The Moderating Effect of Brand Loyalty on the Relationship between Promotion Activities and Consumers' Purchase Decision-Making

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Over the past few decades there has been increased production and consumption of organic food. However, a review of the literature shows that research into consumer attitudes to organic food lacks an explicit theoretical basis, and this paper aims to fill this gap. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to verify the relationship among promotion activities, brand loyalty and purchase decision-making in the organic food market. In addition, it also explores the moderating effects of brand loyalty on the relationship between promotion activities and consumers' purchase decision-making.

Organic food consumers in Taiwan were adopted as the research population, and measuring scales proposed by other scholars were revised to fit the research context. After a pretest, a total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to organic food stores in northern, central, and southern regions of Taiwan. Tests of reliability, Pearson correlation, and hierarchical regression analysis were conducted to examine the hypotheses, and the results of the study are as follows:

1. *Promotion activities have a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.*
2. *Brand loyalty has a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.*
3. *Brand loyalty has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between promotion activities and purchase* decision-making

Keywords: Organic foods, Promotion activities, Brand loyalty, Purchase Decision- Making

1. Introduction

Consumers have become more concerned about the nutritional content, health benefits, and quality of the food they eat [15], and one of the primary ways this is expressed is through the purchase of organic products. Consequently, the past few decades have seen a rise in both production and consumption of organic food [5], and this trend has also been reflected in Taiwan.

However, to date there is little research related to consumer attitudes and preferences for organic products [5], and the studies that do examine consumer

attitudes to organic food lack an explicit theoretical basis [28]. Therefore, this study focuses specifically on examining the motivation and attitudes of Taiwanese organic food buyers to better understand the factors which influence consumers' purchasing decision-making with regard to such products.

In the literature, consumers' behavioral intentions have been assumed to be principally determined by their attitudinal assessments regarding products or services based on marketing mix variables such as advertising and promotional efforts [31]. For example, the influences of brand, store and price promotions have been studied to find their influence on consumer evaluations and purchase intentions [29], and it has been shown that marketing practitioners often rely on promotions to gain market share in a number of consumer product categories [16], [21]. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the impact of consumer promotions is of considerable practical importance in this context [24].

Another important factor is brand loyalty, as the empirical research has demonstrated that while it can not only result in a specific purchase pattern [17], it can also influence consumer behavior in the decision-making model. In this respect, Ghosh [14] noted that sales promotions have to be targeted at customers with different levels of loyalty to prevent decreases in brand valuation [21]. This study focuses on certain specific critical factors, such as promotion activities and brand loyalty, and attempts to build an integrated framework to examine the influence of these factors on the organic food consumers' purchase decision making model.
This paper is organized as follows. Second section presents the theoretical background and the hypotheses. Third section describes the model framework, the data used to test those hypotheses. Finally we report results and conclusions.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1 The Relationship between Promotion Activities and Purchase Decision-making

Manufacturers and retailers have increasingly begun to adopt promotion tools that tout multiple products demands [5], [13]. At the same time, marketers are also increasingly relying on sales promotions to achieve their goals in the marketplace, and thus to create a sense of immediate need in consumers by adding extra incentives [30]. Blattbeerg and Neslin [4] proposed that promotions are action-focused marketing events whose purpose is to have a direct impact on the purchasing behavior of customers. Kotler [25] noted that the most frequently used promotion tools include coupons, free gifts, sampling, cash refunds, bonus packs, discounts and product quality warranties.

With regard to the different types of promotion activities, Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent [8] have contended that the study of sales promotions should be expanded to include the different effects of monetary and non-monetary promotions. To this end, Campbell and Diamond [6] divided promotion tools into (1) monetary ones that rely on stimulates presentable and capable for compared to the sales price by the way as coupons and discount, (2) non-monetary ones that use stimulates unable to be both presented in monetary forms and compared to the sales price which most likely the way by free gift. According to Chandon et al. [8], price and non-price sales promotions may involve different levels of benefits to consumers, including savings, quality and convenience [14]. In addition, it is generally believed that higher

prices adversely affect the likelihood of purchase, because consumers avoid purchasing products that are seen as too expensive [30]. Moreover, discount promotions help consumers to infer estimations of price savings.

