



## The Impact of Social Marketing and Brand Relationships on Purchase Behavior\*



### Toplumsal Pazarlama ve Marka İlişkisinin Satın Alma Davranışına Etkisi

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#### Abstract

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Social marketing is perceived as an approach that transcends traditional marketing strategies to enhance social welfare and improve individuals' quality of life. Brand relationships, on the other hand, denote the emotional and psychological connections that develop between consumers and brands. This research examines the effects of social marketing activities and brand relationships on consumer purchasing behavior. The goal is to reveal the impact of social marketing understanding and brand relationships in businesses on consumer purchasing behavior. The methodology involved a comprehensive literature review and data collection from 475 participants residing in Ankara. The data collection process consisted of scales with various questions regarding social marketing campaigns and brand relationships. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21 and AMOS 20 statistical package programs. Findings indicate that social marketing efforts and strong brand relationships positively influence consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers, especially in the context of social marketing, form deeper connections with businesses that showcase social responsibility projects and eco-friendly products, enhancing brand loyalty, brand image, and purchasing tendencies.

**Keywords:** Social marketing, brand image, brand awareness, purchase behavior.

#### Öz

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Sosyal pazarlama, geleneksel pazarlama stratejilerinin ötesine geçerek toplumsal refahı ve bireylerin yaşam kalitesini yükseltmeyi hedefleyen bir yaklaşım olarak görülmektedir. Marka ilişkileri ise tüketiciler ile markalar arasında gelişen duygusal ve psikolojik bağları ifade etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, sosyal pazarlama faaliyetlerinin ve marka ilişkilerinin tüketici satın alma davranışları üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın amacı, işletmelerdeki sosyal pazarlama anlayışının ve marka ilişkilerinin tüketici satın alma davranışlarına olan etkisini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada yöntem olarak, kapsamlı bir literatür taraması yapılmış ve Ankara'da yaşayan 475 katılımcıdan konuya ilişkin veriler toplanmıştır. Veri toplama süreci, katılımcılara sosyal pazarlama kampanyaları ve marka ilişkileri ile ilgili çeşitli sorular içeren ölçeklerden oluşmuştur. Elde edilen veriler, SPSS 21 ve AMOS 20 istatistik paket programları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, sosyal pazarlama çabalarının ve güçlü marka ilişkilerinin, tüketicilerin satın alma kararlarını olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir. Tüketicilerin, özellikle sosyal pazarlama anlayışıyla birlikte sosyal sorumluluk projeleri ve çevre dostu ürünler gibi sosyal pazarlama unsurlarını ortaya koyan işletmelerle daha derin bağlar kurduğu ve bu bağların, marka sadakati, marka imajı ve satın alma eğilimlerini artırdığı tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplumsal pazarlama, marka imajı, marka farkındalığı, satın alma davranışı.

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## 1. Introduction

Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for businesses to gain a competitive advantage and pursue a successful marketing strategy. Marketing strategies aim to increase consumer interest in brands, shape brand preferences, and ultimately encourage purchase behavior. At this point, the concept of social marketing stands out as a significant approach that diverges from traditional marketing concepts (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971: 3-12). Social marketing signifies a marketing approach that seeks to enhance the well-being of society by considering not only economic benefits but also environmental and social benefits (Peattie and Peattie, 2003: 365-385). On the other hand, brand relationship signifies the emotional and psychological bonds that consumers form with a brand. The brand relationship, which shapes consumers' processes of perceiving, evaluating, and preferring brands, plays a critical role in businesses to establish and gain a competitive advantage with their brands (Keller, 1993: 3-22). Brand image and brand awareness, which form the foundation of consumer behavior, reflect the perceptions that consumers have about a brand. While brand image represents the overall impression and perception a consumer has about a brand, brand awareness indicates the level at which a consumer recognizes and remembers the brand (Aaker, 1991: 22-34).

In the 21st century, the number of studies examining the impact of social marketing on brand relationships has increased. Particularly, there is an emphasis on the importance of integrating corporate social responsibility awareness into marketing strategies (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001: 225-243). In this context, the influence of social marketing on brand relationships and how this influence affects purchase behavior has emerged as a significant research area. Some studies in the literature suggest a positive impact of social marketing on brand relationships (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2005; Misra and Beatty, 2006). These studies indicate that social marketing strategies create a positive perception, particularly by enhancing brand image and brand awareness, thereby encouraging consumers to establish stronger connections with brands. On the other hand, some research has argued that the impact of social marketing strategies on brand relationships may be limited (Andreasen, 2001; Ellen et al., 2000: 229-239). These studies underscore that social marketing alone may not be sufficient among the factors influencing consumer-brand relationships.

This article aims to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between social marketing, brand relationships, and purchase behavior. The article seeks answers to questions regarding the effectiveness of businesses engaging in social marketing activities on brand relationships and whether this effectiveness, if present, has a strong potential to influence purchasing behavior. A survey was conducted with 475 participants residing in Ankara, and the data obtained will be analyzed using statistical programs SPSS 21 and AMOS 20. The analysis will focus on examining the impact of social marketing on brand image and brand awareness and how this impact shapes purchasing behavior. This research is expected to provide valuable insights into how businesses can integrate social marketing into their marketing strategies and contribute to the literature. Furthermore, understanding the impact of integrating social responsibility awareness into marketing strategies will enable a better understanding of its effects on brand relationships and business purchasing behavior.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Social Marketing

Until 1971, the concept of marketing was primarily focused on tangible values such as products, services, or money. However, in 1971, Kotler and Zaltman, in their published article, for the first time introduced the concept of "social marketing" by suggesting the applicability of marketing methods to social issues; the notion that thoughts and ideas could also be marketed. Kotler and Zaltman defined social marketing as "the planning, implementation, and control of programs designed to influence the acceptability of social ideas by planning, prioritizing pricing, communication, distribution, and market research, giving priority to the business" (Andreasen, 2001; Kotler and Zaltman, 1971: 3-12).

