

## Investigating the Relationship between Business-to-Business (B2B) Orientation with Emotional Commitment, Calculative Commitment and Buyer-Supplier Relational Performance

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between B2B brand orientation, emotional commitment, calculative commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance. This research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive in terms of data collection method. The statistical population of this research includes 116 manufacturers and suppliers of auto parts in Gilan province, who operate as B2B and sell their products to car manufacturers or dealers and authorized car repair shops. Using simple random sampling and Cochran's formula, 93 manufacturers and suppliers of auto parts were selected as a statistical sample. In order to collect data, the questionnaire tool was distributed among them. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Also, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the population. This test showed that all research variables have a non-normal distribution, therefore partial least squares method and PLS software were used to test the research hypotheses. The results showed that B2B brand orientation has a positive and significant relationship with emotional commitment, calculative commitment and relational performance. It was also observed that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional commitment and calculative commitment with relational performance.

**Keywords:** B2B brand orientation, Emotional commitment, Calculative commitment, Relational performance

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### Introduction

Today, the growth and development of global markets, followed by the increase in competition between different businesses, has created different and variable demands among customers. Meanwhile, businesses able

to survive in this changing market will be able to respond to the needs of their customers with the highest level of quality. In this regard, one of the factors that are very important for providing products and services with



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the quality of the company to the customers is the quality of the raw materials and parts as well as the products that are provided to the companies by the suppliers during the supply chain process. Therefore, what is important at the beginning is the accurate identification and correct selection of suppliers by the company (1). Usually, the identification and selection of supply chain suppliers is a complex process that is based on multi-criteria decision-making in which factors such as the degree of uncertainty, effectiveness, cost management and the like are considered (2). After the company succeeds in making the necessary identifications and choosing the right supplier, the next step, which is a more important step, takes place, which is the maintenance and development of cooperation between the company and the right suppliers. Is. Because in competitive business environments, maintaining cooperation with quality and efficient suppliers is considered very difficult and vital (3). Based on this, one of the most important criteria that is taken into consideration to check the level of cooperation and effectiveness of relationships between companies and supply chain suppliers is the performance of relationships or relational performance between them. In other words, in relational performance, the efficiency and effectiveness of the activity between the company and the retail and wholesale units that supply the necessities of that company are evaluated in terms of the level of innovation and the possibility of maintaining long-term strategic relationships (4). Many researchers believe that the expansion of relations between companies and their suppliers helps to integrate the company's activities and ultimately leads to an increase in customer satisfaction. Also, improving the performance of relations has helped to share and exchange information between suppliers and companies, and finally, it can be effective in better understanding the company about the state of the market environment (5).

In recent years, one of the most important industries that has grown in the country and has been able to capture a significant share of the country's economy is the automobile industry. The automotive industry in Iran has an important position in the national economy, having a 20% share of the added value of the entire industrial sector and a share of about 4% in the gross do-

mestic product (6). The increase in the level of domestic production led to the acceptance of many buyers to buy cars, and the demand for cars from buyers can be seen growing every year. But on the other hand, the increase in the price of cars in the country has caused the level of expectations of buyers to increase from the quality of products and customers are always looking for buying high quality cars, which has created an important challenge for car manufacturers. In the meantime, establishing quality relations and developing effective relational performance between car manufacturers and car parts manufacturers and suppliers seems more vital than ever. Despite the importance of cooperation and relationship performance, today we see a decrease in cooperation between car manufacturers and parts manufacturers, and the supply chain of car companies is operating inefficiently. Therefore, it is very important to identify the factors that can lead to the improvement of relational performance between automotive companies and their suppliers.