Since consumers who are more price conscious should be more sensitive to price-oriented sales promotions, it is interesting to examine the different effects of both types of promotions, monetary and non-monetary, on consumers' behavior [28]. This study assumed that retailers rely on various types of sales promotions to affect consumers' perceptions of organic food. So this study try to analyze whether discount and non discount promotions have a differential impact on buying intentions. This study might generalize this to a statement such as: *the investigation of this study demonstrated that promotion has an effect on consumers' purchase decision*. There thus appears to be a positive relationship between promotion activities and purchase decision-making. Based on the above review, the following hypotheses are presented:

H1: Promotion activities have a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.
H1a: Discount type promotions have a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.
H1b: Non-discount type promotions have a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.

2.2 The Relationship between Brand Loyalty and Purchase Decision-Making

There is no doubt that the concept of brand loyalty is of strategic importance for companies in order to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage [18]. Empirical research has demonstrated that brand loyalty does not result only in a specific purchase pattern [18]. Liao [27] argued that brand loyalty can be viewed as the result of consumer behavior based on positive brand associations, while Huang [20] noted that it can achieve higher customer lifetime value with high degree of brand associations, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality. In addition, Grover and Srinivasan [19] stated that loyal customers show more favorable responses with regard to making purchases of the focal brand than competing ones. The variety of definitions of brand loyalty that appear in the literature are in part due to the fact that it is a very complex construct, which has been seen as a series of repeat purchases and as well as an expression of preference, commitment and allegiance [18]. To integrate these various ideas, we assumed that brand loyalty motivates certain consumers to purchase the same brand routinely and avoid switching to another one, and this increases brand equity profits. We might generalize this to a thesis statement such as: *the investigation of this study demonstrated that brand loyalty has an effect on consumers' purchase decision.* Accordingly, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Brand loyalty has a significant and positive influence on purchase decision-making.

2.3 The Moderating Effect of Brand Loyalty

A large body of literature has examined the impact of price promotions on consumers' purchase behavior [9], [19], [1], [31]. There are also found no difference in sales volume or repeat purchase behavior due to price promotions [10]. So this study tries to investigate price promotions from different perspectives. As to study, the effects of promotions on consumers' purchase decisions are expected to be moderated by consumers' loyalty, and so this study integrated the various above-mentioned theories of promotion activities, purchase decision-making and brand loyalty. The existing theoretical models suggest that greater consumer loyalty increases a firm's market power and leads to higher prices and fewer price promotions [2]. Moreover, consumers sometimes care more about quality than price, and this may be why brand loyalty has been found to reduce price sensitivity [34]. It has been proposed that consumers can be divided into different loyalty segments, each of which has heterogeneous tastes with regard to the firms' products [33], [34]. According to the literature, promotional offers are generally irrelevant to latent loyal and non-loyal consumers, as they do not buy the brands as often as the other groups of customers [22]. In addition, it has been found that the effects of promotions on purchase decision-making for consumers with different levels of loyalty are different. For example, high loyalty consumers are more sensitive to the compatibility between price incentive and brand image than low loyalty consumers [31], and Feinberg, Krishna, and Zhang [11] found that, compared to non-loyal consumers, loyal ones tend to view larger rewards as being fair [24]. Liao [27] noted that consumers use the price as an important internal cue to indicate product quality, and thus price incentives should have a weaker impact on consumers with lower levels of loyalty than on those with high loyalty with regard to a prestigious brand [31].

