

Investigating the role of alliances on performance with the mediating role of brand image in automotive industry holdings

Saeid Baharlou¹, Alireza Rousta² , Farzad Asayesh¹ 

1- Department of Business Management, ShQ.C., Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e Qods, Iran

2- Department of Business Management, ShQ.C., Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e Qods, Iran

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of studying the effect of alliance marketing on marketing performance with the mediating role of brand image in automotive industry holdings. The research method is applicable in terms of its purpose, quantitative in terms of implementation method, and descriptive-correlational in terms of nature and method. The statistical population of senior managers, marketing managers, and experts of automotive holdings in Tehran was 256 samples. A standard questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect research data. The content validity of the tool was confirmed by specialists and experts, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to measure the reliability of the tool. By distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and divergent validity. The AVE value for all variables must be greater than 0.5. SPSS and PLS software were used to analyze the data. The research findings show that alliance marketing has a positive effect on marketing performance. Alliance marketing has a positive effect on brand image in automotive industry holdings. Brand image has a positive effect on marketing performance. In addition, the results showed that brand image has a positive mediating role in the relationship between alliance marketing and marketing performance. In general, the more coordination, synergy, and unity between marketing units, the more coherent, reliable, and positive the brand image is formed in the minds of customers, and this image in turn improves marketing performance indicators such as customer attraction, loyalty, and profitability.

Keywords:

Alliance marketing, marketing performance, brand image, automotive industry

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Corresponding Author: Alireza Rousta

Email: alirezarousta@iau.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Introduction

In the current turbulent and changing business environment, organizations are faced with challenges such as widespread uncertainties, intense competition, limited human and financial resources, and lack of specialized knowledge. In such an environment, economic enterprises are forced to cooperate and synergize with other companies to survive and improve their competitive position. These collaborations, which take the form of business alliances, have recently become one of the fundamental pillars of business development and growth strategies. Business alliances are considered strategic agreements between companies that aim to enter new markets, develop joint products, exchange technology, and exploit complementary resources and skills (He et al., 2024). Such alliances help organizations to improve their marketing performance and gain greater competitive power in the market by combining capabilities and leveraging each other's advantages (Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019). Among the different types of organizational alliances, alliance marketing has a special place. Alliance marketing is a type of strategic cooperation between two or more companies that aims to achieve common goals in the field of marketing and sales (Oyedele et al., 2023). This type of alliance can include the exchange of knowledge and information, the design and implementation of joint advertising campaigns, the use of joint distribution and promotion channels, and the use of marketing resources of the parties (Sadiqi et al., 2016). The main goal of such collaborations is to increase market share, strengthen brand identity and awareness, and create sustainable competitive advantages. In this way, organizations can make their marketing processes more efficient and improve their brand position in the minds of customers by using each other's marketing capabilities (Oyedele et al., 2023).

However, some researchers believe that alliance marketing between companies is always accompanied by certain challenges and risks. For example, Choi & Contractor (2019) state that "relational risk" is one of the inherent dimensions of such collaborations. This type of risk refers to the possibility of opportunistic behaviors such as failure to fulfill commitments, incomplete cooperation, secret knowledge transfer, concealment of valuable information, or pursuing personal interests instead of collective interests. The existence of such dichotomies shows that the field of marketing alliances still requires further study and analysis. This is especially important in today's competitive and dynamic environments; because identifying the factors affecting the success or failure of alliances can help design more effective collaboration strategies between companies.

The main issue of the present study is that automotive companies need to develop marketing alliances between themselves and their subsidiaries to maintain their competitive position and improve market performance. The lack of such coordination and unity among marketing units can lead to inconsistency in the implementation of advertising strategies and weakening of the main brand image. Therefore, the central question of this research is: what effect does alliance marketing have on marketing performance and what is the mediating role of brand image in this relationship?

Theoretical Basis

Alliance Marketing and Marketing Performance

Alliance marketing is a process in which a group of market players enter into purposeful cooperation with the aim of achieving common interests and synergy in performance. Many companies are unable to fully implement their marketing strategies independently due to limited access to the required resources, either tangible resources such as capital and

infrastructure, or intangible resources such as knowledge, expertise, and brand reputation. In such circumstances, they enter into interaction and resource sharing with other companies, even competitors, and sometimes with consumers, in order to create more sustainable competitive advantages through collective cooperation (Bendig et al., 2024).