Today, paying attention to marketing activities as a tool to be present in the minds of customers and create a spiritual asset called a brand is considered a new point of view in marketing science. Various researches showed that the real value is not inside the goods or services, but this value exists in the minds of real and potential customers and it is the brand that creates the real value in the minds of customers (7). This is why companies pay special attention to brand and its management. Brand is a strategic imperative for companies that helps them create more value for customers and sustainable competitive advantages. Creating a strong brand in the market is the basic goal of many businesses; Because a strong brand can increase the trust of customers when buying goods and services and help them to better understand ambiguous factors; In other words, a powerful brand is considered a valuable asset for the company. In fact, having powerful brands increase the company's ability to compete and increase their profitability (8). Today, branding is increasingly used as a business strategy to develop competitive advantage by companies engaged in business to business (B2B) units. Business (B2B) is a commercial organization that offers its services and products to other commercial companies and its purpose is not the final consumer. Brand orientation is always presented

as a strategic activity for B2B businesses. Because the brand cannot have immediate and short-term benefits for this type of business units, and also (B2B) businesses always seek to establish and manage long-term business relationships with their customers. Therefore, brand orientation can be used for businesses that operate in the (B2B) field as a management tool in maintaining and developing long-term relationships (4).

On the other hand, one of the factors in relational marketing between companies and their suppliers is the commitment to maintain and establish communication between the company and businesses (B2B). Because studies have shown that those companies that have a higher level of commitment towards their suppliers, compared to companies that have less commitment, have higher satisfaction with their customers (9 and 10). Relational commitment can become a valuable asset of companies and create more value for the company and customers by reducing the cost of transactions between the company and the supplier (11). Relational commitment can be expressed in two forms: emotional commitment and calculative commitment. Emotional commitment arises due to the emotional confrontation between the company and the supplier. This is despite the fact that the accounting obligation has a value and economic perspective and is current between the company and the supplier by creating value in the products. Also, organizations, especially businesses (B2B) around the world are looking for valuable sources of brand orientation (12). Brand orientation refers to an approach in which organizational processes revolve around creating, developing and protecting brand identity in continuous interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Contrary to popular belief that brand is only critical for businesses that deal with end consumers, brand orientation can contribute to the quality of business-to-business (B2B) relationships with their customers. Based on this, researchers' research (13 and 14) shows that brand orientation is an important driver for the success of B2B companies and managers should be encouraged to promote brand orientation in their organization (4). Therefore, brand orientation for B2B businesses has become an attractive and interesting concept in recent years. Also, during

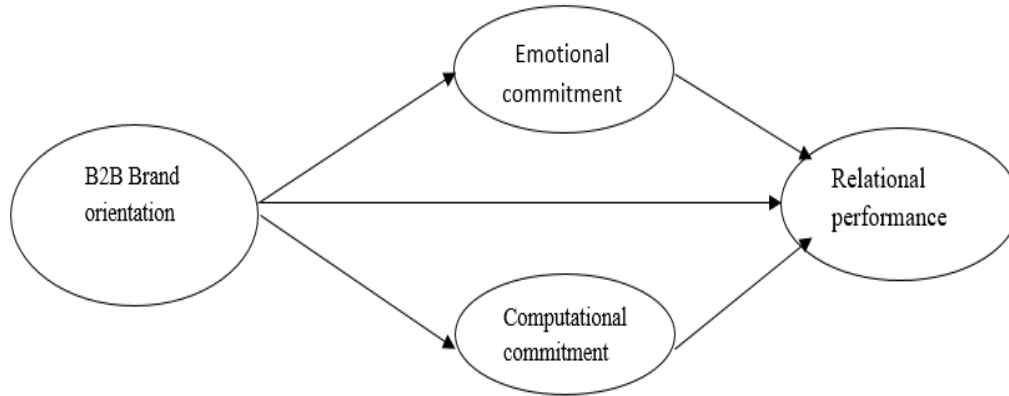
the last two decades, many organizations have become aware of the importance of satisfying their customers and have realized that retaining customers is far less expensive than attracting new customers. Relationship marketing seeks to establish such relationships with target customers that they will buy from him (the company) again in the future and encourage others to do the same. The best approach to maintain and maintain customers is to create a lot of satisfaction in the customer and pay attention to what is considered valuable for him, so that as a result, his loyalty to the company is strengthened. One of the most important indicators in relational marketing is relational commitment, which can make the customer satisfied with the purchased product. Commitment is one of the important variables for understanding the power of marketing, and it is also a useful tool for measuring the probability of customer loyalty and predicting future purchases of customers (14). Today, B2B businesses have realized that the existence of relational commitment can identify, strengthen and improve activities that are important and valuable from the customer's point of view, while creating a long-term relationship with the customer. Attract more buyers and make them loyal to their company (4).