Furthermore, the existing literature cannot explain why a brand that creates more consumer loyalty than its rivals would compete by offering a lower average price and more frequent promotions [2]. In order to invest in creating a loyal base of consumers, a firm may offer a low price that attracts new consumers and some of these buyers may become loyal. When the firm establishes a large base of loyal consumers they can harvest the value created by charging a higher price [2]. In addition, it has been noted that promotions are short-term activities, but that building loyalty requires a longer time period, and this could be the reason why some studies found that loyalty has no effect when price sensitivity is low, but has a strong positive effect when price sensitivity is high [34]. In short, and in the context of this study, when consumers are loyal to a particular organic brand that means they focus more on food safety, quality and healthy eating. When these customers are satisfied with their purchases and experiences, price discounts will not influence their purchase decision-making. A synthesis of the relevant studies suggests that brand loyalty has a moderating role between promotion activities and purchase decision-making. This study might generalize this to a statement such as: *this study demonstrated that effects of promotion activities on purchase decision-making at different loyalty levels could be different.* Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: Brand loyalty has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between promotion activities and purchase decision-making

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Framework

Based on the references and hypotheses mentioned above, the research framework and the relationships between the independent and dependent variables are shown in Figure 1.

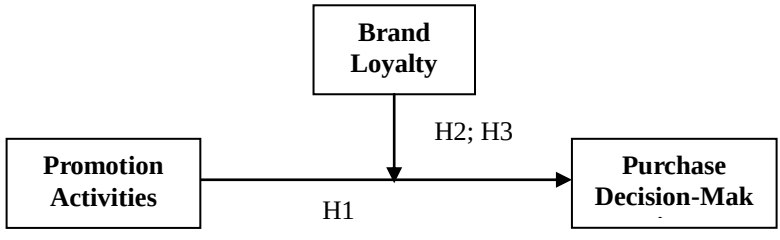

Figure 1 *Research Framework*

3.2 Operational Definitions and Measurements

The questionnaire is based on the research framework with three constructs. Promotion activities are examined to uncover the kind that affects purchase decision-making. Brand loyalty is included to better understand consumers' beliefs and attitudes. Finally, purchase decision-making is examined to investigate the outcomes of this process. In addition, the survey also collected the demographic details of the respondents in order to understand the needs of consumers in a better way.

This study adapted existing questionnaires on the three constructs developed by, Wong (2004), Huang [20] and Wu [36], with items changed to better suit the research context of examining consumer behavior and loyalty with regard to promotion activities and organic foods.

3.3 Sampling Design

The questionnaire pre-test was conducted using a convenience sampling data collection method with 30 consumers in the Tainan branches of the Li-ruhn organic chain stores. The subsequent data collection procedure adopts organic food consumers as the research population, with a total of 300 questionnaires being distributed in 30 organic food stores in the northern, central, and southern regions of Taiwan.

3.4 Validity and Reliability Tests

(1) Assessment of Model Fit

The first step in the assessment of model fit used the χ^2 test, comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), and the standardized Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) to assess model fit. Step two was to assess the quality of the measurements.

3.4.1 Promotion Activities

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the factor loading structure of the subscales and to evaluate the fit of the proposed models to the data. The overall model fit is shown in Table 1 by the chi square, χ^2 (8) =18.45, p=0.0. The resulting root mean square error of approximation was 0.04, and the normed fit index was 0.93. The comparative fit index was 0.96, the goodness-of-fit index was 0.94, and the adjusted goodness-of-index (AGFI) was 0.85. The AGFI (0.85) was slightly lower than the recommended cutoff of 0.90, but the GFI (0.94), CFI (0.96) and NFI (0.93) were all acceptable, and thus, so was the overall fit of the model. The data thus appear to support the two-factor structure.

