



Brand Image and Brand Trust's Effect on Brand Loyalty: A Study in the Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

A customer with brand loyalty trusts his/her brand and always prefers the same brand. In addition, these customers recommend their brand to people around them and resist negative information about their brand. In this context, creating brand loyalty in customers enables companies to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Due to the importance of brand loyalty, the effect of brand image and brand trust on brand loyalty, which is considered to be the premises of brand loyalty, was examined. In line with the aims of the research, a questionnaire was applied to the local customers of 4 and 5 star hotels in Aydın /Kuşadası and 398 participants were reached in the face-to-face questionnaire. Research data were analyzed with the help of SPSS-24 and Amos 18 programs. Analysis results show that brand image and brand trust have a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. The research is considered to raise awareness for hotel managers while expanding the literature on the service sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important sector that creates added value for the economies of the country. Tourism also enables the development of sectors such as transportation, construction, entertainment and food. According to the Statistical Institute of Turkey 51.7 million tourists visited Turkey in 2019. The same year, Turkey's tourism revenues were \$34.5 billion (TUIK, 2020). While 28.74 billion dollars of income was obtained from foreign tourists, 5.76 billion dollars was obtained from domestic tourists. Considering that most of the tourists stay in hotel businesses, in the light of the above data, the importance of hotel businesses for the development of countries is obvious (Demirağ, 2019).

Transportation opportunities have improved and the hotel customers have turned into a more multicultural structure. In this multi-cultural structure, the demands and expectations of each customer also differ (Sürücü & Sesen, 2019). Today's hotels try to ensure customer satisfaction by meeting the differing expectations and needs of customers (Sağbaş & Sürücü, 2020). However, the entry of new and strong competitors into the market threatens the sustainability of existing hotels. For this reason, hotels want to establish a long-term relationship with their existing customers and to gain competitive advantage by maintaining this relationship (Şahin & Biçer 2020). Homburg and Giering (2001) state that brand loyalty is the basis of establishing long-term relationships with their customers.

Brand loyalty is defined as the repetition of the purchasing action for the same brand and the deep loyalty felt towards the brand (Sürücü, Yeşilada & Maslakçı, 2020). The loyal customer to the brand trusts the brand and always prefers the same brand (Selvi & Ercan, 2006). In addition, customers who are loyal to the brand recommend their brand to people around them and resist negative information about their brand (Şahin & Biçer 2020). This situation provides marketing advantage to certain companies with commercial leverage effects such as brand loyalty, reducing marketing costs and providing more new customers (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005). In addition, brand loyalty is a prerequisite for a firm's competitiveness and profitability (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Marketers use brand loyalty as a strategic and powerful weapon to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Chinomona, 2016; Keller & Lehman, 2006; Runyan & Droge, 2008). Therefore, every firm desires to be a brand with high customer loyalty (Morrison & Crane, 2007). In line with the current literature, we know that brand loyalty will create competitive advantage by allowing hotels to make an effective marketing plan. While creating brand loyalty has important benefits for hotels, creating brand loyalty in customers is a long and challenging process (Şahin & Biçer 2020). Marketing researchers conducted various studies by associating brand loyalty with concepts such as brand love (Şahin & Biçer 2020; Uca & Tüzünkan, 2020), perceived service quality (Hussein, Hapsari & Yulianti, 2018), brand communication (Chinomona, 2016), perceived value (Demirağ, 2019), brand identification (Dhurup, Schalkwyk & Tsautse, 2018), brand image and brand trust (Alhaddad, 2015). However, research on the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty is limited (Demirağ, 2019; Martínez, Pérez, & Del Bosque, 2014). However, this is an important gap because it is thought to be difficult to establish brand loyalty without detecting the visual and perceptual image in the mind of the customer towards the brand (Demirağ, 2019).

Brand image expresses the customers' impressions of the brand and the reality they perceive. A positive image created for the brand enables the customers to create awareness about the products and services offered in a market that has reached satisfaction like tourism (Peltekoğlu, 2004). In this regard, Kandampully and Hu (2007) state that the brand image affects the customers' overall evaluation of the hotel and therefore the brand image is important in the hospitality (hotel) industry. In the studies conducted on the tourism sector, it was found that there is a significant

relationship between brand image and brand loyalty (Chinomona, 2016; Martínez et al., 2014; Yapraklı & Keser, 2017). For this reason, it is considered that it will be beneficial to consider the brand image in the studies to determine brand loyalty in the tourism sector.