Therefore, the current research seeks to gain the necessary knowledge regarding the relationship between B2B brand orientation, emotional commitment, calculative commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance. Thus, by identifying the role of brand orientation, emotional commitment and calculative commitment on relational performance, the present research can add new and effective knowledge to the literature in the field of B2B companies. and to have an effective role in improving the decision-making process of automotive industry managers in order to develop their relational performance with their suppliers. The conceptual model of the research is presented as follows. Based on the conceptual model of the research, the hypotheses are proposed as follows:

1. There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and emotional commitment.
2. There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and calculative commitment.

3. There is a significant relationship between emotional commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance.
4. There is a significant relationship between the accountability commitment and the buyer-supplier relational performance.

There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and buyer-supplier relational performance



**Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research**

## Research Methodology

The current research is descriptive and causal in terms of its practical purpose and in terms of the nature and method of analysis, which is carried out by a survey method. The statistical population of this research includes 116 manufacturers and suppliers of auto parts in Gilan province, who operate as B2B and sell their products to car manufacturers or dealers and authorized car repair shops. In order to determine the statistical sample, a simple random method was used and Cochran's formula was used to determine the statistical sample size, based on which 93 companies were selected as a statistical sample. In order to measure the variables, the standard questionnaire of Chang et al. (2020) was used, which was organized in two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire includes general information including the company's work history and the number of employees. The second part is dedicated to specialized questions about research variables. This section contains 15 questions that were presented in four parts. This questionnaire is completed by the CEOs of companies that produce and supply auto parts in Gilan province. Also, the scale used in the questions of the questionnaire is a five-point Likert

spectrum including completely disagree, disagree, somewhat agree, agree and completely agree. Table (1) shows the specifications of the research questionnaire.

Table 1: Research questionnaire information

Variable	Number of Questions
B2B brand orientation	1-5
Emotional commitment	6-9
Computational commitment	10-12
Relational performance	13-15
Total	1-15

In order to check the validity of the questionnaire, the face validity method and the opinion of 5 expert university professors were used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. In this way, 30 questionnaires were distributed among the companies in the first stage, and after Cronbach's alpha test in SPSS 23 software, the value of this coefficient was obtained. Since these values are more than the minimum standard of 0.7, it can be concluded that the research variables are reliable in the questionnaire tool.

Also, in order to analyze the data, in the first step, the normality of the data distribution was investigated by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The next step is dedicated to evaluating the construct validity and composite reliability of all the collected questionnaires. Construct, diagnostic and convergent validity criteria have been used to check the validity of the questionnaire. When one or more characteristics are measured, the correlation between these measurements provides two important indicators of validity. If the correlation between factor loadings is high, the questionnaire has convergent validity, and if the correlation between the tests that measure different characteristics is low, the tests have divergent validity. In the divergent validity part, the amount of difference between the indices of one construct is compared with the indices of other constructs in the model. Finally, the reliability evaluation has been done based on indices such as

Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is considered a classic criterion for measuring reliability and a suitable criterion for evaluating internal stability. Internal stability indicates the degree of correlation between a variable and its related indicators. The estimation of the research model and the testing of the hypotheses were also done based on the structural equation modeling method with the partial least squares approach. It is also worth mentioning that the implementation of the mentioned statistical methods was done using specialized software SPSS<sup>23</sup> and Smart PLS<sup>2</sup>.

## Findings

The results of the analysis of demographic characteristics, which included questions in the first and general part of the questionnaire, are shown in Table 2..