Table 1 *Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

Index	χ^2	*df*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR
Result	18.45	8	0.94	0.85	0.96	0.93	0.04

3.4.2 Brand Loyalty

Maximum likelihood estimation was used, and the overall model fit, as shown in Table 2, indicates that the chi square was χ^2 (4) = 20.5, p=0.0, for both versions of the brand loyalty subscales. The resulting root mean square residual was 0.04, and the normed fit index was 0.90. The comparative fit index was 0.92, the goodness-of-fit index was 0.94, and the adjusted goodness-of-index was 0.78. The AGFI (0.78) was lower than the recommended cutoff of 0.90, but GFI (0.94), CFI (0.92) and NFI (0.90) were all acceptable, and thus so was the overall fit of the model. The data appear to support the two-factor structure.

Table 2 *Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

Index	χ^2	*df*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR
Result	20.5	4	0.94	0.78	0.92	0.90	0.04

3.4.3 Purchase Decision-Making

Maximum likelihood estimation was used, and the overall model fit, as indicated in Table 3, shows that the chi square was χ^2 (38) = 60.25, p=0.0, for both versions of the purchase decision-making subscales. The resulting root mean square residual was 0.06, and the normed fit index was 0.88. The comparative fit index was 0.95, and the goodness-of-fit index was 0.91, just over the recommended level. The AGFI (0.84) and NFI (0.88) were slightly lower than the recommended cutoff of 0.90, and RMR (0.06) was slightly higher than 0.05. However, GFI (0.91) and CFI (0.95) were acceptable, and thus so was the overall fit of the model. The data thus appear to support the three-factor structure.

Table 3 *Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

Index	χ^2	*df*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR
Result	60.25	38	0.91	0.84	0.95	0.88	0.06

(2) Convergent Validity

All items loaded significantly on their respective factors ($p < 0.01$). With the loading of the items all over 0.50 [12], the findings summarized in Table 4 provide support for the convergent validity of the measures of promotion activities, brand loyalty, and purchase decision-making.

Table 4 *Standardized Loadings of the Initial Model for the Constructs*

Constructs	Dimensions	Items	Loadings	C.R.	Cronbach's α
Promotion activities	Discount Type	PA_1	0.78	a	0.87
		PA_2	0.87	9.09***	
		PA_3	0.88	9.19***	
	Non-discount Type	PA_4	0.74	a	0.66
		PA_5	0.47	3.84***	
		PA_6	0.55	4.47***	
Brand Loyalty	Brand Loyalty	BL_1	0.46	3.97***	0.80
		BL_2	0.51	3.79***	
		BL_3	0.47	4.82***	
		BL_4	0.80	4.81***	
		BL_5	0.87	3.97***	
Purchase Decision-Making	High Quality Cognitive	PDM_1	0.60	a	0.84
		PDM_2	0.80	6.03***	
		PDM_3	0.80	6.02***	
		PDM_4	0.90	6.40***	
	Brand Cognitive	PDM_5	0.81	a	0.78
		PDM_6	0.87	8.15***	
		PDM_7	0.55	5.38***	
		PDM_8	0.47	4.87***	
	Price Cognitive	PDM_9	0.48	a	0.68
		PDM_{10}	0.69	3.91***	
		PDM_{11}	0.76	3.78***	

*** p<0.001

(3) Reliability

The subscales achieved good reliability coefficients, with a Cronbach's α between 0.66 and 0.87. These results suggest a high degree of consistency for each factor of the relevant constructs. Therefore, the subscales of promotion activities, brand loyalty and purchase decision-making, achieve approximate reliability coefficients.

4. Result of Data Analysis

4.1 The Characteristics of the Respondents

This study received 144 questionnaires from the 1st to 24th of April in 2009, of which 17 were incomplete. Of a total of 300 questionnaires, this study thus obtained 127 valid questionnaires, giving a 48% response rate. The respondents were mostly 30-39

years old (52.0%) and married (54.3%). Most respondents reported a monthly family income of less than 1.56 thousand US dollars (55.9%) and had a collage educational level (55.1%). In addition, the most common purchase frequency for organic food was once a month (37.8%), with most respondents only sometimes eating organic food (55.1%).