The Social marketing approach advocates that through the transmission of value to customers via marketing strategies, not only the well-being of consumers but also the well-being of society will increase. It is focused on social benefits and does not pursue profit as its primary goal. This approach is a process aimed at enhancing spiritual gains. The process involves the application of marketing principles and methods to induce positive behavioral changes in a predetermined audience or the entire society, intending to provide maximum benefit to the community, convince or altering specific behaviors (Armstrong and Kotler, 2018: 620-621; Moskevich, 2015: 10-12; Terrance, 1997: 21-23).

Social marketing not only aims to instill positive habits in individuals but also strives to distance them from negative habits, behaviors, and attitudes. The focus is on providing information about the product or service rather than achieving sales targets, intending to benefit society by promoting of the product or service. Social marketing, which goes beyond merely focusing on outcomes, also aims to leave a positive and warm impact on potential customers, contributing to the brand's positive recall (Armstrong and Kotler, 2018: 620-621; Dođru, 2014: 20-23; Polat and Mercan, 2015).

In the 20th century, businesses are directly held accountable for their impact on the society and environment in which they operate. Therefore, Social marketing closely addresses issues such as environmental pollution, deforestation, healthy families-healthy individuals, water resources, violence against women, education, etc., striving to positively influence consumer perceptions. Companies are now concerned not only with short-term economic gains but also with issues related to social well-being, awareness of natural resource consumption, main supplier capabilities, and the economic welfare of society. The success, impact, and reach of social marketing depend on organizations coming together and actively participating in social marketing. To achieve this, public institutions, for-profit, and non-profit organizations act collectively in a holistic manner in social marketing (Armstrong and Kotler, 2018: 213-618; Aydođdu, 2020: 8; İlder and Bayraktarođlu, 2007: 117-132).

## 2.2. Brand

Brand as the identity of the product or service that a business provides to the market. This identity sets the product or service apart from others in the market and creates differentiation (Aaker, 1991). Kotler (1991) defines a brand as the use of names, signs, and symbols to define and differentiate the product or service offered to customers from those of competitors. The concept of a brand is a powerful factor in customer perception, contributing to the reputation and fame of a business. It is effective in the purchasing decision process as it leaves a general impression on the consumer regarding aspects such as price, performance, and product quality. A brand provides information to consumers about the identity and image of the business and instills confidence in the quality of the product (Keller, 2013). The perceptions of consumers towards the brand formed in their minds as a result of their experiences and knowledge about the brand contribute to the creation of brand image (Baumann et al., 2015: 21-31; akmak and zkan, 2015: 203-216; Mammadova, 2023: 3-28; DeChernatony et al., 2011; Dilsiz, 2008: 13-43; Ekdi, 2005: 4-17; Morgan, 2001; ztürk, 2010: 24-48; Sönmez, 2015: 36-94; Wilke and Zaichkowsky, 1999: 9). Brand image is the altered form of the sum of information acquired by consumers about the brand from what they hear, experience, advertisements, services, and packaging, through previous beliefs, selective perception, and social norms. Consumers can attribute meaning to brands for themselves and others, reflecting the image they want or want to be. Brand image elements are examined under three headings: symbolic, functional, and experiential. (Wu and Wang, 2014).

Symbolic brand image meets consumers' needs for self-expression, status, and respect by allowing them to identify with it. In their advertising efforts, many companies emphasize features such as allure and attractiveness to promote the perception that those who use their brands will also gain that image and reputation. It is more geared towards psychological and sociological needs. Symbolic values, such as brand personality and self-congruence, contribute to the formation of

symbolic brand image (Azizağaoğlu and Altunışık, 2012: 39-43; Bhat and Reddy, 1998: 111-143; Sop, 2017: 149; Tosun and Gökerik, 2023: 279-320). Another element of a brand, functional brand image, according to Keller (1993: 3-22); another element of a functional brand image is the image formed through the product's essential features to meet customers' basic needs. It is the evaluation of the brand by consumers based on its concrete value related to functional tasks. It is aimed at immediately and practically meeting functional expectations. It expresses the consumer's perception of functional features such as price, product variety, quality, comfort, safety, and staff competence in the products and services offered by the brand. In this respect, it is performance-based. It shows that consumers formulate and interpret the functional features offered by the brand in their minds to assess the quality and value of the brand in the dimensions of brand quality and value (Bhat and Reddy, 1998: 111-143; Chakraborty and Bhat, 2018: 148-164; Sop, 2017: 172; Yuniar, 2019). Brands aim to create new experiences for consumers not only to meet their functional needs but also with the products and services they use. In this way, brands that aim to increase the memorability of the product and service on the customer emphasize experiential brand image (Gökerik et al., 2018: 1222-1238; Sekmen and Arslan, 2021: 221-249). In addition to brand image, brand awareness, or recognition is also crucial for business marketing strategies.

