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Factors Affecting Customer Loyalty of Consumers Shopping on Social Media Platforms

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ABSTRACT

The relentless progress in information and communication technology has resulted in substantial alterations in individuals' consumer behavior. Originally intended for fostering personal connections, the utilization of social media has recently experienced a substantial transformation as businesses incorporate it into their e-commerce strategies. Social media platforms have become an integral part of the everyday routines of the ordinary consumer demographic, serving as a crucial tool for online purchase. The rise of e-commerce has sparked intense rivalry among firms, compelling them to enhance client loyalty through the use of social media platforms. The expectations and objectives of customers who participate in online purchase through these channels fundamentally differ from those of traditional in-person shoppers. This study aims to analyze the determinants that impact consumer loyalty among white-collar professionals that engage in online transactions via social media platforms. The primary aim of this study is to examine the phenomena of online consumer loyalty. This study has a cohort of 364 individuals employed in professional or managerial positions. Following the formulation of the hypotheses, data was gathered via a questionnaire. The acquired data was analyzed using a multiple regression model to examine the three hypotheses. The results indicate that individuals' loyalty towards a corporation is positively influenced by their judgments of corporate social responsibility, website service quality, and public relations. Furthermore, research demonstrates a substantial correlation between the frequency of online purchases and the level of consumer loyalty. The final section of the paper is an analysis of the practical consequences that result from the aforementioned findings.

Keywords: Online Shopping, Customer Loyalty, Perception of Corporate Social Responsibility.

JEL Classification Codes: M30, D12, D23

Sosyal Medya Platformları Üzerinden Alışveriş Yapan Tüketicilerin Müşteri Sadakatini Etkileyen Etmenler

ÖZ

Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki sürekli ilerleme, insanların tüketici davranışlarında önemli değişiklikler meydana getirmiştir. Başlangıçta kişisel ilişkileri kolaylaştırmak için tasarlanan sosyal medya kullanımı, son zamanlarda işletmelerin e-ticaret taktiklerine entegre edilmesiyle önemli bir değişim göstermiştir. Çağdaş toplumda, sosyal medya platformlarının çevrimiçi satın alma aracı olarak kullanılması, ortalama tüketici demografisinin günlük rutinlerinin temel bir bileşeni olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. E-ticaretin ortaya çıkışı, işletmeler arasında şiddetli bir rekabete yol açmış ve onları sosyal medya platformlarını kullanarak müşteri sadakatini artırmaya teşvik etmiştir. Bu platformlar aracılığıyla çevrimiçi satın alma işlemine katılan müşterilerin beklenti ve istekleri, geleneksel yüz yüze alışveriş yapanlardan temelde farklılık göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sosyal medya platformları aracılığıyla çevrimiçi satın alma yapan beyaz yakalı profesyoneller arasında müşteri sadakatini etkileyen faktörleri incelemektir. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, online tüketici sadakati olgusunu araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma 364 beyaz yakalı çalışandan oluşan bir örnekleme içermektedir. Hipotezlerin oluşturulması sonrasında anket yoluyla veriler toplanmıştır. Toplanan verilere dayanarak üç hipotezi araştırmak için çoklu regresyon modeli kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, web sitesi hizmet kalitesi ve halkla ilişkiler algılarının çevrimiçi müşterilerin kuruma yönelik sadakati üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, online satın alma sıklığı ile tüketici sadakatinin derecesi arasında kayda değer bir ilişki olduğu gösterilmiştir. Makalenin sonuç bölümünde, yukarıda bahsedilen bulgulardan kaynaklanan pragmatik çıkarımların bir analizi sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi Alışveriş, Müşteri Sadakati, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Algısı,.

JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları: M30, D12, D23

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Kapsam:

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı, sosyal medya platformları üzerinden online alışveriş yapan beyaz yakalı çalışanlar arasında tüketici sadakati düzeyini etkileyen çeşitli unsurları incelemektir. Son yıllarda şirketler arasında, uygun fiyatlı ve yüksek değerli ürünler sunarak geniş bir müşteri tabanına ulaşmaya odaklanan geleneksel pazarlama yaklaşımlarından daha müşteri merkezli bir pazarlama stratejisine doğru kayda değer bir geçiş yaşanmaktadır. Ticari işletmeler, ayırt edici stratejilerin uygulanması, bu tür düzenlemelerin sürdürülmesi ve nihayetinde tüketici bağlılığının teşvik edilmesi yoluyla müşterileriyle kalıcı ilişkiler geliştirmeye çalışmaktadır. Günümüzde "Müşteri İlişkileri Yönetimi" kavramı büyük önem kazanmıştır.