4.2 Causal Model

The proposed relationship among the variables is shown in Figure 1. The standardized path coefficients of these variables (corresponding to direct effects) are presented in Figure 2. In order to test for moderating effect, this study used hierarchical regression analysis to estimate the parameters among the constructs [3].

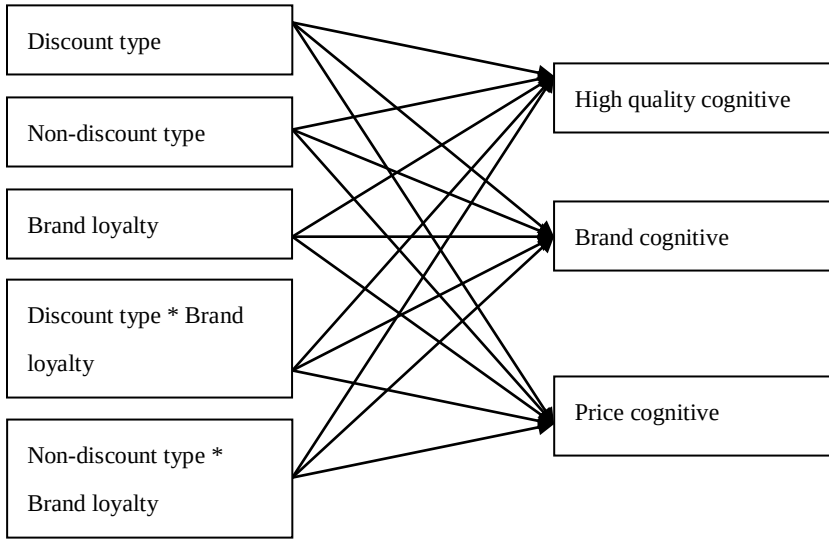

Figure 2 *Standardized Fit Estimation for Purchase Decision-making*

A summary of the paths and standardized parameter estimates as well as the test statistics is provided in Table 5. The results indicate that non-discount type promotions (β=.406, p<.001) had significant and positive direct effects on the high quality cognitive dimension, and thus Hypothesis 1b is supported. However brand loyalty (β=.053, p>.05) had no significant direct effects on the high quality cognitive dimension. And both the interaction between discount type promotion and brand loyalty (β=-.290, p<.01) and the interaction between non-discount type promotion and brand loyalty (β=.195, p<.05) have significant effects on high quality cognitive dimension (see Figure 3 and figure 4). These findings indicate the existence of a moderating effect on the relationship between promotion activities and high quality cognitive dimension, supporting Hypothesis 3.

Table 5 *Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Paths on the High Quality Cognitive Dimension*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables		
	High Quality Cognitive		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Promotion activities			
Discount type	.010	.015	-.016
Non-discount type	.406***	.394***	.395***
Brand Loyalty			
Brand loyalty		.053	.108
Interaction			
Discount type * Brand loyalty			-.290**
Non-discount type* Brand loyalty			.195*
R^2	.170	.172	.235
Adjust R^2	.156	.152	.204
F	12.67***	8.539***	7.445***
ΔR^2		.003	.063
ΔF		.403	4.977***