In addition to brand image, brand trust may also be one of the important factors in establishing brand loyalty (Şaylan & Tokgöz, 2020). Because trust is the basis of all bilateral relations (Tokgöz & Seymen, 2013), and to create brand loyalty, it is necessary to gain the trust of customers first. Brand trust refers to the feeling that after the product or service is purchased, the brand will fulfill its responsibilities to the customer and satisfaction will be achieved. In these bilateral relations established on the basis of trust, the customer will constantly buy the same brand and brand loyalty will emerge with it (Lee & Jee, 2016). Researches reveal that brand trust has an effect on brand loyalty, so customers become more loyal by trusting the brand (Lee & Jee, 2016; Song, Wang & Han, 2019).

Having examined the brand loyalty in the literature, it is seen that the studies are conducted especially on the production sector, but the service sector is limited (Jones & Taylor, 2007). Also, Research on hotels is limited (Demirağ, 2019). This research, which is conducted for hotel customers, is considered to create awareness for hotel managers who want to create brand loyalty in their customers, as well as contribute to the existing gap in the literature.

Literature Review

Brand Image

In business management, a brand is considered an intangible asset that is difficult to imitate by competitors (Buil, Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013). Marketing researchers, emphasizing the importance of branding, state that the brand plays a critical role for market success (Uca & Tüzünkan, 2020; Sürücü et al., 2020; Şaylan & Tokgöz, 2020). Customers' perceptions towards the brand significantly affect their attitude and behavior towards the product and service they receive (Todor, 2014). Aaker (1997) states that the created positive brand image enables companies to reach the target audience they want to reach easily. In addition, using the brand image not only helps businesses build market positions, but also protects brands from other competitors (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). The proper perceived brand image plays a critical role in ensuring customer satisfaction by separating the brand from its competitors (Hung, 2005). In this regard, Kandampully and Hu (2007) state that the brand image is an important concept in the hotel industry, as it affects the customers' overall assessment of the hotel. Some studies reveal the importance of hotel image in customer retention (Ali, Omar, & Amin, 2013; Kandampully & Hu, 2007; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Therefore, today, businesses struggle to protect their brand image and allocate important resources to have a positive image (Chinomona, 2016; Shankar, Azar & Fuller, 2008). As a result, it is considered that having a strong brand image will provide a competitive advantage especially for hotels operating in the tourism sector where competition is at high levels.

Keller (2009) defines brand image as the whole of customers' impressions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and associations about the brand. Customers often use the brand image to understand the quality of the product or service and to decide their behavior (Salinas & Pérez, 2009). The quality of the brand image indirectly enables customers to have information about the quality of the product or service (Sääksjärvi & Samiee, 2011). A positive brand image represents high quality for the customer and creates the impression that brand products differ from competitors

(Ekinci & Hosany 2006). In this respect, brand image is customer attitudes and behaviors towards elements that add additional meaning and value to a certain brand within a certain product group.

Customers prefer hotels where they can meet their expectations and feel happy. In a study conducted on the hotel industry, Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) emphasize that brand image is an important factor in the formation of recommendation and purchase intentions for hotel customers. However, brand image is also an important predictor of customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction contributes to the formation of brand loyalty at the end of the process by providing repeat purchases. Aktuğlu (2004) states in his research that the brand image is related to the satisfaction that occurs after the purchase and that a positive brand image will create brand loyalty to the companies. While the relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty has been comprehensively examined in previous studies, the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty has received much less attention (Demirağ, 2019). Martínez et al., (2014) argue that brand image, rather than customer satisfaction, may be the main determinant of brand loyalty. These researchers state that products with a stronger brand image reduce the cognitive perception of customers and perceive the customers to be of higher quality than they are when making the product/service evaluation. Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) argue that brand image rather than satisfaction may be the main determinant of brand loyalty in service sectors such as hotels where it is difficult to distinguish according to concrete quality characteristics of services.

In other studies, Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) documented that hotel image has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, while in another study on boutique hotels, Hussein et al., (2018) stated that the hotel's brand image positively affected the perceived quality. The hotel's brand image plays an important role in creating brand loyalty among customers. These studies show that customers tend to be more loyal to a hotel with a positive image. The following hypothesis has been developed to be investigated in line with the researches and the literature.

H1: Brand image affects brand loyalty in a significant and positive way.