Müşteri ilişkileri yönetiminin temel amacı, bir işletmenin müşteri tabanı içinde önemli ölçüde kârlılık sağlayan müşterileri ayırt etmek ve değerlerini en üst düzeye çıkarmak için kaynakları buna göre tahsis etmektir. Bu yaklaşımın amacı, müşterilerin yaşam boyu değerlerini artırarak sadakatlerini geliştirmektir. Müşterilerin ihtiyaç ve tercihlerine öncelik veren pazarlama yaklaşımı, doğası gereği teknoloji odaklı bir bakış açısıyla uyumludur. Dijital pazarlama çabalarının giderek daha fazla öne çıktığı günümüz koşullarında, web sitesi kalite algısı ve sosyal medya pazarlama faaliyetlerinin müşteri sadakatini geliştirilmesi ve sürdürülmesindeki önemi yadsınamaz.

Öte yandan, halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinin doğru bir şekilde yürütülmesi, itibar algısını etkileyerek marka ve işletme imajının şekillendirilmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Marka bağlılığının artması, markaya sadakat gösteren müşterilerin sayısında da artışa yol açarak bağlılıklarını güçlendirir. Çağdaş pazarlamada, titizlikle tasarlanmış ve etkin bir şekilde uygulanmış halkla ilişkiler stratejilerinin kuruluşlara sağladığı avantajlar giderek daha belirgin hale gelmiştir. Klasik dönemde işletmeler kâr elde etmeyi amaçlamış, bu kârı elde etmeye ve sürdürmeye özel bir önem vermişlerdir. Çağdaş toplumda ise mevcut yükümlülüklerin yanı sıra işletmelerin etik ve çevresel görevleri de ön plana çıkmıştır. Firmaların yükümlülüklerini yerine getirmek için kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk girişimleri yürütmesi, çağdaş müşteriler üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Çağdaş toplumda tüketim alışkanlıklarına dikkat eden bireylerin, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk girişimlerine öncelik veren kurum ve markalara yönelik beklentileri artmaktadır. Dahası, bu bireyler bu tür girişimlerin işletmelerin operasyonel çerçevelerine sorunsuz bir şekilde dahil edilmesinin ve böylece kurumsal sürdürülebilirliğin sağlanmasının öneminin farkındadır. İşletmeler, bu talebin bir sonucu olarak marka bilinirliği, marka sadakati ve marka bağlılığında eş zamanlı bir büyüme yaşamaktadır.

Yöntem:

Bu çalışma, 1 Mayıs 2023 – 1 Temmuz 2023 tarihleri arasında, İstanbul'da ikamet eden ve sosyal medya platformlarını kullanarak çevrimiçi alışveriş yapan beyaz yakalı profesyonellerden oluşan bir örneklem üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada kullanılan veri toplama yaklaşımı bir anket formunun kullanılmasıdır. Soruların bir kısmı yüz yüze görüşmeler yoluyla uygulanırken, diğerleri Google Formlar kullanılarak çevrimiçi olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk etapta toplanan 457 anketten 93'ü eksik yanıtlar ya da katılımcıların online satın alma alışkanlıklarının bulunmaması nedeniyle analiz dışı bırakılmıştır. Çalışmada kullanılan araçlar 5'li Likert tipi tutum ölçekleridir. Müşteri sadakatini ölçmek için Dehghan ve Shahin (2011, s. 11) tarafından geliştirilen 5 maddelik ölçek kullanılmıştır. Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk maddelerini ölçmek için Maignan (2001, s. 67) tarafından oluşturulan ölçek kullanılmıştır. Web sitesindeki hizmet kalitesi unsurlarını değerlendirmek için Rasli ve diğerleri (2018, s. 41) tarafından geliştirilen 5 maddelik ölçek kullanılmıştır. Halkla ilişkiler algısını ölçmek için kullanılan sorular, orijinali Gonzalez (2014, s. 51) tarafından üretilen ve beş maddeden oluşan bir ölçekten türetilmiştir. Bu çalışma, sosyal medya platformları tarafından kolaylaştırılan alışveriş davranışlarındaki ortalama farklılıkların istatistiksel anlamlılığını analiz ederek sosyal medya pazarlamasının müşteri sadakati üzerindeki etkisini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır.