**Table 2: Description of demographic characteristics**

Demographic characteristics	Classes	Frequency	Percentage
Job experience	Less than 5 years	12	13%
	5-10 years	48	52%
	More than 10 years	33	35%
Number of employees	Less than 10 people	5	5%
	10-20 people	26	28%
	More than 20 people	62	67%

As the results of Table 2 show, from the total of 93 responding companies, companies with a history of activity between 5 and 10 years had the highest frequency with the number of 48 and 52 percent. Also, 62 out of 93 companies, which constituted 67% of the

population, had more than 20 employees. Descriptive analysis of variables including centrality and dispersion indices such as mean, skewness, skewness, variance and standard deviation are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Descriptive indices of the studied variables**

variable	Question	Mean	SD	Variance
B2B brand orientation	This company always considers branding as an essential strategy	2.84	1.21	1.47
	The company's brand is considered in all marketing activities	3.11	1.10	1.21
	The brand is essential in starting the business of this company	2.74	1.02	1.04
	Long-term brand planning is critical to the company's future success	2.82	1.26	1.60
	Brand is an important asset for this company	3.47	0.99	0.99
Emotional commitment	Our group tends to develop and maintain closer relationships with car manufacturers	3.21	1.09	1.19
	In case of problems, these cases are resolved through close communication with car manufacturers	3.16	1.15	1.33



Computational commitment	Our group is ready to make long-term investments with car manufacturers	3.05	1.11	1.24
	Our production portfolio is ready to provide additional services to car manufacturers	3.10	1.00	1.01
	The cost of changing the car manufacturer is very high for our collection	2.95	1.092	1.19
	Maintaining a relationship with an automobile manufacturer brings many benefits to our production complex and leads to the development of relationships.	3.44	0.92	0.85
	Our production group has to cooperate with this automobile manufacturer because it is very difficult for us to find a new company.	3.18	0.95	0.91
Relational performance	We always decide to continue working with this automobile company	2.65	1.14	1.31
	We are looking to maintain a long-term relationship with the automaker	2.95	1.06	1.12
	We have no plans to change automobile manufacturer in the short term (that is, within a year).	2.80	0.95	0.91

According to table 3, the item "brand is considered an important asset for this company" is 3.47 and the item "brand is necessary in starting the business of this company" is 2.74. respectively, they have the highest and lowest average value among other variables of B2B brand orientation. In the variable of emotional commitment, the item "Our group has a desire to develop and maintain closer relations with car manufacturers" is 3/21 and the item "Our group is ready to make long-term investments with car manufacturers" is 3/05. respectively, they had the highest and lowest mean value among other items of emotional commitment variable. In the calculative commitment variable, the item "Maintaining the relationship with the car manufacturer brings many benefits to our production line and leads to the development of relations" is 3.44 and the item "The cost of replacing the car manufacturer is very high for our line" is 2.95. respectively, it had the highest and the lowest average value among other variable items of arithmetical commitment. And

finally, in relational performance variable, the item "We seek to maintain a long-term relationship with the automobile manufacturer" is 2.95 and the item "We always decide to continue working with this automobile company" is 2.65. respectively, it had the highest and the lowest average value among other relational performance variables.

Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to investigate the claim made about the data distribution of a quantitative variable. In this test, the null hypothesis represents the claim made about the normality of data distribution. Table 4 shows the results of this test. The results of Table 4 show that the significance level of all variables is less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the variables have a non-normal distribution. Therefore, in order to analyze the data, partial least squares method and Smart PLS software were used, which are suitable for non-normal distribution.

**Table 4: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results**

Variable	Mean	SD	Sig.	$\alpha$	Result
B2B brand orientation	3.002	0.949	0.000	0.05	Abnormal
Emotional commitment	3.110	0.871	0.000	0.05	Abnormal
Computational commitment	3.193	0.840	0.000	0.05	Abnormal
Relational performance	2.806	0.935	0.000	0.05	Abnormal

In this section, the fitting of the measurement model is discussed using the criteria of diagnostic validity, convergent validity and reliability. The results of Table 5 show the values of indicators related to diagnostic validity, convergent validity and reliability. As can be seen in table 5, according to the limits for both Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability

(above 0.7), it is concluded that the values of these indicators for all variables of the research are acceptable. are accepted Based on the convergent validity results, it can be seen that all the research constructs are in a suitable range and overall the desirability of the measurement models is confirmed.

