



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Effect of Negative Past Experiences, Poor Relationship Quality and Rumor on Brand Hate: A Research on Fast Food Industry

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## Abstract

This study investigates negative past experiences, poor relationship quality, and the impact of rumor on brand hate. The sample of the study consists of fast-food customers in Turkey. Out of the non-probability sampling methods, convenience sampling method was adopted. 455 customers were reached by using convenience sampling method, but only 433 of them provided data suitable for analysis. Questionnaire forms designed to measure data variables were available online (via Google forms, e-mails and other social media networks). The collected data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS, and the validity and reliability of the scales were measured. AMOS was used to test the hypotheses using the Structural Equation Model. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between negative past experiences and rumor and brand hate. However, it was determined that there is no positive relationship between poor relationship quality and brand hate.

## Keywords

Brand experience, Relationality, Fast-food industry

## Introduction

Because the modern concept of marketing is consumer-focused; actions and policies of businesses have a broad perspective which includes consumer expectations, perceptions, and evaluations of the product. Therefore, the number of studies on consumer experiences with the product and the brand, relationship quality, and brand rumors are increasing steadily. (Haarhoff, 2018; Nasidi, 2016; Kanagal, 2009; Fournier and Alvarez, 2013; Kucuk; 2016; Dubois et al., 2011).

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Consumer experience includes the negative or positive perceptions of consumers on how well the product they got met their needs (Johnston and Kong, 2011: 5). When the desires and needs of consumers are not completely met, they start to have negative experiences. Consumers who have negative experiences with a brand will avoid or even despise the brand, causing problems for the businesses in the market where the competition is strong.

Businesses can strengthen the relationship quality by evaluating consumer needs and wants. If conflicts that cause poor relationship can be resolved (ensuring that work processes are at the same level with marketing strategies), it will be possible to have a long-term bilateral relationship (Palmatier, 2008). A consumer-focused marketing concept requires improving relationship quality. In order to create a strong value, brands and companies should establish a healthy relationship established with the consumers. This way, understanding hate or love towards a brand becomes would be possible.

Rumor is information consisting of confirmed/non-confirmed news or propaganda regarding a product or the brand (Aditya, 2014: 121-122). Rumor including negative statements against the business is regarded as “gossip harassment” (Liu et al., 2014). Rumors mostly have negative effects on the businesses. However, if rumor is used as a feedback device, negative feelings towards the product or the brand would be diminished and managing harmful psychological perceptions like hate would be beneficial for the businesses.

Brand hate represents the negative feelings of consumers towards the brands they tried before (Navarro, 2013). For this reason, it is necessary to focus on the relationship between consumers and brands, in other words, on the feelings of consumers while they are trying out a brand (Fournier and Alvarez, 2013: 259). Negative feelings cause a gradual alienation from the brand. The studies on the causes and results of brand hate show that negative past experiences with the brand, rumor and poor relationship quality lead to brand hate (Kapferer, 2004; Ahmed and Hashim, 2018; Zarantonello et al., 2018).

In today’s competitive environment, businesses have to analyze consumers well. Businesses that pay attention to the feelings and thoughts of consumers and take appropriate strategies and decisions will gain competitive advantage. Developing technology and the resulting social platforms have created spaces where consumers can share their experiences, feelings and thoughts with others comfortably and instantly. Many consumers, especially those who have not used the product before, pay attention to the recommendations (Kement et al., 2018) and complaints (Demirağ and Çavuşoğlu, 2022) of others while purchasing a product. A rational consumer is likely to avoid or even hate a product because of negative comments made by people who had used the product before and had negative experiences. It is important for businesses to develop some strategies for such scenarios that will threaten their competitiveness, sales and even existence. Increasing the quality of the relationship they have with the consumers can be a useful strategy.

If businesses cannot create more trust and satisfaction, it can have negative effects such as rumors and hatred. The lack of a strong relationship with consumers can cause them to be unable to evaluate the veracity of a rumor and therefore to have negative feelings and thoughts in a short time. In cases where the quality of the relationship is weak and combined with negative customer experiences, the product, brand and even the business can be seriously damaged. As the negative discourse towards the business increases on different platforms, it will inevitably cause more customers to have a negative view.

The results obtained from the hypotheses are thought to contribute to both the literature and businesses. This study focuses on negative consumer evaluations. It is aimed to contribute to the limited number of research results in the literature by examining the relationship between bad relationship quality, rumors, negative experiences, and brand hate. It is also important to carry out the research in the fast-food sector. It is thought that examining the relationship between bad relationship quality, rumors and negative experiences, and brand hate will contribute to the limited number of research in the literature. It is also important to carry out research in the fast-food sector. With the changes in the consumption habits today, eating habits of consumers have also changed. Reasons such as the fast pace of life, long working hours have made consumers lean towards practical eating habits. Even though the wave of healthy eating habits during Coronavirus have decreased the consumption of fast food (Bohlouli et al., 2021), there is still an ever-growing fast-food sector where new brands emerge everyday. Therefore, a consumer-oriented study can offer valuable results in terms of competitive strategies for the businesses in the sector.

