading	T-Value		factor loading	T-Value
] fac	0/62	9/97	Taste	0/68	20/63
	(ntr tors pro			Scent	0/71	17/79
	insi ; of duc			flavor	0/76	20/69
	c the t			Product quality	0/87	24/47
	Ħ			Packaging quality	0/71	20/22
	xterna 1	0.61	9.39	Product appearance (packaging)	0/73	22/87
	l fa			Packing color	0/8	21/37
	ctor duc			Packing size	0/84	21/65
	t t			Recyclable container	0/79	21/94
produ	f the			Ability to reuse the container	0/77	22/55
t.	S			Compounds	0/76	19/55
	Pro	0.86	<i>.</i> .	Preservatives	0/79	20/74
	duc ctur		6.4	fat percentage	0/94	21/4
	e t			Raw materials used	0/64	14/99
		0.58	9.71	Novelty of products	0/76	18/33
	Pro			Health	0/91	22/04
	duc			Durability	0/84	19/01
	t he			Being natural	0/96	25/04
	alth			Being traditional	0/85	20/13
	1			Expiration dates	0/86	21/92
					0/72	18/31
	Per fz	0.01	0.04	Novelty seeking	0/86	22/65
Ŀ	son	0.81	8.36	Diversity	0/82	21/09
ıdiv	ality rs			Eye and Ocular	0/75	19/42
idu	7			Prestige	0/66	16/42
al f:	р			A sense of nostalgia	0/72	17/6
icto	syc] fz	0.0	0.07		0/78	19/74
ſS	hole	0.8	8.86	Experience	0/78	19/68
	ogic rs			Buy from Familiar	0/72	17/75
	al			Use of others	0/7	17/05
	Cot	0.32	5.48	Company history	0/68	16/86
	3dm				0/83	20/86
	uny ID			Geographical location of the factory	0/97	27/3
	pro			Export power	0/78	19/58
	The oducti on wer of the	0.73	6.73	Production and sales volume	0/83	21/16

				Company specialization	0/76	18/81
				Company credit	0/77	20/17
				Superior technology	0/8	21/61
	The s c cc			Complete product portfolio	0/84	23/1
	omp	0.63	7.84	Variety of products	0/85	23/38
	oan: etiti			Innovation	0/88	24/77
	of ion			after sales services	0/74	19/54
	the			Brand	0/75	19/75
	Dist powe			How to maintain (logistics)	0/95	28/71
	ributic er of t mpany	0.31	5.4	Company distribution	0/96	29/11
	' he			Availability	0/45	10/53
	cot ve			Relative price	0/84	21/11
	npe pri	0.52	7.43	Price stability	0/83	20/98
	ce			Fair price	0/68	16/23
				Seller's recommendation	0/7	17/29
Infor				Expert and staff advice	0/81	21/38
min				Oral advertisements	0/77	19/84
g fact				Company advertising	0/85	22/94
SIC				Awareness of the company's production process	0/8	20/94
<u> </u>				Family	0/77	19/75
soc				Social verification	0/91	25/05
ial ors				The opinion of those around	0/84	22/22
fe				Store cleanliness	0/77	19/41
otor				Store brand	0/8	20/41
e re				Store order	0/88	23/16

Table 8: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

7. Discussion

7.1 Qualitative Study - Identifying the Influencing Factors on the Purchase of Dairy Products by Customers

This part of the research identifies the factors affecting customers' purchase in the dairy industry. The focus group was used to identify the factors from the opinions of customers and understand their views. As a result, 23 interviewees were used in 5 focus groups, discussing about dairy products, dairy companies, and the success factors of some companies, the factors considered in the customers' purchase, and the factors affecting their purchase. The statements of each interviewee in each group were recorded separately to make the interview process more accurate. In this process, the researcher and another person (colleague) were in charge of meeting and discussion to perform the interview process properly without deviations from its path. All comments of the interviewees were recorded after data collection. At the end of each group discussion, the interview process was performed by the two coders. Given the high commonality of the fifth group interview with the previous groups, the focus process of the focus group reached saturation, and the interview process ended. Finally,

two coders (researcher and colleague) examined the interviews and extracted the codes using the theme analysis method.

A total number of 205 codes were extracted from the coding process, categorized into 60 themes according to their thematic focus. The method of reliability of two coders and retest was used to confirm the reliability in this section. The results confirmed the reliability of the interview and coding processes. A questionnaire was designed based on the themes extracted from the focus interview process. This section aimed to provide data on the performance data collected from the respondents about dairy companies. The extracted themes can be summarized in the form of several categories of factors using exploratory factor analysis in SPSS software. Then, the extracted components (factors) are confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. This test was performed by confirmatory factor analysis in LISREL software. The minimum number of samples for this section was 384 questionnaires according to Morgan Table. Sampling from different urban areas, determining the number of respondents in each area, and distributing the questionnaires were the next steps.