Brand Trust

Due to the diversity of the hotel industry, customers may be hesitant to purchase services. Getting service from a hotel they do not know carries risks about the extent to which the relevant brand will respond to its psychological needs and to what extent it will meet its expectations and needs. Aware of this, customers want to minimize these risks by getting service from the brand they trust. In this case, trust functions as a mental mechanism that reduces the risks related to customers' service purchases (Şaylan & Tokgöz, 2020). Marketing literature indicates that trust plays a more prominent role in customers' purchasing decisions when uncertainty and information asymmetry are intense (Chiu, Huang, & Yen, 2010; Chinomona, 2016; Sürücü et al., 2020). Therefore, the trust in the brand acts as a mechanism to make positive thoughts about the brand, reduce risk and uncertainty, and make customers feel comfortable with their brands (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003; Pavlou, Liang & Xue, 2007). Brand trust by its very nature enhances long-term relationships between customers and the brand and helps hotels maintain their competitive advantage (Srivastava, Dash & Mookerjee, 2015; Sürücü et al., 2020). In this context, brand trust is an important factor to be successful in the hotel industry.

Brand trust refers to the customer's belief in the ability of a brand to perform the functions claimed (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and plays a central (effective) role in the purchasing decision making process (Şaylan & Tokgöz,

2020). As the customer fulfills the responsibilities of the brand after purchasing the product, it leads to the development of trust in the brand (Hegner, Fenko & Teravest, 2016). This perspective is a concept that develops with brand trust, previous experiences and past experiences (Dhurup et al., 2018).

Many researchers think that customers will be loyal to the brand with their repeated purchases in order to reduce the risks that customers will assume by turning to other products, and the customer will be loyal to the brand (Gürbüz & Doğan, 2013; Sürücü et al., 2020). In addition, the literature states that brand trust creates a valuable relationship between the brand and the customer and that the continuity of this relationship will result in brand loyalty (Eren & Erge, 2012; Önen, 2018). In studies that support the literature, it is documented that brand trust positively affects brand loyalty (Eren & Erge, 2012; Gürbüz & Doğan, 2013; Patawayati, Zain, Lingerie, & Rahayu, 2013). The following hypothesis has been developed to be tested in line with the researches and current literature.

H2: Brand trust affects brand loyalty in a significant and positive way.

Method

Universe and Sample

Research is conducted at one of Turkey's most important tourism destinations, Aydın/Kuşadası. The population of the research consists of 4 and 5 star hotels operating in Aydın/Kuşadası. The reason why 4 and 5 star hotels are preferred is that these hotels give importance to their brands and have sufficient resources to increase the image of their brands.

According to the data of Aydın Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, there are 37 hotels in Kuşadası, 13 of which are 5-stars (www.aydin.ktb.gov.tr). Within the scope of the research, hotel managers were contacted by phone and an appointment was requested for the interview (11 hotel managers could not be reached). The managers of 19 hotels, who responded positively to the appointment request, were interviewed face to face and information about the aims of the study was shared (7 managers responded negatively to the appointment request). On the condition that the hotel names are kept confidential and the research data are not shared with third parties, permission was obtained from 15 hotel managers to conduct the research. In June and July 2019, local tourists were interviewed face-to-face with easy sampling method by going to hotels and reaching 430 participants. 32 of these questionnaires were not evaluated because of being filled improperly (21 participants gave up from completing the questionnaire). The analysis of the research was carried out over 398 questionnaires.

According to the results of the frequency analysis conducted to reveal the demographic feature of the participants in the research, 218 of the participants are male and 180 are female. 243 of these participants are married and 155 of them are single. 151 of the participants are 35 years old and under, 114 of them are between 35-40 years old, 133 of them are 41 years old and above. 99 of the participants are high school and below, 230 are university and 69 are graduate / doctorate education level.

Data Collection Tools

The questionnaire used in the study consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants including gender, age, marital status and educational status. In the second part, scales were used to determine the participants' brand trust, brand image and brand loyalty. A five-point

Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree) was used to determine to what extent the participants of the study agreed with the statements. It is assumed that as the scores of the participants from the scale increase, so does their perception of that scale.

To determine the brand image, the "brand image scale" developed by Kim and Kim (2005) and conducted by Kayaman and Araslı (2007) on the tourism industry was used in the study. The one-dimensional scale consists of 8 items. The brand value in the survey was used by the brand trust scale developed by Lau and Lee (1999) and used by Köse and Özer (2015) in their study on the tourism industry. The one-dimensional scale consists of 8 items. Finally, to measure brand loyalty, the "brand loyalty scale" applied in the tourism industry by Uca and Tüzünkan (2020) and developed by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) was used. There are 5 items in the scale consisting of one dimension.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis in the research was conducted with the help of SPSS-24 and Amos-18 programs.