This study analyzes the effects of negative past experiences, poor relationship quality and rumor on brand hate in the light of the hypotheses developed based on the literature and empirical studies. Therefore, it aims to determine the causes of brand hate that create a significant competitive disadvantage, and to contribute to marketing performers and the literature.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Negative Past Experience**

Brand experience is conceptualized as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus et al., 2009: 52). Past experiences are related to daily life (Haarhoff, 2018: 4). Experience plays a big role in developing behavior-oriented beliefs. In the formation of the behaviors, the quality of the experience directly affects the possibility of an objective behavior (Bojko, 2013: 4). Experience is at the focus of the marketing activities. Brakus et al. (2009: 52), state that experiences of consumers with the brand are undeniably popular in marketing. Therefore, marketing performers emphasized

that understanding how consumers experience with the brand is significantly important for developing marketing strategies for products and services. Pine and Gilmore (1998) emphasize the importance of creating strong and permanent consumer experiences (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016: 69). Consumers make decisions by taking past experiences into consideration as well as marketing programs and noncommercial information sources; they consider their experiences as an “internal information source” (Hanaysha, 2017: 8). Consumers start creating experiences when they use a product or start a cognitive effort about the product and while coping with a need, they use their negative/positive experiences as an internal source and try to build trust (Nasidi, 2016; Kement and Bükey, 2020). Past experiences of consumers mostly stem from past relationships associated with the product or the brand (Khan, 2018: 2). Results of expectations and perceptions of consumers in their quality assessments, in other words deductions regarding product quality creates product experience (Urban, 2010: 820). Product quality, physical qualities, way of presentation, post-sale consumer services are important factors in the formation of this experience. Katawetawarak and Wang (2011: 68) state that in addition to these factors, negative past experiences of consumers can also be caused by salespeople. Oppressive attitude and weak consumer control mechanisms of salespeople can cause negative experiences regarding corporate identity and salespeople. This would increase online sales. For this reason, determining consumer perceptions regarding the product is important. Past experiences of consumers have an impact on perceptual filters, and this redounds on product evaluations (Solomon et al., 2010). When consumers have a utilitarian approach towards the product and cannot get the benefit they hoped to get from it, will strengthen the possibility of the emergence of negative past experiences in product evaluations (Martin, 2017: 3). Consumers can convey negative and positive suggestions about the product and their experiences to more consumers in parallel with the technological developments. Especially, individual negative experiences with the services and corporates after or during purchase can affect existing or potential consumers’ experiences (Verhagen et al., 2013: 1430). Consumers do not share their negative past experiences with other consumers (even though they often complain about the negative aspects of the product) until their complaints reach a serious level. Even though this situation prevents potential customers to be alienated from the firm, it also eliminates the chance to regain a customer who can give positive reports to others (Richins, 1983: 76). In addition, as dissatisfaction prevents the detection of the factors causing negative experiences because of the lack of feedback, it precludes turning negative experiences into positive ones.

### **Poor Relationship Quality**

The term, relationality draws attention as an important argument that firms use as a sales strategy. In this context it is suggested for the salespeople to try to develop good relationships with the consumers (Ghzaiel and Akrouf, 2012: 2), as there is a mutual affinity between companies and individuals in consumer markets. This relationship is formed as a result of the exc-

change process between consumers and salespeople. Although the products are trade related, consumer relationships depend on social relationships. For this reason, a good product should be supported with a good relationship (Kanagal, 2009: 12). Consumers perceive the relational activities of firms as weak or superior and then make product evaluations. The perceived relationship quality depends on the consumer value. Comparison between quality perceptions of consumers regarding the service and sacrifices creates relational perceived value (Liljander and Strandvik, 1995). While high relationship quality (effective communication) creates high service quality, poor relationship quality (conflicts and lack of cooperation) negatively affect the service quality (Alawneh, 2012: 299). Businesses can strengthen the relationship quality by evaluating the needs and wants of consumers. In addition, elimination (ensuring that work processes are at the same level with relationship marketing strategies) of conflicts that cause poor relationship quality, long term investment relationships depending on relationship quality will be possible (Palmatier, 2008). Relationship quality determines the possibility of fluctuation between the supplier and the customer. High relationship quality is regarded as a good relationship while poor relationship quality is regarded as a bad relationship. The quality of the relationship is critical in creating a competitive advantage (Kempeners, 1995: 1630). Likewise, Crosby et al. (1990) state that long term exchange process between consumer-salesperson is a function of relationship quality. Therefore, future sale opportunities mostly depend on the relationship quality and reciprocal explaining and cooperative intentions create relational sale behavior by strengthening the relationship quality and create a strong connection between the salesperson and the customer. In addition, the level of the relationship quality directly affects the perception of consumers about the company or the brand. Consumers perceiving good relationship quality are less willing to retaliate than consumers perceiving poor relationship quality. Businesses can reduce the effect of retaliation when they focus on the relationship quality and turn the consumer perception in favor of themselves (Gregoire and Fisher, 2006). This way consumers can turn to positive word-of-mouth communication about the company or the brand. Pandir and Enginkaya (2018: 151) mention the effect of relationship quality on positive word-of-mouth communication. Fournier (1998: 367) emphasizes the relationship between relationship quality and brand loyalty and states that brand relationship quality and brand loyalty are results of strong relationships and in time, this consistent structure towards the brand will give information regarding the future of the business.