**Table 5: The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability coefficient**

Variable	Alpha>0.7	CR>0.7	AVE>0.5
Computational commitment	0.7980	0.8822	0.7152
Emotional commitment	0.8071	0.8708	0.6280
B2B brand orientation	0.8956	0.9269	0.7218
Relational performance	0.8591	0.9145	0.7812

Finally, divergent validity is the third criterion for assessing the fit of measurement models in the PLS method. The validity of divergence in this method is measured in two ways: a) methods of reciprocal factor loadings; (b) Fornell and Larcker method. In this research, the second method is used to measure the validity of divergence. According to Fornell and Larcker, the validity of divergence is at an acceptable level when the average variance extracted for each

construct is greater than the shared variance between that construct and other constructs in the model. If the root mean of the extracted variance ( $\sqrt{AVE}$ ) for a variable is greater than the correlation of that variable with other variables, there is divergent validity for that variable. In Table 6, the numbers on the root diameter of the mean square root are extracted.

**Table 6: The results of divergent validity**

Variable	Computational commitment	Emotional commitment	B2B brand orientation	Relational performance	AVE
Computational commitment	0.8456				0.7152
Emotional commitment	0.8102	0.7924			0.6280
B2B brand orientation	0.7533	0.7853	0.8495		0.7218
Relational performance	0.8155	0.7603	0.8134	0.8838	0.7812

According to Table 6, it can be said that the validity of the divergence is at an acceptable level. The test of the research model has been done using the partial least squares method. Figures 1 and 2 show the research model along with the underlying

and observed variables in it in the form of reflective measurement models along with the path coefficients between the variables as well as the values of the coefficient of determination and Student's t-statistics.