Validity and Reliability Analysis of the Scales

Factor analysis was performed to test the structural validity of the scales. Varimax vertical axis rotation technique was preferred for factor analysis. Factor analysis was decided to be interpretable, considering the results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. KMO values provide information about factor analysis. The closer the KMO criterion to 1, the more appropriate the data for factor analysis is evaluated. Accordingly, KMO value of brand image was measured as 0.897, KMO value of brand trust was 0.875, and KMO value of brand loyalty was measured as 0.805. These values show that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results (brand image: $X^2 (28) = 1579,180$ $p < 0.001$, brand trust: $X^2 (28) = 1393,453$, $p < 0.001$; brand loyalty: $X^2 (10) = 686,030$) shows that it is suitable for factor analysis (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman 2007). The results of the factor analysis show that a single factor with an eigenvalue above 1 is formed in all scales used in the study. In other words, all 3 scales preserved their original form and were obtained as one dimension. Analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Factor Analysis Results

	Item Nu.	Factors Loading	Eigenvalue	Total Variance Explained (%)
Brand Image	BI 1	0,642	3,635	45,439
	BI 2	0,696		
	BI 3	0,673		
	BI 4	0,655		
	BI 5	0,740		
	BI 6	0,699		
	BI 7	0,701		
	BI 8	0,652		
KMO= 0,897; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity=1579,179; Sig.=0,000; df= 28				
Brand Trust	BT 1	0,689	3,314	41,419
	BT 2	0,730		
	BT 3	0,683		
	BT 4	0,675		
	BT 5	0,631		
	BT 6	0,567		
	BT 7	0,598		
	BT 8	0,554		
KMO= 0,875; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity= 1393,453; Sig.=0,000; df= 28				

Table 1. Factor Analysis Results (continuation)

Brand Loyalty	BL 1	0,548	2,144	42,887
	BL 2	0,730		
	BL 3	0,773		
	BL 4	0,622		
	BL 5	0,572		
KMO= 0,805; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity=686,030; Sig.= 0,000; df= 10				

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha value were calculated to determine the reliability of the scales (Table 2). Sürücü and Maslakçı (2020) state that as these values approach 1, the reliability increases and the reliability value of the scale should be 0.7 and above for the research to give healthy results. The results in Table 2 show that the scales included in the study are reliable. In addition, fit indices of the research model made with the help of Amos-18 program were examined in the study. The data obtained showed that the research model had an acceptable fit index (CMIN / df = 3.082, GFI = 0.921, CFI = 0.895, IFI = 0.901, RMSEA = 0.053).

Table 2. Reliability Results

Variables	Item Number	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Brand Image	8	0,869	0,875
Brand Trust	8	0,847	0,848
Brand Loyalty	5	0,782	0,787

Correlation Analysis

The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined in order to understand whether the data showed normal distribution or not. The coefficient of skewness for the brand image was -0.5486 and the kurtosis coefficient was 0.1978, the skewness coefficient for brand trust was -0.535 and the kurtosis coefficient was 0.105, the skewness coefficient for brand loyalty was -0.535 and the kurtosis coefficient was 0.105. The skewness and kurtosis values between -1.5 and +1.5 show that the data have a normal distribution (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). In order to determine the correlation between variables, Pearson Correlation values were taken into account in the analysis.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlations

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Brand Image	Brand Trust	Brand Loyalty
Brand Image	3,916	0,723	1		
Brand Trust	3,928	0,676	0,516**	1	
Brand Loyalty	3,791	0,765	0,485**	0,512**	1

** P < 0,01, (N=398)

Having examined the correlations between the variables used in the study; It is seen that brand image has a significant and positive correlation with brand trust ($r = 0.516$, $p < 0.01$) and brand loyalty ($r = 0.485$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, brand trust has a significant and positive correlation with brand loyalty ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.01$).