Brand awareness is the inclusion of the brand's presence, structure, and benefits it provides to customers in the consumer's perception of the market. Brand awareness is the first conscious step for the customer to recognize and remember the brand (Hoyer and Brown). The perception of the brand by consumers and potential customers, awareness of the brand's existence, is crucial for the brand's ability to survive in the market. Brand awareness is a desirable condition for producers. The customer's acquaintance with the brand, evaluation, and experience creates awareness in the customer, making them prefer that brand in the next purchase (Macdonald and Sharp, 2000). Positive brand recall in the customer's mind significantly influences their ability to choose that product from competing brands. Remembering and having a positive memory of the product and satisfaction level significantly affect the customer's decision. Brands that are not remembered or are not prominent among consumer alternatives are not expected to realize the purchasing behavior of consumers (Kaptanoğlu et al., 2019: 248-266; Aktuğlu, 2016).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Model**

This quantitative and descriptive research aimed to determine the relationship between social marketing brand image, brand awareness, and their impact on purchasing behavior. The data is derived from a two-stage process involving a literature review and survey application. The study has obtained ethical approval from the Karabük University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Board with the decision dated January 18, 2023, and numbered E-78977401-050.02.04-216008, allowing the research to be conducted.

In the first section of the questionnaire utilized in the research, a classification scale was employed to determine participants' demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational status, and household income). The second section of the survey, scales from various researchers' works were utilized to construct the study's measurement instruments. Specifically, the research incorporated Wu and Wang's (2014) scale for brand image and brand awareness, Üner and Baş's (2018) scale for social marketing, and Coyle and Thorson's (2001) scale for purchasing behavior. The interval scales were prepared in a 5-point Likert scale format, ranging from "1 for Strongly Disagree" to "5 for Strongly Agree". Survey data were collected from 475 participants during the period from March 2021 to February 2022, employing a convenience sampling method through face-to-face and online survey methods. Finally, all research hypotheses were subjected to Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for analysis.

### 3.2. Research Model and Hypothesis Development

In the proposed research model, Social Marketing is the independent variable; Symbolic Brand Image, Functional Brand Image, and Brand Awareness are the mediating variables; and Purchasing Behavior is the dependent variable. The research indicates that the independent variable affects all mediating variables, which in turn influence the dependent variable. Theoretical foundations supporting the research hypotheses, along with the hypotheses and the proposed research model (Figure 1), are presented within this framework.

Social marketing is a strategic approach that encourages behavior change for the benefit of society. This approach aims to increase consumer loyalty to the brand by strengthening the symbolic and functional image of brands and brand awareness. Social marketing activities enhance the symbolic image of the brand, enabling consumers to perceive the brand not only as a provider of products or services but also as an institution reflecting social values. Studies by Gordillo-Rodriguez and Sanz-Marcos (2020) have emphasized how social marketing initiatives can strengthen the symbolic image of brands and increase consumers' emotional attachment to the brand, thereby enhancing the brand's social responsibility awareness and reputation among consumers. Similarly, social marketing also impacts the functional image of the brand. Research by Eger et al. (2018) and Lada (2018) suggests that social marketing can improve consumers' perceptions of the quality and benefits of the brand's products and services, reinforcing consumer trust in the brand. In terms of brand awareness, studies by Osmanova et al. (2023) and Pribadi and Alaftariasaujana (2023) indicate that social marketing initiatives have the potential to increase brand awareness. Campaigns conducted through social marketing increase the brand's visibility and recognizability, allowing for greater consumer interaction with the brand. This interaction enhances consumers' knowledge about the brand and fosters positive attitudes towards it. Based on these findings, hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c were developed.

**H1a:** There is a positive and significant relationship between social marketing understanding and symbolic brand image.

**H1b:** There is a positive and significant relationship between social marketing understanding and functional brand image.

**H1c:** There is a positive and significant relationship between social marketing understanding and brand awareness.

The effects of brand image and awareness on consumer purchasing behavior occupy a central position in modern marketing strategies. Evaluating the impacts of symbolic and functional brand images, alongside brand awareness on these behaviors, the existing literature offers an extensive overview. Symbolic brand image's impact on consumer purchasing behavior demonstrates how a brand interacts with consumers' self-expression, social status, and sense of belonging. Rahman et al. (2021) indicate that symbolic brand image significantly influences consumers' purchasing intentions. Ansari et al. (2019) and Zhao et al. (2022) highlight the significant effects of functional brand image and awareness on purchasing intentions. The relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention has become more critical in the digital communication era. Hameed et al. (2023) show that brand awareness indirectly affects consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions in digital communications. Lie et al. (2022) note the significant impact of brand personality and experience on purchase intention, but not direct impact of brand awareness. Anand (2023) delves into the definition, conceptualization, and significance of brand awareness in marketing, emphasizing its role as a key component in brand equity and consumer decision-making processes.

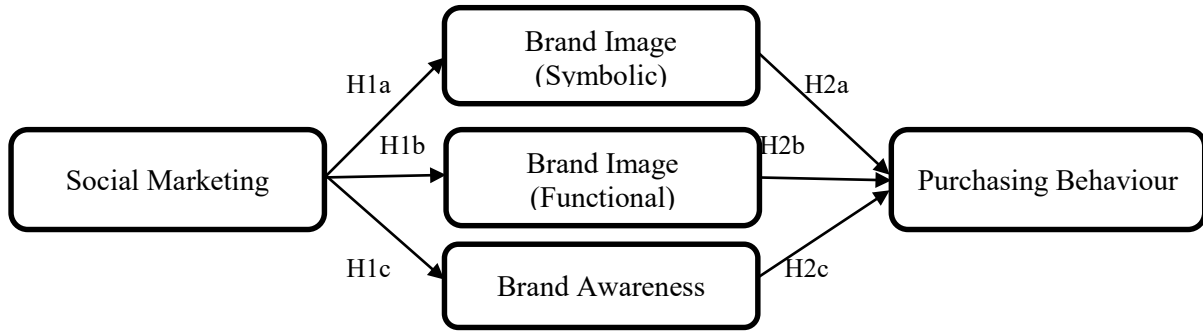
This theoretical framework provides a crucial resource for understanding the influence of brand image and awareness on consumer purchasing behaviors, forming hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c based on these studies.