## **Rumor**

Rumors are shared in the market about the products, brands or establishments and are spread from one consumer to another through word-of-mouth communication (Sudhir and Unnithan, 2014). Negative rumor, which is also called “gossip harassment” in psychological and sociological research, consists of three stages. These are; rumor formation, spread and control (reduction of the rumors) (Liu et al., 2014). Each three step is shaped by certain communication activities. In social psychology rumor spreads according to the structure of

the groups that act in unison towards the same goal and social conditions. In this context, the place of products newly hitting the market in the perceptions of the consumers can change depending on market conditions and the benefits of the people who spread the rumor (Thompson and Ward, 2008: 756). Rumor is a source that modern business managers use as a reference during information exchange. Although non-harmful narratives can diminish after a certain amount of time, some can start out innocent and can, in time, turn into a harmful one for business activities (Kimmel, 2008: 190). Rumors about the business can negatively or positively affect the business, the brand or the corporate structure (Kapferer, 2004). Businesses try to keep negative rumors away from their companies and try to benefit from the positive impacts of positive rumors in their brand extension strategies (Dubois et al., 2011: 1021). Negative rumors spread faster than positive rumors and can harm the business and their products faster (Nodira and Přemysl, 2017: 113-114). In other words, negative rumors spread more among the consumers. This is caused by the fact that negative information is more accessible and leads to a lower perceived diagnosis of any positive information about the product or the brand (Aditya, 2014: 120). Rumors also have the potential to become a part of a malicious campaign by turning into gossip and being used to affect others through misinformation and propaganda (DiFonzo and Bordia, 2007: 275). For this reason, it is easy for businesses who implement aggressive policies to turn to unfair competition in their campaigns and strategies toward their competitors. For example, negative rumors on McDonald's using red worm meat in their hamburgers have put the firm in a difficult position. Even though this rumor is not true, McDonald's coping attempts with this rumor was not effective and firm's sales decreased by 30% in the areas that this rumor was spread (Jensen, 2015: 575). Easy accessibility to information, rapid changes in information technologies and not being able to control information make the spread of the rumors inevitable. Chua et al. (2016) state that a misinformation circling through social media can rapidly turn into a rumor; however, adding reliable sources decrease the rumors and can have a corrective function. Therefore, correcting the rumors spread online against the businesses with reliable sources will facilitate the transition to the last stage and will reduce the damages caused by negative word-of-mouth communication to minimum.

### **Brand Hate**

Hate is defined as deeply felt dislike and disgust. Hate mostly triggers hostility towards disliked objects (Navarro, 2013). Fischer et al. (2018), argue that hatred has a tendency towards actions and is a result of negative perceptions and rather than the work of individuals or groups it stems from questioning who those people are. Because hatred stems from a psychological process, in addition to psychology and sociology it is also present in marketing literature. Consumer oriented modern marketing approach foresees the analysis of consumer attitudes and behaviors with all their aspects. Although the studies in literature mostly focus on the positive elements towards the brand the number of studies focusing on negative ele-

ments that are dangerous to the continuity of the businesses and that cause refrainment from the brand like brand hate is gradually increasing (Fournier, 1998; Bryson and Atwal, 2019; Lee et al., 2009). Factors like the complex structure of consumer behaviors, competition, dynamicity of needs and wants etc. make it more important to understand the factors creating negative thoughts and emotions. Dalli et al. (2006: 87) state that it is important to reveal both positive and negative aspects in evaluations regarding consumer behavior in order to better explain and understand purchasing and consuming behaviors. At this point it is important to examine brand hate and factors causing hatred. Brand hate is a concept opposed to brand love and it represents consumer's alienation from the brand for several reasons (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Brand hate represents hatred towards a brand (Zarantonello et al., 2016: 10). Monahan et al. (2017) state that it is impossible for a consumer to love every brand and that when a consumer hates a brand it will jeopardize the future of the business. Brand hate has an active (negative communication) or a passive (avoiding the brand) effect (Bryson et al., 2013). Johnson et al. (2011) state that consumers who have strong vengeance feeling will resist the targeted brand. Kaniewska-Sęba and Pająk-Patkowska (2017: 57), state that consumers who use hateful expressions against the brand have a higher possibility to be one of the dissatisfied customers in social networks and this will put marketing performers in a difficult position. Factors causing brand hate and results of this hate are approached in different aspects in literature. Sternberg (2003) state in brand hate theory that hate is caused by poor relationship quality and rumors. Accordingly, hate theory states that in addition to direct personal experiences, indirect nonpersonal experiences (rumors) also cause hatred and this can trigger brand hate among the consumers of a brand (Hashim and Kasana, 2019: 230). Sakulsinlapakorn and Zhang (2019), state that aggressive personality, low brand trust, high levels of guilt and low justice perception are among the reasons that consumers avoid a brand, and this strengthens the turn from brand love to brand hate. Bryson et al. (2013: 32) state that brand hate is affected by three factors. The first one is negative stereotypes attributed to consumers of a brand; the second one is the dissatisfaction stemming from the brand experience and the last one is the negative effect of reference groups (family, work environment, kith and kin etc.) (Karlsson and Rodrigues, 2015: 8). This result shows that in addition to user's profile, reference groups should also be taken into consideration. Hegner et al. (2017) specified the reasons of brand hate as negative past experience, symbolic unconformity and ideological unconformity, and determined that these reasons cause brand alienation, negative expressions and brand retaliation.