Bulgular:

Yapılan analizlerin sonuçlarına göre tüm ölçekler bir faktör çatısı altında toplanmıştır. Bununla birlikte bütün maddelerin faktör yükleri 0,80'in üzerindedir ve bu da maddeler ile ilgili ölçekler arasında güçlü bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, tüm ölçekler için Cronbach's Alpha güvenilirlik katsayıları 0,80'in üzerindedir ve bu da ölçüm aracının yüksek iç tutarlılığına ve güvenilirliğine işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, tüm ölçekler tarafından açıklanan kümülatif varyans oranları "oldukça tatmin edici" olarak değerlendirilebilir. Varyans analizi (ANOVA), bağımlı değişken ile üç bağımsız değişkenden en az biri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Regresyon analizi sonuçlarına göre kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk algısı, web sitesi hizmet kalitesi algısı ve halkla ilişkiler algısının müşteri sadakati ile istatistiki olarak anlamlı bir ilişki göstermiştir ($pCSR = pPRP = 0.000$ ve $pWQ = 0.001 < 0.05$). Regresyon katsayıları incelendiğinde, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk algısının ($\beta CSR = 0.373$) en yüksek katsayısı, web sitesi hizmet kalitesi algısının ($\beta WQ = 0.250$) ise en düşük katsayısı gösterdiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, beyaz yakalı çalışanların internet üzerinden alışveriş yaptıkları firmaya olan bağlılıklarının temel belirleyicisi, kurumun kurumsal sosyal sorumluluğuna ilişkin düşünceleridir. R2 skoruna göre, araştırma modeli orta ila tatmin edici bir istatistiksel güç sergilemektedir. Bu çerçevede, çalışanların kurumsal sosyal sorumluluğu algılama derecesi, web sitesi hizmet kalitesini algılama derecesi ve online alışveriş

yaptıkları firmanın halkla ilişkilerini algılama derecesi, birlikte, söz konusu kuruluşa yönelik tüketici bağlılıklarının %72'sini açıklamaktadır.

Sonuç ve Tartışma:

Araştırma bulgularına göre, sosyal medya platformları üzerinden online alışveriş yapan beyaz yakalıların müşteri sadakatini etkileyen temel belirleyici, alışveriş yaptıkları online platformların kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk girişimlerine atfettikleri önemdir. Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluğun önemi, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk kadar belirgin olmasa da, online alışveriş yapanlar, tüketici sadakatini teşvik etme konusunda ilgili firmanın web sitesi hizmetlerinin ve halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinin kalitesine de önem vermektedir. Araştırma bulguları, online alışveriş yapma sıklığı ile müşteri sadakati arasında pozitif bir korelasyon olduğunu göstermektedir.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current highly competitive landscape, the establishment of customer loyalty and its subsequent maintenance emerges as a critical concern for organizations. The traditional marketing strategy, characterized by the production of cost-effective and superior goods with the objective of reaching a wider consumer base, has been supplanted by a customer-centric marketing approach. Business enterprises strive to cultivate enduring associations with their clientele through differentiation strategies, ultimately fostering customer loyalty and sustaining this advantageous state. In contemporary times, the concept of "Customer Relationship Management" has garnered significant significance.

The fundamental objective of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is to discern the clients who yield profitability within a business's customer base and allocate resources accordingly, according with their respective value. The objective is to cultivate client loyalty by enhancing the customer's lifetime value. The marketing strategy that prioritizes customer needs and preferences is inherently aligned with a technology-driven approach. In the current landscape characterized by the growing prominence of digital marketing endeavors, the significance of website quality perception and social media marketing operations in the establishment and sustenance of consumer loyalty cannot be overstated.

Conversely, the accurate execution of public relations activities has a crucial role in shaping the perception of reputation, so making substantial contributions to both brand and company image. An augmentation in brand loyalty results in a corresponding rise in the quantity of steadfast clients and serves to fortify customer loyalty. In contemporary marketing, the irrefutable significance of well-designed and effectively implemented public relations initiatives for organizations is evident. During the classical period, enterprises were driven by the objective of generating profit, with a focus on increasing this profit and ensuring its sustainability. In contemporary culture, alongside existing obligations, firms are increasingly expected to prioritize their environmental and societal duties. The execution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by firms to meet their ethical obligations holds significant implications for consumers in contemporary society. In contemporary society, individuals who are mindful of their consumption habits have heightened expectations for institutions and businesses that prioritize Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. Moreover, they recognize the significance of corporate sustainability and acknowledge the efficacy of incorporating such projects seamlessly into their business models. The demand for these firms is accompanied by a simultaneous increase in brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand loyalty.