**H2a:** There is a positive and significant relationship between symbolic brand image and purchasing behavior.

**H2b:** There is a positive and significant relationship between functional brand image and purchasing behavior.

**H2c:** There is a positive and significant relationship between brand awareness understanding and purchasing behavior.

The research model created to determine the relationship between social marketing understanding, brand image, and brand awareness, and their impact on purchasing behavior within the scope of the research problem is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Research Model

#### 4. Findings

To examine the relationships between all variables, the SPSS 21 program was employed. The presence of relationships between variables was further analyzed using the structural equation modeling in the AMOS 20 program, and the results were interpreted. Finally, the hypotheses formulated based on the relationships between the variables in the model, the test results, and the emerging findings were interpreted.

##### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Research Participants

In the first stage of the survey, participants were asked for information regarding gender, age, educational status, and household income, limited to those residing in Ankara. The distribution of the 475 participants based on the gender variable is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the Sample Based on Gender

Gender	N	%
Female	251	53
Male	224	47
Total	475	100

According to Table 1, 53% of the participants are female, while 47% are male. It is observed in the table that there is a higher number of female participants in the research. However, there is no significant numerical difference between males and females.

**Table 2.** Distribution of the Sample Based on Age Variable

Age	N	%
Between 18-25	97	20
Between 26-33	127	27
Between 34-41	107	22
Between 42-49	75	16
50 and above	69	15
Total	475	100
Minimum 18		
Maximum 50 and above		

According to Table 2, it is determined that 20% of the participants are in the age range of 18 to 25, 27% are in the age range of 26 to 33, 22% are in the age range of 34 to 41, 16% are in the age range of 42 to 49, and 15% are 50 years old and above. The majority of the sample, 27%, falls within the age range of 26 to 33. Subsequently, it is observed that 22% are in the age range of 34 to 41. The minimum age of the participants is 18.

**Table 3.** Distribution of the Sample Based on Education Level Variable

Education Level	N	%
Elementary School	18	4
Secondary Education	88	18
Associate Degree	57	12
Bachelor's Degree	237	50
Postgraduate	75	16
Total	475	100

According to Table 3, 4% of the participants are elementary school graduates, 18% are secondary education graduates, 12% are associate degree graduates, 50% are bachelor's degree graduates, and 16% are postgraduate degree holders. The majority of the sample comprises bachelor's degree graduates, as indicated in the table.

**Table 4.** Distribution of the Sample Based on Household Income Level Variable

Household Income Status	N	%
0- 4251 TL	37	7
4251- 8500 TL	165	35
8501- 12750 TL	113	24
12751 TL and above	160	34
Total	475	100

According to Table 4, 7% of the participants have a household income between 0 and 4251 TL, 35% have an income between 4251 and 8500 TL, 24% have an income between 8501 and 12750 TL, and 34% have an income of 12751 TL and above. Based on the table, it can be said that most of the sample consists of participants with a household income between 4251 TL and 8500 TL. The proportion of participants with a household income of 12751 TL and above is 34%. There is no significant difference between these two numerical data.

## 4.2. Relations Among Variables

In line with the purpose of the research, correlation analysis was conducted on the variables of brand awareness, functional brand image, symbolic brand image, purchasing behavior, and social marketing scales to interpret the bidirectional relationships among the variables (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Correlations Among Variables

		Ort.	S.S.	1	2	3	4	5
1	BA	3.952	0.786	1				
2	BIF	3.807	0.741	0.471**	1			
3	BIS	3.506	0.819	0.382**	0.624**	1		
4	PB	4.011	0.755	0.417**	0.513**	0.549**	1	
5	SM	3.881	0.694	0.358**	0.407**	0.492**	0.679**	1

p<0.01

BA: Brand Awareness, BIF: Brand Image (Functional), BIS: Brand Image (Symbolic), PB: Purchasing Behavior, SM: Social Marketing

The average value of the current brand awareness is 3.9521 with a standard deviation of 0.78635. The values for the path analysis related to the average value of the functional brand image are 0.471. For the symbolic brand image, the values related to the path analysis are 0.382. The values for the path analysis related to the average value of purchasing behavior are 0.417, while those for social marketing are 0.358. The average value of the functional brand image is 3.8079 with a standard deviation of 0.74103. The values for the path analysis related to the average value of the symbolic

brand image are 0.624. For purchasing behavior, the values related to the path analysis are 0.513, and for social marketing, the values obtained from the path analysis with the average value are 0.407. The average value of the symbolic brand image is 4.0118, with a standard deviation of 0.75565. The values for the path analysis related to the average value of purchasing behavior are 0.549, while those for social marketing are 0.492. The average value of purchasing behavior is 4.0118, with a standard deviation of 0.75565. The values for the path analysis related to the average value of social marketing are 0.679.

When examining Table 5, it is observed that there is a significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) and linear positive relationship among all variables. It can be stated that the relationship between social marketing and purchasing is relatively stronger compared to the relationship between social marketing and brand awareness.

### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Findings for the Measurement Model

The analysis results, where the model is accepted as a whole, require goodness-of-fit values to be within acceptable limits. Goodness-of-fit values mostly range between 0 and 1. A value of 0 indicates no fit between the data and the model, while a value of 1 implies perfect fit. Generally, values greater than 0.80 and approaching 1 indicate an acceptable fit between the data and the model (Özdamar, 2002).