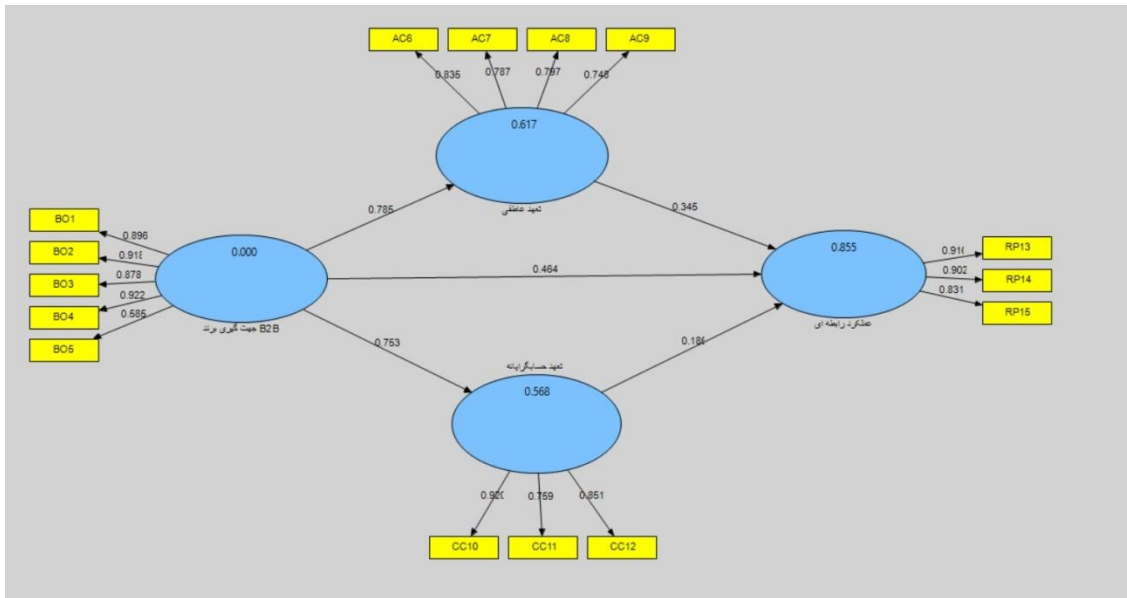


Figure 1: Research model with standard factor loading coefficients

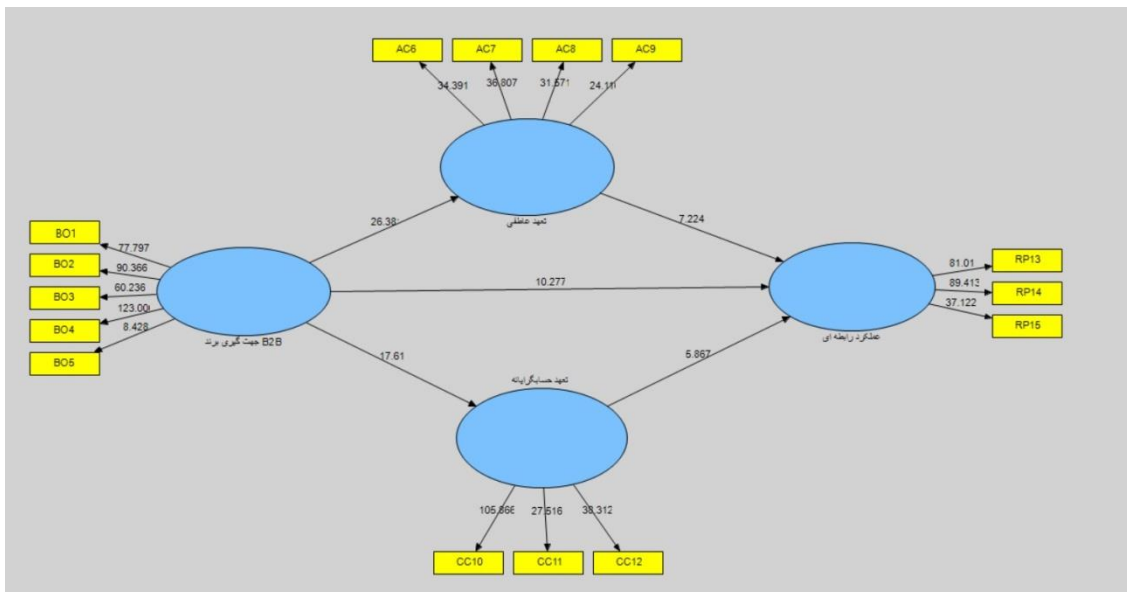


Figure 2: Research model with significant coefficients

Table 7: Hypothesis test results

	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Sig.	Result
1	There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and emotional commitment	0.785	26.38	Approved
2	There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and calculative commitment	0.753	17.61	Approved
3	There is a significant relationship between emotional commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance	0.345	7.22	Approved
4	There is a significant relationship between accounting commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance	0.186	5.86	Approved



5	There is a significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and buyer-supplier relational performance	0.464	10.277	Approved
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The results of Table 7 show that in relation to all hypotheses, the Student's t-statistic was greater than 1.96. Therefore, all five research hypotheses are confirmed at the 95% confidence level. The obtained path coefficients are also positive in all the confirmed hypotheses, which indicates the significant positive effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable in the respective hypotheses. Among the research hypotheses, the relationship path between B2B brand orientation and emotional commitment had the highest value with a path coefficient of 0.785. Finally, the criterion used to evaluate the fit of the structural model includes R<sup>2</sup>, three values of 0.19, 0.33

and 0.67 are considered as the criteria for weak, medium and strong values of R<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, according to the values reported for the research variables in Figure 1, it is 0.514 for the variable of emotional commitment, 0.568 for the variable of arithmetical commitment and 0.855 for the variable of relational performance which is more than the values of 0.33 and 0.67 and indicates the strong fit of the model. The value of the overall index of fit (GOF) is also equal to 0.6954, which also confirms the acceptability of the overall fit of the research estimation model.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between B2B brand orientation, emotional commitment, calculative commitment and buyer-supplier relational performance. In this research, auto parts manufacturers in Gilan province and suppliers of those parts to car manufacturers were studied, which included 93 manufacturers. In total, five hypotheses were proposed in this research, which were analyzed using inferential statistics methods. In order to examine the relationships between the variables and test the research hypotheses, considering that the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated the non-normality of the main research variables. Therefore, to analyze the data, the structural equation modeling test was used with the help of pls2 software to test the hypotheses. In the following, the results of the hypothesis test and their comparison with the results of other researches are summarized as follows:

The result of the first hypothesis test showed that B2B brand orientation is positively and significantly related to emotional commitment. In other words, when producers and suppliers explain and design their brand building activities such as advertising activities based on the attitude of their customers who are wholesalers

and retailers, then the companies will also move towards it. will be attracted and want to buy from these suppliers. Based on this, the interaction between the two makes the suppliers feel a greater sense of emotional commitment to their institutional customers, and in order to satisfy them, they provide additional services outside of the contract framework to the companies. The result of the first hypothesis test is consistent with the results of the studies (4,16) because they observed a positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and emotional commitment. The result of the second hypothesis test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and calculative commitment. In other words, based on the theory of resources and the principle of competitive advantage, whenever the suppliers and suppliers of the branding parts of their collection become the main asset of that collection, in that case, they will gain more profit from communication with wholesale and retail customers. This event will be bilateral so that wholesalers and retailers will also bear high costs to replace their suppliers with well-known brands. Therefore, directional branding leads to the development of benefits resulting from communication and calculative commitment. The result of the second hypothesis test is consistent

with the result of the study (4) because they also observed a positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and calculative commitment. The result of the third hypothesis test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional commitment and relational performance. Based on this, if the suppliers and suppliers of auto parts plan their behavioral policies in a way that they have long-term investment with their corporate customers and in case of work problems, they solve these problems with the help of each other. In that case, they have an emotional commitment to each other, and ultimately, the expansion of this commitment will lead to the development of long-term relationships and relational performance. The result of the third hypothesis test is consistent with the results of the conducted studies (4, 17, and 18). Because they also observed a positive relationship between emotional commitment and the expansion of cooperative relationships between companies and their business partners. The result of the fourth hypothesis test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between calculative commitment and relational performance. Based on this, when the suppliers and suppliers of auto parts find out that the relationship with the wholesalers and car manufacturing companies brings them financial benefits and profits, they will not be willing to stop their relationship with the companies in the short term. Based on this, relational performance will be developed. The result of the fourth hypothesis test is in line with the result of the study (4) because they found that there is a significant relationship between calculative commitment and relational performance. The result of the fifth hypothesis test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and relational performance. In other words, if the manufacturers and suppliers of parts consider the brand as one of the pillars of business life and have a long-term plan, then continuing to work with the companies will be considered the main decision for them. Because they will gain a lot of benefits from this relationship and they will witness the growth of market shares and the sales volume of their products. The result of the fifth hypothesis test is consistent with the obtained results (4, 13, 18, and 19) because they observed that there is a positive and

significant relationship between brand orientation and relational performance.

According to the obtained results, it is suggested:

- Considering the positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and emotional commitment, it is recommended that suppliers pay attention to the features required by industrial companies and wholesalers in order to design their branding and advertising activities. And in this regard, they benefited from business and research and development experts, and during meetings with companies, they identified their needs and provided them with additional services.
- Considering the positive and meaningful relationship between B2B brand orientation and accountability commitment, it is recommended that suppliers prepare economic and financial plans related to cooperation with industrial companies before designing advertising and branding plans. In order to examine and predict in these plans what benefits and possible costs cooperation with companies has for suppliers. For this purpose, suppliers can ask research and development experts to carry out these economic plans with field research.
- Considering the positive and meaningful relationship between emotional commitment and relational performance, it is recommended that if suppliers decide to establish relationships and maintain industrial customers, they can maintain their relationships with the company by obtaining long-term investment. For this purpose, they can obtain the financial resources they need by obtaining contracts with financial institutions.
- Due to the positive and significant relationship between accounting commitment and relational performance, it is recommended that suppliers use the cost/benefit approach in evaluating their customers who are industrial companies. and get comprehensive information by evaluating the financial ratios in relation to the benefit from the relationship with their business partners.

- Considering the positive and significant relationship between B2B brand orientation and relational performance, it is recommended that suppliers adopt policies that lead to the development of brand value in the long term. For this purpose, in addition to branding methods based on virtual space such as social networks, they can use promotional policies and sales incentives such as gifts and special sales policies, as well as customer communication systems to maintain the relationship between them for a long time.

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