## **Speculative Framework**

### **The Relationship between Negative Past Experience and Brand Hate**

There are different factors causing brand hate in the literature. Because hatred is a psychological concept, psychological factors causing consumers to avoid a brand is evaluated thro-

ugh consumer perceptions and beliefs. One of these is the negative experiences that consumers have with the brand. Yoon (2013), state that by negatively affecting the perceptions of consumers, negative consumer experiences increase the tendency to avoid the brand. Yoon determined the reasons of brand hate as negative past experiences with the brand, corporate mistakes and image unconformity. Winchester and Romaniuk (2008), analyzed brand experiences of consumers and negative beliefs through tendencies to associate them with the brand and found that consumer using the brand in the past mostly tend to produce negative beliefs towards the brand. Ahmed and Hashim (2018) examined the precautions (apology, compensation and explanation) to decrease brand hate in consumers who have negative experiences with the brand and found that these precautions have a corrective effect on brand hate caused by bad experiences. Hegner et al. (2017) draws attention to negative past experiences as one of the most important determinants of brand hate. According to the study, negative past experiences with the brand is a reason for the consumer to ignore the brand Bryson et al. (2013) emphasizes the dissatisfaction caused by brand experience as the underlying reason of brand hate (as cited in Karlsson and Rodrigues, 2015: 8). Kucuk (2016) found that negative past experiences negatively affect customer loyalty. De Castro Almeida (2018), state that consumers feel hatred when they perceive the brand negatively and that negative past experiences and ideological unconformities are among the most important determinants of brand hate. In their study on consumers with brand hate against Apple, Rodrigues et al. (2021) found that negative past experiences positively affect brand hate.

In the light of the studies made on the relationship between negative past experiences and brand hate, the following hypothesis was developed

H<sub>1</sub>: Negative past experiences have a positive effect on brand hate.

### **The Relationship between Poor Relationship Quality and Brand Hate**

Understanding the risks that comes from the negative relationship between brand and consumer has increased the number of studies made on this field (Hegner et al., 2017; Alvarez and Fournier, 2016; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Hashim and Kasana (2019: 233) state that the effect of poor relationship quality on brand hate has been unfortunately ignored; however, relationship quality is a significant cause of brand hate. Relationship made with a brand guides perceptions, feelings and behaviors towards the brand. Negative feelings towards the brand emerge undesirable results for businesses like hatred or despise attributed to the brand (Fournier and Alvarez, 2013: 259). Fournier and Alvarez (2013), emphasize that negative perceptions in consumers' relationships with a brand are more important than positive perceptions and therefore surviving and avoiding risks are only possible through managing negative relationships. This assessment reveals the connection between brand hate, which is a result of negative perception towards the brand, and relationship quality. Hegner et al. (2017)



emphasize that negative relationship between consumers and brands, and negative past experiences are important causes of brand hate. Zarantonello et al. (2016) emphasize that brands are under threat because of poor relationship quality and that as long as negative relationships continue brand hate will not be eliminated. Grégoire et al. (2009) studied the effects of time, relationship strength, consumer revenge and online complaints on brand alienation and found that even though the feeling of revenge decreases, brand alienation keep increasing and this triggers the tendency of consumers to hold a grudge (hate) against the brand. Similarly, Grégoire and Fisher (2006) studies the effects of relationship quality on consumers' intention to retaliate. The results of the study show that consumers who perceive high relationship quality has less tendency to retaliate than the ones who perceive a poor relationship quality. However, results also show that strong relationship quality only prevents retaliation when consumers think that they have little control over service failure, and they think they are responsible. Islam et al. (2020) stated in their study on smartphone users that poor relationship quality positively affects brand hate.

In the light of the studies made on the relationship between poor relationship quality and brand hate, the following hypothesis was developed

H<sub>2</sub>: Poor relationship quality has a positive effect on brand hate.