The measurement model conducted within the framework of social marketing, symbolic brand image, functional brand image, brand awareness, and purchasing behavior is presented in Figure 2.

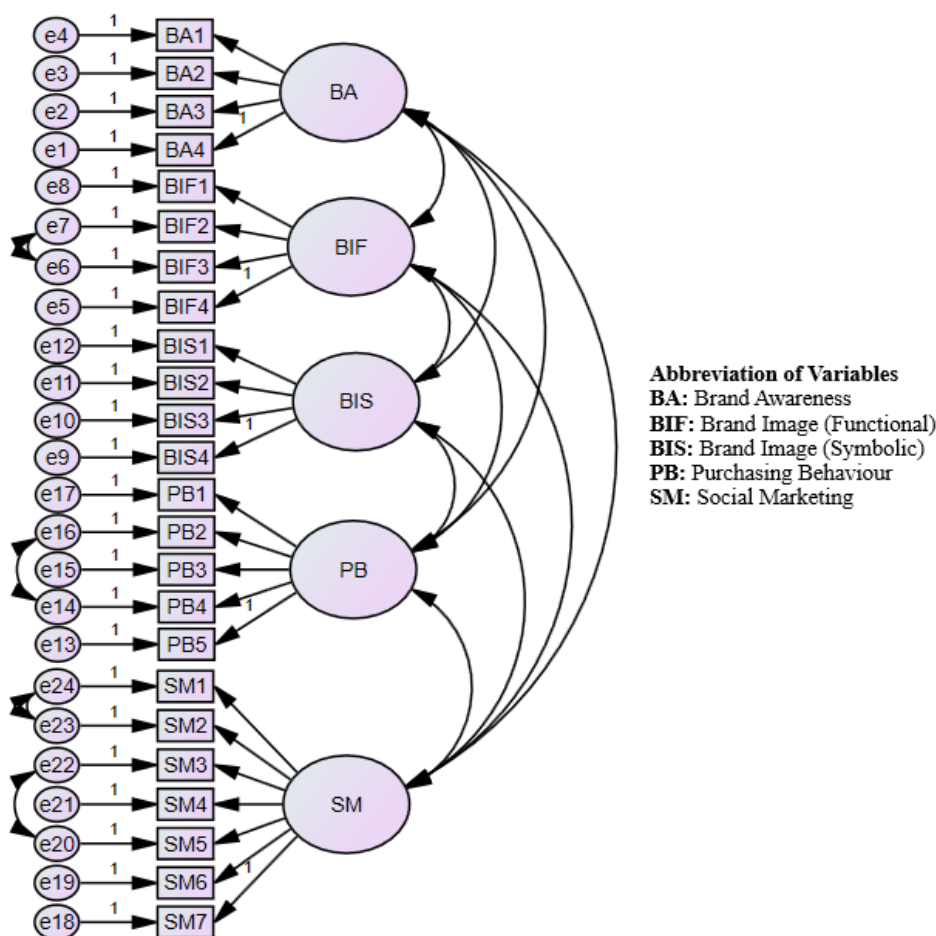


Figure 2. Measurement Model



In Figure 2, circular symbols represent latent variables (e1, e2, e3, ...), while rectangular symbols (BA4, BA3, ...) represent observed variables. The lines between latent variables indicate correlations, representing the causal relationships between latent variables. Arrows on the rightmost side, pointing towards observed variables from latent variables, represent measurement errors (h). Arrows pointing from latent variables to observed variables show the factor loadings of each element, indicating how their respective latent variables represent them.

Table 6 provides the variables' non-standardized values, standardized values, standard errors, t-values, and squared multiple correlations (R<sup>2</sup>). When examining the standardized values in the table 6, it can be observed that the factor loadings of latent variables range between 0.662 and 0.851. Load values between 0.30 and 0.59 are considered to be of moderate validity, while those with a loading value of 0.6 and above are considered to have a high level of validity (Kline, 1994).

**Table 6.** Values for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Values	Standardized Values	Errors	T-Values	R <sup>2</sup>
BA4: Socially beneficial projects help remember the logos of brands.	1	0.777	-	-	0.6
BA3: Socially beneficial projects make brands memorable.	1.073	0.851	0.055	19.39	0.73
BA2: I can distinguish brands with socially beneficial projects from other competitor brands.	0.937	0.765	0.054	17.358	0.59
BIF4: It is wise to prefer brands that undertake socially beneficial projects.	1	0.723	-	-	0.52
BIF3: Socially beneficial projects satisfy customers.	1.001	0.769	0.063	15.918	0.59
BIF2: Brands with socially beneficial projects consider the needs of customers.	0.918	0.709	0.063	14.652	0.5
BIF1: Brands with socially beneficial projects have high quality.	0.935	0.707	0.063	14.785	0.5
BIS4: Brands with socially beneficial projects give users a sense of status.	1	0.662	-	-	0.44
BIS3: Brands with socially beneficial projects have better features than competitors.	1.09	0.755	0.076	14.265	0.57
BIS2: Brands with socially beneficial projects are leaders in their fields.	1.083	0.752	0.076	14.224	0.57
BIS1: Brands with socially beneficial projects are good brands.	1.081	0.768	0.075	14.45	0.59
PB5: I would recommend the product of a business with socially beneficial projects to my friends.	1	0.792	-	-	0.63
PB4: I would consider trying the product of a business with socially beneficial projects.	1.036	0.833	0.05	20.636	0.69
PB3: When I need a product, I prefer the product of a business with socially beneficial projects.	0.988	0.787	0.051	19.474	0.62
PB2: I would probably buy the product of a business with socially beneficial projects.	0.992	0.821	0.049	20.217	0.67
PB1: I am open to the idea of buying the product of a business with socially beneficial projects.	0.998	0.806	0.05	20.095	0.65