A total number of 700 questionnaires was distributed in 13 districts of Mashhad, considering the possibility of the non-return of the questionnaires or their improper completion. Finally, 517 useable questionnaires were collected as the source of analysis. The first statistical test was the quantitative part of the exploratory analysis test, based on which the extracted themes were summarized in the factors. The output of the exploratory factor analysis test was equal to 0.895 according to the KMO sample adequacy test, indicating that the exploratory factor analysis process is appropriate and useful and the number of data is sufficient for this task. The significance level of the test is equal to (0.000), which is less than 0.05, indicating that factor analysis is suitable to discover a new structure of data (factor structure).

Hence, it was possible to trust the results of the factor analysis. According to the next output of the table, all themes (similar to the questionnaire questions) had factor loadings of >0.5, and given that the minimum factor loading was 0.3, all themes were verified, removing no items from the analysis process. The next output showed the amount of variance extracted and the number of extracted factors. According to the results, 14 factors were identified with a total variance of 74.358% and categorized in the final table, which was the rotated matrix of factors. The factor analysis clearly shows the decisive role of each of these factors in the customers' purchase. Thus, each of these factors can be considered as an effective and key factor in the customers' purchase of dairy products, according to their priority. At this stage, the factors were labeled based on the items in each factor. For a more detailed study of the extracted components and factors, confirmatory factor analysis was used, the results of which are presented below. Among the themes related to the external factor of the product, the package size had the highest explanatory value (0.84) followed by the packaging color (0.8). According to the opinions of customers and consumers, these two factors were the determinants of the purchase behavior. Many consumers pay attention to the ability to maintain the product and the cost-effectiveness of the purchase. For example, families with low population prefer packages, used a smaller size to stay healthy, and did not store the products for a long time. Large families liked economical products, so they bought a larger, more economical size. Packaging color indicates low-fat and high-fat because most dairy products are based on color, so it is a factor for health in the minds of customers.

The next factor was the recyclability (0.79) and reusability (0.77) of the containers, which were related to the attention of many customers to the preservation of the environment and the nature of the country. Finally, the appearance of the product (0.73) and the quality of the packaging (0.71) explained the external factors of the product. Perhaps the reason for these low values was that customers did not feel much difference in the packaging of dairy products, and most companies were in close categories in terms of appearance and packaging quality. The next factor was the product structure factor, which had the highest explanatory rate for the fat percentage theme (0.94) followed by preservatives (0.79), compounds (0.76), and finally raw materials used (0.64). Fat percentage was especially important for women, as high fat

was considered harmful to their health and that of their families.

Some customers equated a high fat percentage with more preservatives, and as the percentage of fat in the minds of customers has shaped the structure of the product, the higher factor loading for its preservatives confirms this argument. Finally, some customers paid attention to the ingredients, such as the amount of salt used, etc., depending on the type of product. There were two different views on raw materials, one of which acknowledged that raw material factories were healthy, not thinking about the supply chain because of various tests and trials. This means that few people were aware of the quality of milk used in factories, which can explain why this factor had the explanatory value. The next factor was the health of the product, in which the themes related to naturalness (0.96) and health (0.91) had the highest explanatory value, followed by the expiration date (0.86), being traditional (0.85), durability (0.84), and freshness of products (0.76). For many people, being natural means not having supplements, having less preservatives, and having less harmful chemicals as the criterion of consumption, which was called naturalness.

The next factor was associated with health, which explains many people buy factory products because of the pasteurization of the process. This factor was related to the homogeneity of the production process or the health and attention to the health of production. When buying products, the date from production to expiration is important for customers. Customers want reasonable dates, neither high-shelf nor short-term dates were attractive to them, which confirms the importance of the shelf-life factor for them. Being traditional is one of the factors that go back to the feelings of customers and their mental background. Customers still believe that traditional products are healthier, while they still follow the nostalgic feeling and real taste in products that are traditional, such as Liqvan cheese, etc. It can be acknowledged that Iranian customers and consumers are people who look for and pay attention to appearances in shopping, which means that they are visual people.

Thus, this external factor had the highest explanatory value. Then, because of their selfishness, they want to buy products that they like, which are pleasant and desirable for them. Structural and health factors were at different levels from the customers' perspectives because of the little knowledge that customers have about factory production. Some considered the factory production process to be purely healthy, and because the factories were under the supervision of the Health Organization and the government, its health was confirmed. Some also had a completely negative view, based on which purchase from factories was not good due to a lot of fraud and other factors in factories. Hence, this view preferred traditional method of purchase.