### **The Relationship between Rumor and Brand Hate**

Psychologists say that in addition to moral violations factors like negative rumors, disrespectful behaviors and abuse of emotions or betrayal also affect the feeling of hatred towards an object (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Consumers can take others as reference for their purchasing decisions. In other words, they can use the choices and evaluations of others as tips while they are making their own decisions. Therefore, negative messages, rumors etc. can be determinative in preferability and sales of a brand or a product (Huang and Chen, 2006). Social psychologist Kapferer, state that the biggest effect of rumors about a brand is damage threat; however, not all rumors have the potential to damage a brand and in order to protect brand balance and prevent hate, rumors have to be managed (Kapferer, 2004). Kucuk (2016: 40), state that consumers who symbolically hate a brand are greatly affected by rumors and instead of searching for the reality they develop myths that would reinforce the rumors, like; "everyone hates this brand and therefore I should hate it too". Kaniowska-Sębave Pająk-Patkowska (2017: 57), state that consumers who use hateful statements about the brand have a higher possibility to join the dissatisfied customers in social networks who are troubled with the brand. Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia (2010), state that information shared by businesses during information exchange in market and rumors caused by the perceptions of the opposite party, pose a significant threat for the name of the brand. Thompson and Ward (2008) found that rumors about a new product are gradually spread among consumer groups and cause a

negative impact in consumer groups. Chong et al. (2019), found that rumors about iPhones that were spread between 2002-2019 have increased the impact of Apple in share prices and that rumors about the appearance of iPhones (especially positive rumors) have a significant effect on share prices. Hashim and Kasana (2019) in their study on fast-food sector, found that negative past experiences, rumors, poor relationship quality and symbolic uniformity cause brand hate, and especially rumor is a significant factor in the formation of brand hate. Kesse et al. (2021) stated that the strongest effect of brand hate is rumor and a single rumor can harm even the most famous brands (eg McDonald's and P&G).

In the light of the studies made on the relationship between rumor and brand hate, the following hypothesis was developed

H<sub>3</sub>: Rumor has a positive effect on brand hate.

## Methodology

### Sample and Data Collection

The population of the research consists of consumers who have experienced with Fast Food chains in Turkey and who have a negative idea about them after consumption. Because the research population is too wide, it is impossible to reach the whole population. Therefore, sampling method was used. From non-probability samples, convenience sampling method was used. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), when the population is over 10.000, 387 sample is considered sufficient at 0,05 significance level and error margin. Sample number was determined as 433 considering that it would represent the population. Questionnaire forms were distributed online (via Google forms, e-mails and other social media networks).

Questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part consists of questions regarding demographic features of the participants like gender, age, education, marital status and income status. The second part consists of 4 questions to evaluate negative past experiences (Hegner et al., 2017), 5 questions to evaluate poor relationship quality (Chen and Myagmarsuren, 2011), 12 questions (Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia, 2010) and 6 questions to evaluate brand hate (Hegner et al., 2017). The questionnaire is a 5-point Likert scale and it includes items with statements ranged from strongly agree (1), strongly disagree (5).

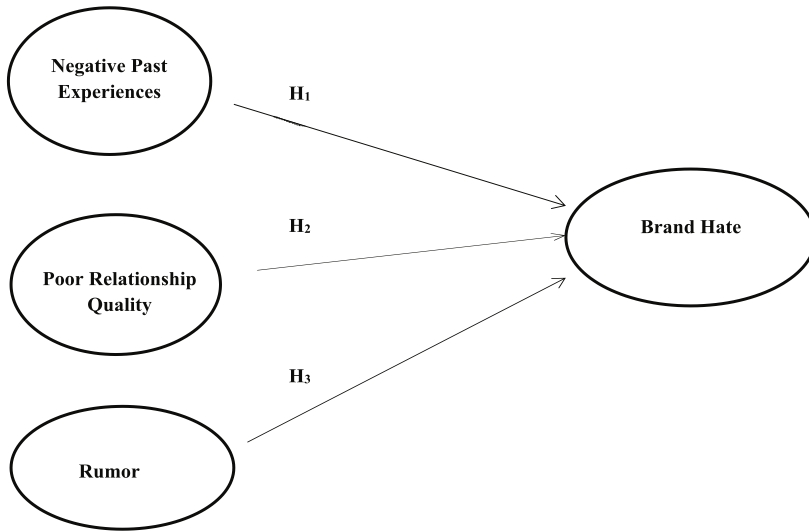


Figure 1. Research proposed model

## Data Analyses

SPSS and AMOS statistical programs were used to calculate the validity and reliability of the questionnaires and to test the hypotheses. Normality results were examined to determine which tests would be used to calculate the hypotheses that were aimed to be measured (See Table 2). The skewness and kurtosis values were calculated to determine the normality of the expressions of the variables. It is expected that the skewness and kurtosis values are within the limits of -3 and +3 (Shao, 2002) in order to say that the expressions of the scale show normal distribution. When the normal distribution scores of the expressions of the variables are examined, they were found to be within the desired range. Parametric tests were used to test hypotheses in the research.