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis refers to writing the relationship between any variable (dependent variable) and one or more variables (independent variable/s) as a mathematical function. Regression analysis, according to the number of independent variables; is divided into two groups as simple regression analysis (single independent variable) and multiple regression analysis (multiple independent variables) (Orhunbilge, 2017). In this study, multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses within the scope of the study, since the effect of two independent variables

will be examined. Regression analysis was performed with SPSS 24.0 statistical package program. The summary of the research model is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,574 ^a	0,329	0,326	0,628

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

Accordingly, brand image and brand trust explain the variance of brand loyalty by 32.6%. In other words, brand loyalty is formed by 32.6% brand image and brand trust.

The estimated values of the coefficients in the model and the related t values are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Beta	Beta		
(Constant)	0,953	0,180		5,310	0,000
Brand Image	0,319	0,044	0,301	7,197	0,000
Brand Trust	0,404	0,047	0,357	8,527	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Loyalty

The regression table gives the regression coefficients and their significance levels used for the regression equation. In the study, the relationship between brand image and brand trust variables and the brand loyalty variable is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Based on this finding; It can be said that participants' perceptions of brand image and brand trust made a meaningful contribution to brand loyalty. The results obtained show that brand image ($\beta = 0.319$, $p < 0.01$) and brand trust ($\beta = 0.404$, $p < 0.01$) affect brand loyalty significantly and positively. Hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were accepted in line with the findings.

Discussion and Conclusion

Brand loyalty provides companies with a significant marketing advantage since it has leverage effect in reducing marketing costs, retaining existing customers and acquiring more new customers. Besides, brand loyalty is considered a prerequisite for a firm's competitiveness and profitability (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). For this reason, companies desire to be a brand with high customer loyalty. Marketing researchers have associated brand loyalty with many variables and investigated the antecedents of brand loyalty. Studies on the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty have remained limited (Brunner et al., 2008; Demirağ, 2019; Martínez et al., 2014). In addition, these researches were generally conducted on production sector and the researches on service sector were ignored (Demirağ, 2019; Jones & Taylor, 2007). However, this is a serious gap in the literature. Because tourism is an important source of income for countries and also a source of employment (Sürücü & Şeşen, 2019). This research, which investigates the effect of brand image and brand value on brand loyalty in the service sector, not only contributes to closing the gap in the literature, but also expands the literature on brand loyalty. The main findings are as follows.

In the research, it has been determined that brand image has a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. Brand image in the tourism industry is considered to be one of the most important factors in the formation of purchasing intentions for the hotel customer. Since the perceptions of customers in the tourism sector are abstract,

the level of awareness of the service they receive is related to the image of the brand (Kang & James, 2004; Keller, 1993). In other words, the quality of the brand image indirectly affects the customers' opinions about the quality of provided service. As a matter of fact, Hussein et al., (2018) state that the hotel image positively affects the perceived quality and indirectly plays an important role in creating brand loyalty in customers. Grönroos (2010) argues that brand image is a value-added premise that determines customer satisfaction and loyalty. From this point of view, brand loyalty is a result of corporate brand image.

Another finding obtained in the study is that brand trust affects brand loyalty in a meaningful and positive way. Actually, this is expected. Because in order to create brand loyalty in customers, it is necessary to gain the trust of the customer first. Customers always prefer one brand in order to minimize the risks they will take by turning to different brands. Meeting the expectations and needs of the preferred brand increases the customer's trust in the company. As stated by Eren and Erge (2012), the trust in the company and the trust in the brand will create a synergy together and will have a more impact on brand loyalty. This finding of the study is in parallel with the previous research findings (Demirağ, 2019; Lee & Jee, 2016; Song et al., 2019).

Success in maintaining brand loyalty in the service sector depends on increasing service quality and creating a sense of trust in customers. Gürbüz and Doğan (2013) state that brand trust is also effective on brand loyalty and this effect is greater in the service sector. As a result, in the hospitality industry, where competition is rapidly increasing, marketing strategies for brand loyalty should be created in order to acquire new customers and retain existing customers for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Research findings reveal that brand trust and brand image are important factors in the formation of brand loyalty. In this context, it is recommended to use elements that will support the brand image of hotels and create trust, which is the basis of brand reputation. Among these elements, advertising activities can be developing marketing strategies in the context of customer relations.

Some limitations should not be overlooked when evaluating research findings. First of all, the research was carried out in Aydın / Kuşadası. Considering that each region has different cultural structures, it is necessary to generalize the research findings with large participants in different regions. In addition, the cross-sectional design of the study is insufficient to explain the cause and effect relationship. Finally, the research was conducted in the summer. It is considered that the data to be included in the winter seasons will be more generalized.

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