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

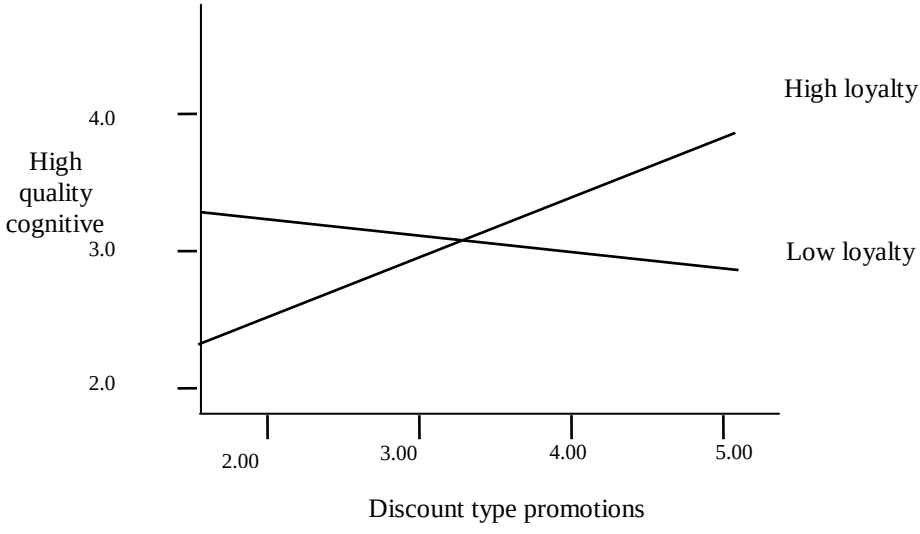

Figure 3 *Interaction between Promotion Activities and Brand Loyalty*

The results in table 6 indicate that non-discount type promotions (β=.208, p<.05) had significant and positive directs effect on the brand cognitive dimension, and thus Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. Model 2 shows that brand loyalty (β=.200, p<.05) had significant direct effects on the brand cognitive dimension (Hypothesis 2 is supported). Model 3 shows that there is no significant effect among the three constructs. These findings, therefore, did not show a moderating effect on the relationship between promotion activities and the brand cognitive dimension.

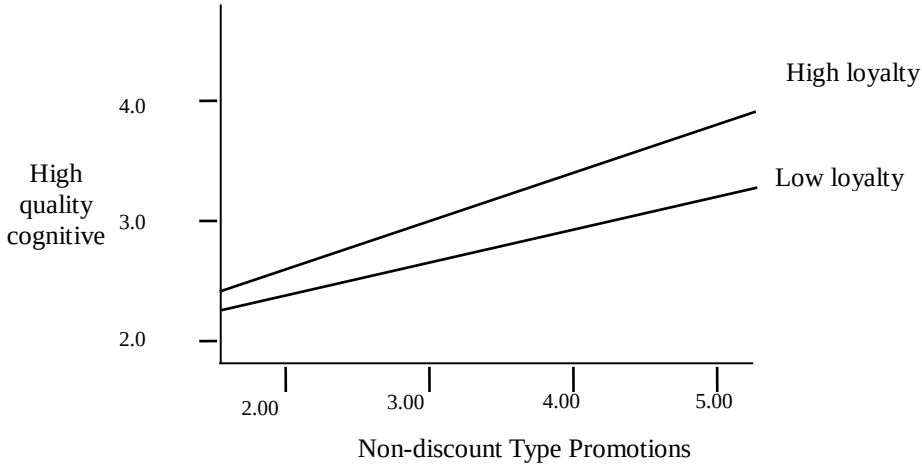

Figure 4 *Interaction between Promotion Activities and Brand Loyalty*

Table 6 *Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Paths on the Brand Cognitive Dimension*

Independent Variables	**Dependent Variables**		
	Brand Cognitive		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Promotion activities			
Discount type	.027	.047	.051
Non-discount type	.208*	.162	.165
Brand Loyalty			
Brand loyalty		.200*	.167
Interaction			
Discount type * Brand loyalty			.071
Non-discount type* Brand loyalty			-.110
R^2	.050	.089	0.097
Adjust R^2	.035	.066	0.060
F	3.280*	3.984*	2.601*
ΔR^2		.038	.008
ΔF		5.171*	.567

* $p<0.05$

The results in Table 7 indicate that discount type promotions (β=.512, $p<.05$) had significant and positive directs effect on the price cognitive dimension, and thus Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. However brand loyalty (β=.113, $p>.05$) had no significant direct effects on the price cognitive dimension of purchase decision-making. These findings thus did not show a moderating effect on the relationship between promotion activities and the price cognitive dimension, and reflect the fact that the interaction between brand loyalty and discount type promotions is not a critical moderator between promotion activities and the price cognitive dimension, but that discount type promotion is still an important component of the price cognitive dimension for customers.