In order to determine Cronbach's Alpha values and internal consistency, composite reliability was calculated while for construct validity, factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al, 2012). The square root of the AVE values were calculated to determine discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Structural Equation Model in AMOS was used to test the hypotheses, variance inflation factor (VIF) and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ).

## Results

### Participants Profile and the Measurement Model

In this part of the study, demographic features of the Fast Food consuming customers were analyzed and then correlation analysis results were reported. Afterwards, structural equation

model analysis results were reported and interpreted. Demographic features of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Frequency Analysis*

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	216	49,9
	Female	217	50,1
Age	18-24	192	44,3
	25-34	124	28,6
	35-44	103	23,8
	45-54	14	3,2
Marital Status	Married	207	47,8
	Single	226	52,2
Education Status	High School	95	21,9
	Associate Degree	195	45,0
	Bachelor's Degree	129	29,8
	M.D/ PhD	14	3,2
Income Status	Very Low	43	9,9
	Low	94	21,7
	Middle Class	261	60,3
	High	16	3,7
	Very High	19	4,4
Negatively Thought Fast Food Chain	McDonald's	118	27,3
	Domino's Pizza	38	8,8
	KFC	41	9,5
	Burger King	54	12,5
	Popeyes	18	4,2
	Subway	20	4,6
	Usta Döner	26	6,0
	Tavuk Dünyası	35	8,1
	Çiğköftem	26	6,0
	All	41	9,5
	Others	16	3,7
<b>Total</b>		<b>433</b>	<b>100</b>

216 (49,9%) of the participants are male, 217 (50,1%) of the participants were female. 44,3% of the participants (n: 192) are aged between 18-24. Fewest age range is 45-54 (n: 14). 45% of the participants are associate degree students (n: 195). 60,3% of the participants are middle class (n: 261). The answers to the question "Which of the Fast Food chains do you have a negative opinion against?" were mostly McDonald's (n: 118).

The reliability of the research model was determined by CA values and internal consistency was calculated using CR. Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2019) stated that CA and CR values have to be over 0.70. The reliability and validity table shows that the results are above the specified limit. These results confirm that all latent variables given in the proposed model are reliable and have internal consistency.

Factor loadings and AVE values were calculated to determine the convergent validity of the variables. Factor loadings of the expressions (Kaiser, 1974) and the AVE values of the variables (Hair et al., 2019) were above 0.50, thus ensuring the convergent validity of the research model.

Table 2  
*Validity and Reliability*

Variables		S.	K.	CA	CR	AVE	Faktor Loadings
Negative Past Experiences	NPE1	-,286	-,627				,721
	NPE2	,145	-1,130	,85	,89	,69	,668
	NPE3	-,458	-,472				,838
	NPE4	-,573	-,114				,819
Poor Relationship Quality	PRQ1	-,385	-,521				,808
	PRQ 2	-,450	-,366				,785
	PRQ 3	-,390	-,254	,85	,89	,63	,783
	PRQ 4	-,804	,154				,620
	PRQ 5	-,821	-,029				,651
Rumor	RUM1	-1,820	2,706				,705
	RUM 2	-1,692	2,408				,697
	RUM 3	-1,661	2,149				,672
	RUM 4	-1,251	1,992				,786
	RUM 5	-1,009	1,215				,770
	RUM 6	-1,039	1,408	,93	,94	,59	,802
	RUM 7	-1,144	1,529				,761
	RUM 8	-1,204	1,723				,789
	RUM 9	-,953	,646				,814
	RUM 10	-,932	,522				,761
	RUM 11	-,927	,563				,744
	RUM 12	-,250	-,605				,577
Brand Hate	BH1	-1,486	1,524				,882
	BH 2	-1,609	2,116				,926
	BH 3	-1,524	1,851	,92	,94	,72	,924
	BH 4	-,773	,441				,695
	BH 5	-,764	,066				,652
	BH 6	-,587	-,434				,640

S: Skewness; K: Kurtosis; CA: Cronbach Alfa; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted

The discriminant validity analysis was tested by comparing correlations with the square root values of AVE. In the AVE square root values (bold values) in Table 3, each intersecting structure should have a higher value than the intersection of other hidden variables (Garson, 2016).

The results show that the square root values of AVE are higher than the correlation coefficients. The proposed model was found to meet the criteria determined by discriminant validity analysis.

Table 3

*Mean, standard deviation and discriminant validity*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1 Negative Past Experiences	3,22	,870	<b>0,831</b>			
2 Poor Relationship Quality	3,52	,866	,608	<b>0,796</b>		
3 Rumor	3,85	,782	,582	,700	<b>0,773</b>	
4 Brand Hate	4,00	,922	,625	,655	,789	<b>0,852</b>

Note: The results written in bold numbers in the sections of each scale refer to the square root of the AVE Values

After calculating the goodness of fit values of the research model, it was determined that the research model has a good goodness of fit.