**Table 6 (Cont.). Values for Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

SM1: When price and quality are similar, I prefer the products of businesses that support social projects.	1	0.743	-	-	0.55
SM2: I try to support businesses that carry out socially oriented projects by buying their products/services.	1.046	0.758	0.053	19.69	0.58
SM3: The company’s contribution to social benefit influences my preferences in purchasing decisions.	1.012	0.715	0.066	15.362	0.51
SM4: I believe that businesses can create social benefit.	1.072	0.751	0.065	16.37	0.57
SM5: Collaborating with a non-profit organization increases the effectiveness of a campaign.	0.911	0.695	0.061	14.904	0.48
SM6: I can pay more for a product that creates social benefit than for another product of the same quality.	0.766	-	0.071	10.76	0.25
SM7: My loyalty is higher to brands engaged in social marketing activities.	0.851	-	0.069	12.321	0.33

BA: Brand Awareness, BIF: Brand Image (Functional), BIS: Brand Image (Symbolic), PB: Purchasing Behavior, SM: Social Marketing

The significance levels of t-values for observed variables were examined within the scope of CFA. In this context, t-values greater than 1.96 and within a 95% confidence interval indicate that the latent variable significantly explains the observed variable at a 0.05 significance level. Similarly, t-values greater than 2.56 and within a 99% confidence interval suggest that the latent variable significantly explains the observed variable at a 0.01 significance level.

Table 6 shows that the lowest t-value calculated by CFA is 10.76, and the highest t-value is 20.636. Since all the t-values in the research are well above 2.56, it can be concluded that all relationships between latent variables and observed variables are statistically significant.

**Table 7. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Goodness of Fit Criteria	Goodness-of-Fit Value	Criterion for Good Fit	Acceptable Fit Criterion
Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ )	(597.264/237) 2.52	$\leq 3$	$\leq 5$
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.909	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.884	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.917	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.939	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.948	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055	$\leq 0.05$	$\leq 0.08$

In order for the structural model to be fully acceptable, goodness-of-fit criteria for the examined confirmatory factor analysis are provided in Table 7. These criteria demonstrate the fit and consistency between the relationships in the model and the sample data. When determining the limitations of the Chi-square statistic, the widely accepted  $\chi^2/df$  ratio being less than five is considered sufficient for an acceptable fit, and less than three indicates a good fit. With a  $\chi^2/df$  value of 2.52, the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test satisfies the condition for a good fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is expected to be between 0 and 1. In the table, GFI is found to be 0.909, indicating a good fit (Bayram, 2010; Şimşek, 2007). The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) value is considered to provide an acceptable fit when it falls between 0.8 and 0.9, and it indicates a good fit when it exceeds 0.9. In this case, the AGFI value of 0.884 meets the condition for acceptable fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is considered acceptable when it is above 0.90 and good when it is above 0.95. The NFI value of 0.917 falls within the acceptable fit range. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)

ranges between 0 and 1, with values in the 0.90-0.95 range indicating acceptable fit and values above 0.95 indicating good fit. The TLI value of 0.939 in the table satisfies the condition for acceptable fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) takes values between 0 and 1, with values close to 1 indicating a good fit. A CFI value between 0.95 and 0.97 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.97 suggest a good fit. The CFI value of 0.95 in the table meets the criteria for acceptable fit (Bayram, 2010; Meydan and Şeşen, 2011). Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is expected to have values close to 0. In Table 7, the RMSEA value of 0.055 satisfies the criteria for acceptable fit. The goodness-of-fit criteria indicate that the relationships in the model are consistent with the sample data.

#### 4.4. Validity Analysis

In the research, the impact of businesses with a social marketing orientation on consumers' perceptions of brand image and brand awareness, and, if any, the effect of these on purchase behavior, is examined directly or indirectly. Factors such as social marketing, brand image (symbolic), brand image (functional), brand awareness, and purchase behavior are investigated under the umbrella of social marketing. The influence of these factors on purchase behavior is analyzed. All hypotheses are tested using structural equation modeling. The relationships between observed variables and latent variables are examined using CFA with the help of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach. Based on the results obtained from CFA, a structural model (path analysis) is developed to explore the factors influencing purchase behavior.

#### 4.5. Structural Model (Path Analysis)

The relationship between the variables used in the research can be analyzed through a structural model. Within the scope of the structural model, the direct relationships between variables can be examined, and the impact of social marketing on symbolic brand image, functional brand image, and brand awareness, and, if present, the extent to which this impact influences purchasing behavior can be determined using a path diagram. The structural model facilitates the testing of six hypotheses formulated for the research. The path Analysis was employed to measure the direct effects of social marketing on symbolic brand image, functional brand image, and brand awareness, and the direct impact of each of these on purchasing behavior.

**Table 8.** Structural Model Fit Indices

Goodness of Fit Criteria	Goodness-of-Fit Value	Criterion for Good Fit	Acceptable Fit Criterion
Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/sd$ )	(858.871/243) 3.534	$\leq 3$	$\leq 5$
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.853	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.819	$\geq 0.90$	$\geq 0.80$
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.929	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.952	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.921	$\geq 0.95$	$\geq 0.90$
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055	$\leq 0.05$	$\leq 0.08$

Table 8 shows that the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test has a value of 3.534. Additionally, the GFI criterion, AGFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA criteria meet the conditions for acceptable fit goodness. The TLI criterion also fulfills the requirement for good fit with a value of 0.952.