Table 7 *Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Paths on the Price Cognitive Dimension*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables		
	Price Cognitive		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Promotion activities			
Discount type	.512***	.524***	.526***
Non-discount type	-.043	-.070	-.067
Brand Loyalty			
Brand Loyalty		.113	.080
Interaction			
Discount type * Brand loyalty			.063
Non-discount type* Brand loyalty			-.113
R^2	.240	.252	.261
Adjust R^2	.227	.234	.230
F	19.550***	13.816***	8.539***
ΔR^2		.012	.009
ΔF		2.024	.716

*** p<0.001

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 The Relationship between Promotion Activities and Purchase Decision-Making

This research finds that discount type promotion activity has non-significant influence on high quality cognitive dimension and brand cognitive dimension in the organic food market. Specifically, consumers will have a stronger intention to purchase more products when they are being promoted without discounts. The results of this empirical study provide evidence for a positive relationship and significant influence of the non-discount type of promotion on consumers' high quality cognitive and brand cognitive dimension in this context. Just as the previous literature mentioned [11], [27], loyalty consumers concern more about high quality of product than price discounts.

5.1.2 The Moderating Effect of Brand Loyalty

This study investigated the moderating roles of brand loyalty on the relationship between promotion activities and the consumers' purchase decision-making. The results show that brand loyalty has a positive effect on the brand cognitive dimension, when consumers purchase organic food. Wood [35] indicated that a brand-loyal person would buy a brand in preference to its competitors. Yoo, Donthu and Lee [37] argued that brand loyalty makes consumers buy a particular brand's products routinely and deters them from switching to a rival brand.

These results also highlight the importance of psychological variables in promotion activities research. Moreover, the findings suggest that consumer attitudes to certain organic foods with regard to product brand image and former buying experience exert moderating effects on the relationships between some of the organic food decision-making motives. The main finding of this study is that brand loyalty

has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between two types of promotion activities and high quality cognitive dimension of purchase decision-making. The result reveals that no matter what type of promotion activities are engaged in, consumers with high brand loyalty will have stronger high quality cognitive and will purchase more products. The results are also consistent with Wuang (2002), which found that consumers who are loyal to certain brands attach more importance to the product than to the price, with regard to factors such as product quality. This reflects the fact that consumers are willing to pay a higher price to purchase organic food, and are more concerned about certification marks that guarantee quality and safety than they are with price discount.

Furthermore, the results did not indicate any significant moderating effect of brand loyalty on the brand cognitive and price cognitive dimension. Just as Sinitsyn [33] stated, when the consumers are loyal to a certain brand, a mixed price strategy should be used. This suggests that when an organic food brand inspires a higher level of loyalty, the firm can harvest extra value by charging a high price [2]. However, when firms want to use promotions to sell more products, brands with less consumer loyalty should undertake more discount promotions. Based on these empirical results and findings, some suggestions are provided by the current work to the institutions concerned with facilitating the on-going expansion of Taiwan's organic food industry.

5.2 Research Limitations and Suggestions

Although the empirical results partially support the hypotheses presented in this work, several limitations remain and these provide suggestions for future research. First, the questionnaire used in this work only covered the northern, central, and southern regions of Taiwan, excluding the eastern region and offshore islands. The second limitation is that the survey only focused on consumers with experience of buying organic food. In addition, this research examined consumer behavior with regard to organic products in Taiwan, instead of the general consumption market. It is thus suggested that future studies should include a survey of the whole nation and cooperate with an organic products chain store to define the needs of consumers in a more in-depth fashion. Finally, it is possible for future consumer researchers to use the approach presented in this work to study the effects of other variables over time.

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