Table 4

*Model Fit Indices*

	$\chi^2$	DF	$\chi^2/DF$	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Criteria			$\leq 5$	$\geq 85$	$\geq 90$	$\geq 90$	$\leq 08$
	1070,208	310	3,452	0,84	0,91	0,90	0,075

After the measurement model was completed, the structural model was analyzed. Model, which was developed with negative past experiences, rumor, poor relationship quality and brand hate, was tested using AMOS package program. Evaluation of the results of the structural model includes the analysis of the predictive ability of the model and the relationships between different structures (Hair et al., 2017). Structural model evaluation is also known as internal model evaluation as it examines the relationship between latent variables. This stage begins with checking the structural model for the linearity problem and continues with the evaluation of the relationships and path coefficients in the structural model. Table 5 presents the VIF values of the structural model. When a VIF value higher than 3 at the factor level, it is an indicator of both linearity problem and common method bias (O'Brien, 2007). Since there was no VIF score above this threshold in the model, there are no linearity and bias problems in the model. The  $R^2$  value was examined for its predictive power.  $R^2$  is the coefficient showing what percentage of the exogenous variables explain the endogenous variables (Hair et al., 2019). Yıldız (2021) stated that  $R^2$  values can be between 0 and 1 and that higher values will show higher accuracy in the predictions. The exogenous variables explanation rate of brand hate was found to be 67%. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*Structural Equation Model Regression Weights*

Variables		Estimation	S.E.	t	P	VIF	R <sup>2</sup>	Result
H <sub>1</sub> N.P.Experience	Brand Hate	0,222	0,071	3,124	0,02*	1.719	0.67	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> P.R.Quality	Brand Hate	-0,013	0,071	-0,183	0,855	2.226		Declined
H <sub>3</sub> Rumor	Brand Hate	0,884	0,089	9,903	0,00***	2.122		Accepted

$p < 0.001$ \*\*\*;  $p < 0.01$ \*\*;  $p < 0.05$ \*; N.P.Experience: Negative Past Experience; P.R.Quality: Poor Relationship Quality; SE: Standard Error; VIF= Variance Inflation Factor

Path analysis results show that model is acceptably fit (Chi-square: 1038,847; d.f. 309;  $p < 0.001$ ; RMSEA: 0.074; NFI: 0.89; CFI: 0,92; IFI: 0,92; TLI: 0,91).

Path analysis show that negative past experience has an effect on brand hate. The relationship between negative past experience and brand hate is statistically meaningful ( $p < 0,05$ ). Brand hate positively affect negative past experience. Therefore “H<sub>1</sub>: Negative past experiences positively affect brand hate” hypothesis was accepted. Path analysis results show that there is not a meaningful relationship between poor relationship quality and brand hate. In this regard “H<sub>2</sub>: Poor relationship quality positively affect brand hate” hypothesis was declined. Results show that rumor has an effect on brand hate. In this regard the relationship between rumor and brand hate is statistically meaningful ( $p < 0,001$ ). Brand hate positively affect rumor. Therefore, “H<sub>3</sub>: Rumor positively affect brand hate” hypothesis was accepted.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This research studies the effect of negative past experiences, poor relationship quality and rumor on brand hate. These reasons for brand hate essentially emerge from consumer experiences and perceptions. The study was conducted on consumers who have consumed fast food before and have negative thoughts towards these fast food brands. Fast food consumption is more among young and middle-aged people. Demographic data of the study also show that most of the participants are aged between 18-44. This result is not surprising because it is common knowledge that young and middle-aged consumers, who are active in working life (job, studentship), have turned fast-food consumption into a consumption culture due to time restrictions and economic reasons. In addition, consumers in this age category are more active in using communication technologies than older consumers. Thus, consumers can reach a wider scale of brands, can compare them and can have an idea about negative/positive experiences of other consumers. In other words, consumers in this category have different and intense feelings depending on the frequency of encountering with the brand and experiences, and they are more certain of themselves than consumers above middle age.

Consumers, who consumed fast food and developed negative feelings towards them, were asked questions about the experiences they had gone through and the reasons behind them. Analyses show that negative past experiences positively affect brand hate. This result is consistent with the studies in the literature (Yoon, 2013; Winchester and Romaniuk, 2008; Ahmed and Hashim, 2018; Hegner et al., 2017; Bryson et al., 2013). Researchers draw attention to negative past experience among the factors that cause brand hate. Additionally, this result is a tip for businesses to focus on consumer experiences. Detecting the experiences that cause negative feelings in consumers, facilitating cognitive efforts, taking solution-oriented precautions, improving product qualities and consumer feedback mechanisms are considered beneficial in this context, because experiences with the product and the brand will affect consumer willingness and behaviors (repurchase, overpaying). A rational consumer would

not be willing to repurchase a product that s/he had a negative experience with unless it is a monopoly. This way, the future, profits and continuity of the business will be damaged.