#### 4.6. Findings Regarding Direct Effects

The structural coefficients for the model presented in Figure 1 allow testing the hypotheses formulated for causal relationships. Thus, the structural model enables the examination of direct

effects within the scope of the research model. Standardized values, standard errors, and t-values for the hypotheses in the research are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Structural Model Values (H1)

Hypothesis			Standardized Values	Standard Errors	T-Values
H1a	Social Marketing		0.761*	0.107	9.181
H1b			0.661*	0.085	8.156
H1c			0.570*	0.089	8.250

p<0.05

BA: Brand Awareness, BIF: Brand Image (Functional), BIS: Brand Image (Symbolic), PB: Purchasing Behavior

When examining the path analysis in Figure 1 and referring to the values in Table 9, it is observed that the dimension of social marketing has a positive and significant impact on the symbolic brand image factor (H1a:  $\beta=0.761$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between social marketing orientation and symbolic brand image is less than 0.05, the H1a hypothesis is accepted.

It has been determined that the dimension of social marketing has a positive and significant effect on the functional brand image factor (H1b:  $\beta=0.661$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between social marketing orientation and functional brand image is less than 0.05, the H1b hypothesis is accepted.

It has been found that the dimension of social marketing has a positive and significant relationship with brand awareness (H1c:  $\beta=0.570$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between social marketing orientation and brand awareness is less than 0.05, the H1c hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 10.** Structural Model Values (H2)

Hypotheses			Standardized Values	Standard Errors	T-Values
H2a	Brand Image (Symbolic)		0.519*	0.701	7.710
H2b	BIF: Brand Image (Functional)		0.175*	0.069	3.206
H2c	Brand Awareness		0.213*	0.052	4.255

p<0.05

PB: Purchasing Behavior

When examining the path analysis presented in Figure 1 and referring to the values in Table 10, it is observed that the symbolic brand image dimension has a positive and significant impact on the purchase behavior factor (H2a:  $\beta=0.519$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between the symbolic brand image dimension and the purchase behavior factor is less than 0.05, the H2a hypothesis is accepted.

It has been determined that the functional brand image dimension has a positive and significant effect on the purchase behavior factor (H2b:  $\beta=0.175$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between the functional brand image dimension and the purchase behavior factor is less than 0.05, the H2b hypothesis is accepted.

It has been found that the brand awareness dimension has a positive and significant relationship with the purchase behavior factor (H2c:  $\beta=0.213$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Since the p-value between the brand awareness dimension and the purchase behavior factor is less than 0.05, the H2c hypothesis is accepted.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This research investigates the direct and indirect relationships between consumers' perceptions of brand image and brand awareness towards businesses with a social marketing orientation. It explores

the potential impact of these relationships on purchasing behavior. In this context, Research's main objective is to determine whether consumers form a positive perception of businesses they believe to have a social marketing orientation, understand the impact of this perception on brand image and brand awareness, and identify whether this situation influences consumer purchasing behavior. To achieve this goal, the research initially involves 475 individuals aged 18 and above in the Ankara province. Data for the research is collected through online and face-to-face survey techniques. Therefore, the research unveils the thoughts of consumers aged 18 and above who prefer any brand regarding their perceptions of businesses with a social marketing orientation and whether they engage in purchasing behavior towards products they perceive to have a brand image and brand awareness. In this regard, the research is considered important for businesses aiming to expand their target audience and increase profit margins based on sales. Another benefit of the research for businesses is its inclusion of exemplary cases related to social marketing orientation. This research demonstrates the significance of social marketing orientation for businesses in terms of their importance for both the community and customers. Therefore, businesses are expected to adopt a social marketing orientation focusing on social benefits will increase their contributions to society.

The hypotheses formulated in the research and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling in SPSS 21 and AMOS 20 programs. When evaluating the results of the data analysis, it was determined that social marketing orientation leads to positive perceptions among consumers regarding brand image and brand awareness (H1a:  $\beta=0.761$ ,  $p>0.05$ ; H1b:  $\beta=0.661$ ,  $p>0.05$ ; H1c:  $\beta=0.570$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Furthermore, it was observed that consumers engage in purchasing behavior even to support the social marketing activities of such businesses (H2a:  $\beta=0.519$ ,  $p>0.05$ ; H2b:  $\beta=0.175$ ,  $p>0.05$ ; H2c:  $\beta=0.213$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

The conducted correlation analysis revealed significant ( $p<0.01$ ) and linear positive relationships between variables such as brand awareness, functional brand image, symbolic brand image, purchasing behavior, and social marketing orientation. Additionally, it can be stated that the relationship between social marketing and purchasing behavior is relatively stronger compared to the relationship between social marketing and brand awareness.

The path analysis results indicate that the social marketing orientation dimension has a positive and significant effect on symbolic brand image ( $\beta=0.761$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and functional brand image ( $\beta=0.661$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). These findings suggest that businesses with a social marketing orientation positively influence the brand images of customers aged 18 and above residing in Ankara. Research by Gazzola et al. (2020), concluded that businesses engaging in social marketing activities significantly enhanced their brand image and customer loyalty by promoting their social responsibility efforts. Özgüven (2013) also highlighted the impact of brand image in achieving the effect of social marketing on customer loyalty, stating that when social marketing positively influences brand image, it increases customer satisfaction and, consequently, customer loyalty. Furthermore, Özdemir (2009) asserted in his research that conveying the social marketing orientation of brands, emphasizing their positive impact on society without causing harm, strengthens brand images. Sucu (2020) found that social marketing activities undertaken by brands positively influence brand image and impact consumers' future brand preferences. Akkoyunlu and Kalyoncuoğlu (2014: 125-144) suggested in their research that businesses engaging in social marketing activities, particularly as consumers' sensitivity and economic levels rise, positively affect the brand images of businesses involved in such activities. The findings of these studies in the literature support the results obtained in this research.