Regarding the company's identity card, the factors of the obtained standards (0.83) had the highest explanatory value, followed by the company's production history (0.78) and the geographical location of the company (0.76). The company's standards show the customers' trust in the government, based on which they accept

the health standards that the company has acquired. Therefore, customers accept the standards considering the importance they attach to their health. The production history indicates the years of production and the company's reputation that makes people trust it easily. Finally, the geographical location is associated with two biases of buying from local factories or supplying from close factories to them. Customers believe that transportation and long distances reduce the quality and increase spoilage due to the high sensitivity of dairy products.

The next factor of company production power, called the theme of superior technology, had the highest explanatory value (0.88), followed by company reputation (0.85), company specialization (0.84), company production volume (0.8), and the company's export power (0.76). The production power of the company shows the ability of the company to produce. Companies that have up-to-date technologies, like Kaleh and Mihan companies, have gained high prestige and expertise with a high daily production rate, leading to their considerable growth. They can export to countries around the world and have a better position in the minds of customers. The next factor is the company's competitiveness, with the themes of brand theme (0.96), innovation (0.95), product diversity (0.75), complete product portfolio (0.74), and good aftersales services (0.45).

The brand theme has the highest explanatory value due to the nature of the product in the dairy production process. Accordingly, a good brand for both the company (Kaleh) or for the product (Sun Kaleh, Lactovia Kaleh, Haft Grineh, Abali carbonated dough) encourages more purchase. Innovation confirms the result of modern technologies, according to which the innovative companies have a variety of products, complete their portfolio, and are successful and lasting in the minds. Due to the nature of dairy products (being consumed) after-sales services had a lower explanatory power. The next factor is the distribution factor, with a factor loading equal to (0.84) for the theme of how to maintain (logistics), indicating the highest explanatory value in the distribution factor.

The next theme is the distribution, which has a factor loading equal to (0.83), followed by the product availability with a factor loading of (0.68). These results show that storage, transportation, and distribution are very important. Availability has the lowest factor loading, perhaps because customers buy their brand and if they need a particular brand, they will find it anywhere. Although availability is important, the distribution, maintenance, and distribution system are more important. The final component of the company is to have a competitive price, in which the fair price had the highest explanatory value (0.97), followed by price stability (0.83), and relative price (0.68). This shows that in terms of pricing, price fairness is very important for customers. Customers will constantly compare the prices of products in both rows and categories for different companies. Companies must be careful about their price level and constantly consider the level of price satisfaction and customer perspectives. Next, price stability is important. Companies with high price changes create a negative view in the customers' minds and customers will feel unfair about this price instability.

The relative price must also be observed, i.e., the price adjusted based on the quality level, brand, type of product, etc. The next factor is the character factor, which includes 5 themes. Novelty as the first theme had the highest value with a factor loading of 0.86, followed by diversity (0.82). This result shows a sense of novelty and variety and the pleasure of buying from Iranian consumers. The next factor is emulation with a factor loading of 0.75, followed by local bias and prejudice (0.72), and prestige (0.66). This factor shows that the emulation factor is seen in shopping, which is particularly high among women. In buying dairy products, prestige has the lowest factor loading because it is not a luxury product. The next factor is the psychological factor, which includes 5 themes. The most important factors were taste and experience with the highest loading of 0.78).

This shows the high importance of the customer experience and personal desire in buying products, followed by nostalgia (0.72), buying from acquaintances (0.72), and psychological factors (0.7). Information includes 5 themes. Word-of-mouth advertising had the highest exploratory value with a factor loading of 0.85, followed by the recommendations of experts and personnel (0.81). Awareness of the production process of the company (0.8), company advertisements (0.77) and the seller's recommendation (0.7) explained the information factor. This shows the importance of the word of mouth and the advice of experts and staff.

This result shows that the promotion by individuals and others plays an important role. Social factor consists of three themes. The factor of social verification in purchasing with factor loading of 0.91 and social verification with a factor loading of 0.84 had the highest explanatory values. The family also had an explanatory power with a factor loading of 0.77. According to these results, people's views on the purchase and the role of the opinions of people and others were very important in the purchase of dairy products. Store factor has three themes. The theme of store order with a factor loading of 0.88 had the highest explanatory value. The next factor was the brand of the store with a factor loading of 0.8, followed by the cleanliness of the store (0.77). This shows that order is very important for customers. Accordingly, offering products in branded, stylish, orderly, and clean stores will lead to a competitive advantage for the company in the process of distributing its products, increasing the company's distribution power [19-21].

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