Negative experiences will affect how consumers share their experiences with the product or brand. The negative experiences shared on different platforms will cause many potential customers to avoid the business and therefore affect the sales and decisions of the business negatively. Another danger here is that some consumers can avoid the brand based on the negative experiences of others and can defame the brand even though they have never experienced with it before. This makes it more difficult for businesses in terms of determining their target market in a competitive environment. The results of the study show that a significant number of the fast-food consumers are of the young and middle-aged people. Considering that this influence group is more effective on reference circles and they use communication technologies more effectively, businesses should be very careful towards negative experiences.

Another result of the study is that rumors positively affect brand hate. This result is consistent with other studies (Zarantonello et al., 2016; Kapferer, 2004; Kucuk, 2016; Kaniewska-Sęba and Pająk-Patkowska, 2017; Kimmel and Audrain-Pontevia, 2010; Hashim and Kasana, 2019). The effect of rumor on brand hate shows that rumors spread hate about a product or a brand. This situation can cause a dangerous outcome for the businesses. The fact that perceptions regarding the product is negative is a strong reason for the consumer to avoid the product. In situations like this it is suggested for businesses to use communication technologies effectively and use informative or rather amendatory messages (if possible, through personalized messages) regarding the factors causing rumors. Inaction can make hatred permanent by strengthening the perception that the consumer is “being ignored”. Especially, taking actions against the source and means of spread of the rumor can turn rumor into positive communication. For example, when a consumer causes a rumor by saying that the products used in X business are out of date, reaching other customers and sending messages that the rumors are groundless would at least help potential customers to not be alienated from the brand. Hashim and Kasana (2019: 240) state that businesses can reduce the negative effects of rumors about the product/brand by taking part in social and environmental responsibility projects and therefore decrease the number of consumers experiencing brand hate.

It is recommended that businesses have some strategies so that the rumor does not turn into gossip and destructive emotions such as hatred over time. It is important to follow the opinions and suggestions on physical or digital platforms. Identifying dissatisfactory factors and providing feedback on corrective measures as soon as possible will, thus, prevent the rumors from getting bigger and bigger. Another strategy that can be applied by businesses is to instantly respond in the face of rumors. In this case, the best method is to explain to all customers on digital platforms that the rumor is false. This can be achieved by creating a strong customer database. Having at least the contact information of customers, learning their



age range and even their tastes with the customer order tracking system can provide information to businesses about the measures they can take in the face of rumors. Another strategy is to have and effectively use means of communication that would increase the quality of the relationship. Strong communication will ensure that the business is aware of the rumors even before they emerge thanks to messages, e-mails and other forms of communication. What the businesses should focus on at that point, is to note the distinction between rumor and complaint. Failure to follow the complaints will make rumors and gossip inevitable. Businesses have to resolve complaints in order to eliminate rumors.

The most remarkable result of this study is that poor relationship quality does not have a positive effect on brand hate. This result shows that while negative past experiences and rumor can be causes of brand hate, poor relationship quality is not one. In other words, participants do not pay attention to poor relationship quality in the formation of brand hate. Hashim and Kasana (2019) in their study on the causes of brand hate, state that the causes of brand hate should be evaluated differently, for example, efforts made to reduce the negative effects of past experiences will not change the effects of rumor or relationship quality on hate. This assessment proposes that each cause should be evaluated on its own. Moving from this fact, different reasons can be put forward regarding this result. Fournier and Alvarez (2013: 259), state that the relationship with the customer create positive/negative feelings about the brand. In addition, quality perceptions of consumers regarding service would be compared with the sacrifices and thus relational perceived value will be formed (Liljander and Strandvik, 1995). The fact that participants of this study do not have certain perceptions regarding relationship quality may have inhibited the formation of a negative result like hate. In other words, it can be said that expectations and perceived values regarding the product are not formed yet. In addition, participants may have focused on atmospheric factors like employers, ambience, aesthetics and view instead of relationship quality. On the other hand, according to Zaran-tonello et al. (2016) if poor relationship quality is continuous, it can create brand hate. Participants in this study may never have a poor relationship quality perception or even though they had before it had diminished for such a long period of time that it is not considered as a cause for brand hate. Lastly, participants may not have thought relationship quality as a reason for brand hate depending on their personality traits expectations, beliefs, behaviors etc. The numbers of the reasons for this issue can be increased; however, it is suggested for fast food restaurants to focus on rumor and negative past experiences more than relationship quality in order to avert brand hate.

Like all studies, this study also has its limitations. This study is conducted only on the perceptions of consumers regarding fast food sector. It is suggested that there should be more studies on different sectors in the future. Another limitation of the study is about the sample number. This study reached 433 consumers. If more consumers are reached in future studies, study results would be more valuable. Conducting future research in different cultures and ge-

ographies will be important in terms of comparing the results of this study. Lastly, this study approaches negative past experiences, poor relationship quality and rumor as causes of brand hate. It is believed that if future studies are conducted on different variables creating brand hate, they will provide hate literature with more comprehensive and original information.

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