The path analysis results reveal that the social marketing orientation dimension positively and significantly affects brand awareness ( $\beta=0.570$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). In the research conducted by Özsaçmacı (2018), results obtained through Partial Least Squares Regression (PLS) indicated that social marketing activities in retail market products mediate the relationship between brand awareness and consumer purchase intention. In the research by Tıgılı et al. (2007), Social marketing activities were found to have a positive impact on brand awareness, particularly when businesses aimed not only to

increase sales but also to elevate society's values. While the findings of these studies in the literature support the positive influence of social marketing on brand awareness, it's worth noting that there are conflicting results. Karayel Bilbil and Aydınlioğlu (2018: 38-58) conducted research with university students and found that the number of positive responses to purchasing activities in response to social marketing activities of the observed brand was quite low. Survey data concluded that there was generally no significant relationship between social marketing, brand image, and purchase decision. The inconsistency in the results of Karayel Bilbil and Aydınlioğlu's (2018: 38-58) research is thought to be attributed to the application of the research to university students.

Secondly, it has been determined that the symbolic brand image dimension ( $\beta=0.519$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and the functional brand image dimension ( $\beta=0.175$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) have a positive and significant impact on the purchasing behavior factor. Therefore, it can be said that the consumer's perceived brand image and brand awareness are significant factors that guide purchasing behavior. Onurlubaş and Altunışık (2019) concluded in their research that brand image has a significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase packaged food products. Studies by Mohammadzadeh (2015), Karakaşoğlu and Arslan (2016), and Sayan (2021) also found a significant positive impact of brand image on purchase intention. Additionally, the findings obtained in this research align with numerous other studies, such as Agharzayev (2019), Özdemir Çakır (2013), Nagar and Rana (2015), Onurlubaş (2018), Lin (2013), Raza et al. (2017), Rehman and Ishaq (2017), which collectively suggest that brands with a strong brand image guide consumers towards purchasing behavior, and consumers who are aware of the brand are more inclined to make purchases.

It has been determined that the brand awareness dimension ( $\beta=0.213$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) has a positive and significant impact on the purchasing behavior factor. The finding that brand awareness positively impacts purchase intention aligns with the results of previous studies (Chi et al., 2009: 135-144; Hoyer and Brown, 1990; Peng, 2006; Tariq et al., 2017).

Literature has seen many studies limited to two variables; however, this research differs from others by incorporating three mediating variables (brand awareness, symbolic brand image, and functional brand image), resulting in a more detailed and unique model (Plumeyer et al., 2019; Lada, 2018; Ugalde et al., 2023). In the existing literature, no research has explored the relationship between social marketing orientation and symbolic brand image, functional brand image, and brand awareness, along with the potential role of this relationship in influencing purchasing behavior. Additionally, the differentiation of brand image into two dimensions, symbolic and functional, in the used scale makes this research distinctive, as there is no prior research with such a detailed breakdown in the literature. In this context, the research is believed to contribute to the literature by offering a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social marketing orientation and brand perceptions. Furthermore, including consumer opinions in the research makes it valuable for businesses, providing insights and guidance for their strategies.

T-test results and linear factor analysis indicate that all relationships between variables are significant and consistent. The findings obtained from the survey administered to consumers aged 18 and above in Ankara reveal that businesses with a social marketing orientation positively influence consumers' perceptions of brand image and brand awareness. Furthermore, it suggests that this influence has an impact on purchasing behavior.

When evaluating the obtained findings, it can be asserted that businesses should primarily focus on the significance of social marketing orientation. They should engage in activities related to social marketing orientation, similar to the examples provided in the research. However, conducting activities solely for social marketing may not be sufficient. It has been observed that the success of social marketing efforts is significantly influenced by disseminating these activities to the public and ensuring consumer awareness. In this way, it becomes possible to positively influence consumers' perceptions of brand image. Similarly, raising awareness about the brand's existence and creating

brand awareness can be more robust and meaningful through social marketing efforts. If these activities are conducted properly, consumers are expected to exhibit positive purchasing behavior.

However, various dimensions influence consumer purchasing behavior. The research investigated the relationship between social marketing orientation and two dimensions of brand image, as well as its relationship with brand awareness. To prevent confusion and maintain the overall coherence of the topic, the research limited these relationships to five factors. This limitation also aimed to ensure the reliability of participants' responses without subjecting them to excessive questions. However, it is considered that investigating these dimensions in future studies would contribute to the literature. Additionally, the research has some applied constraints. Firstly, it only includes consumers residing in Ankara, aiming to ensure accessibility to participants. Therefore, similar studies conducted in different cities may yield different results or provide support to the current research. The research findings may change over time due to variations in consumers' purchasing power under changing economic conditions. Hence, future studies might observe differences. Another constraint is that participants are limited to individuals aged 18 and above. This limitation is primarily due to the absence of income levels and the lack of conscious consumer behavior in individuals under 18.

In conclusion, this research determines that the perceptions of brand image and brand awareness impact the purchasing behavior of consumers aged 18 and above in Ankara. It is also identified that the perceptions of brand image and brand awareness are associated with businesses having a Social marketing orientation.

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