Alliance Marketing and Brand Image

Companies need to use new strategies to become pioneers and market leaders. One of these strategies is alliance marketing. This approach emphasizes marketing strategies that focus on building brand image, through which companies can attract higher prices and positive customer attention. In contrast to this approach, there is the individualistic approach, in which the company carries out all its marketing activities alone. In this case, although companies usually collaborate with supply chain members, they remain highly individualistic and try to implement their marketing strategies independently. Individualistic efforts provide companies with insights into actions that can lead to superiority over their competitors, but ignore the impact of collective action by companies (Humphreys & Carpenter, 2018).

Wasim zaka (2025) studied “The Effect of Communication Quality and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty with the Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction”. The research findings showed that communication quality had a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty of Islamic Bank of Afghanistan and brand image affected customer loyalty. Also, communication quality on customer satisfaction was confirmed.

Najafi yazadi et al. (2025) studied “Analysis of Intellectual Paradigm and Drawing Scientific Mapping of International Research in the Field of Brand Image”, the results showed that the most research was in 2021 with 55 articles (13.8%) and the United States is the most active country in this field with 80 articles (20%).

Research Methodology

This research is applicable in terms of the aim, and descriptive-correlational in terms of the method. The statistical population of the study includes 420 senior managers, marketing managers and experts of automobile holdings in Tehran, 256 of whom were selected as a sample by a stratified random method using the Cochran formula. To collect data, a researcher-made questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale was used. The findings from the Cronbach's alpha test and composite reliability to measure the reliability of the research tool are reported in Table 2. To examine the validity of the tool, content validity (expert opinion) was used and its validity was confirmed. Then, by distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE) and divergent validity. The AVE value for all research variables must be greater than 0.5. In order to test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was used in the context of smart pls2 statistical software.

Findings

Research findings has shown that alliance marketing has a positive impact on the marketing performance of automotive holdings. Alliance marketing also strengthens brand image and consolidates positive associations in the minds of customers. Brand image itself plays an important mediating role in the relationship between alliance marketing and marketing performance. Thus, cooperation and coordination between marketing units, synergy in activities, and promotion of brand image pave the way for improving indicators such as customer attraction, loyalty, and profitability. These findings demonstrate the importance of alliance marketing and intelligent brand image management in the long-term success of automotive holdings.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of alliance marketing on marketing performance with the mediating role of brand image in automotive industry holdings. The research method was quantitative and descriptive-correlational and data were collected from managers and experts of holdings through a standard five-point Likert questionnaire. The results showed that alliance marketing has a positive and direct effect on marketing performance and, by strengthening brand image, also creates an important mediating effect on marketing performance.

The results show that alliance marketing has a positive and significant effect on marketing performance of automotive industry holdings. This finding confirms the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of inter-organizational collaboration in improving marketing performance. Bendig et al. (2024) have stated that companies cannot always achieve their marketing goals independently due to limited resources or specialized knowledge, and collaboration with others, including competitors or consumers, provides the opportunity for synergy in performance.

Also, Wasim zaka's (2025) findings have shown that market collaboration can accelerate the product adoption process and increase the penetration of marketing strategies. The present study showed that in automotive holdings, marketing alliances also coordinate advertising efforts and improve efficiency in market access and increase customer satisfaction.

The results show that alliance marketing has a positive effect on the brand image of companies. This is consistent with the findings of pich et al. (2024), who emphasized that collaboration in marketing activities leads to synergy of brand messages and increases brand credibility in the minds of customers. Humphreys & Carpenter (2018) also state that collaboration between brands can strengthen the brand position in the consumer's mind and improve brand image.

The results of the study indicate that brand image has a significant and positive effect on marketing performance. This finding is consistent with the existing literature. Rafiei et al. (2024) believe that brand image is a reflection of consumer experiences and evaluations and directly affects customer attitudes, purchase intentions and actual behavior. Valmohammadi et al. (2024) also state that successful marketing activities are the main driver in creating a positive brand image. Practically, this finding shows that when brands have been able to create a positive and strong image in the minds of customers, their marketing performance also improves. This includes increasing customer loyalty, improving market share and increasing perceived brand value. Therefore, brand image is not only a marketing outcome but also a key factor in enhancing marketing performance. The analysis shows that brand image plays an important mediating role in the relationship between alliance marketing and marketing performance. This finding is consistent with the theory of brand image transfer and Pinello's (2023) studies, which show that marketing alliances can transfer positive customer perceptions of a brand to the partner brand, thereby strengthening the effect of alliance marketing on marketing performance.