The research was conducted in accordance with the principles of research and publication ethics.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer Loyalty

In the current landscape of intense competition, the retention of existing consumers has emerged as a critical concern for organizations. It is widely acknowledged that the expenses associated with getting a new client are significantly greater in comparison to the costs involved in retaining an existing customer. According to Beba (2018), it is advisable for businesses to prioritize the retention of their current customers and focus on maximizing and safeguarding the customer's lifetime value, instead of solely focusing on acquiring new consumers (p. 97). The notion of customer loyalty becomes prominent at this juncture. The significance of marketing objectives for organizations cannot be understated as they play a crucial role in attaining a competitive advantage within the market. Customer loyalty is widely recognized as a crucial marketing objective. The enhancement of client loyalty offers businesses the advantage of greater flexibility in their pricing strategies, while simultaneously attracting new customers to the business. The enduring nature of customers' inclination towards a certain firm serves as a significant measure of their loyalty towards that business (Arı & Yılmaz, 2015). Within the marketing literature, various conceptualizations of client loyalty have been proposed and numerous empirical investigations have been undertaken. According to Duffy (1998), customer loyalty can be described as the behavior of a consumer who consistently makes purchases from the same supplier, demonstrates a favorable attitude, and actively promotes the supplier to others (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). On the other hand, Oyman (2002) defines customer loyalty as the commitment shown towards a specific brand or business.

Within the existing body of research, the idea of customer loyalty is commonly approached from two distinct perspectives: behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Consequently, loyalty is comprehensively elucidated by considering both the observable actions and the underlying attitudes of customers. Behavioral loyalty can be defined as the consistent and repetitive purchase behavior exhibited by a customer.

Attitudinal loyalty, as described by Ball et al. (2003: 1273), refers to a favorable inclination towards the perpetuation of a relationship, along with a motivation to sustain this relationship. Attitudinal loyalty, in a more specific sense, encompasses favorable discussions, endorsements, and endeavors to convince individuals to patronize a particular business, irrespective of the absence of recurring purchase patterns. In summary, consumers that exhibit attitudinal loyalty engage in a form of unpaid and impactful advertising for the business. These favorable testimonials are shown to be equally powerful, if not more so, compared to the commercials created by the firm itself (Çatı & Koçoğlu, 2008: 169).

2.2. Perception of Corporate Social Responsibility & Customer Loyalty

The advent of the Industrial Revolution facilitated the onset of mechanization, the establishment of large-scale production facilities, the transition to mass production, and the emergence of modern business and management practices. Conversely, the impact of corporate operations on society and the environment has gained prominence due to the safeguarding of employee rights and the growing interconnections between businesses, the environment, and society. Consequently, the aforementioned phenomenon has resulted in the emergence and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

The increasing significance of corporate enterprises in the 1950s led to the frequent utilization of the concept of corporate social responsibility. In 1953, Bowen's seminal article titled "The Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" played a pioneering role in establishing the recognition and acceptance of the notion known as "Corporate Social Responsibility" (Carroll, 1999: 270). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is commonly understood as the dedication of businesses to achieving sustainable growth and profitability, alongside the implementation of environmental conservation practices.

However, it is important to note that a business has responsibilities towards both the environment and society, as well as towards all stakeholders who are affected by the decisions and activities of the business (Aktan, 2007: 9). Carroll (1979) posits that the social responsibilities of corporations encompass the economic, legal, and ethical obligations that society expects from these entities (Herrera & Heras-Rosas, 2020: 2). Van Marrewjik (2003:102) provides a definition of corporate social responsibility as the integration of societal and environmental considerations into a company's business operations and engagement with stakeholders. Kotler and Lee (2006: 2-3) provide a definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a dedication to improving societal well-being through voluntary business practices and the allocation of corporate resources.

In order to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals, enhance their reputation among customers, and improve their brand image, businesses engage in social initiatives and activities that align with the goals of the organization (Akkoyunlu and Kalyoncuoğlu, 2014: 127-128). The support of businesses for social and cultural activities, as well as their philanthropic efforts, is perceived as a characteristic of socially responsible businesses that aim to protect the rights of their employees. Furthermore, the endeavors of firms to safeguard natural resources, uphold ecological equilibrium, ensure quality, offer affordable pricing, and exhibit ethical conduct in post-sales service endeavors contribute to the cultivation of a favorable perception among consumers. According to Lervik and Johnson (2003:186), the perceived augmentation in value results in a corresponding rise in consumer contentment and loyalty.

Literature reveals the existence of studies that demonstrate the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty. In their study conducted by Ashraf et al. (2017) in the city of Gujranwala, Pakistan, with a sample of 318 participants who were customers of banks, it was found that Corporate Social Responsibility has a direct and strong impact on customer loyalty (p. 1363). Based on empirical study undertaken by scholars, it has been shown that the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives by banks leads to a notable enhancement in customers' trust in the institution. Moreover, these actions have been found to enhance the overall levels of customer satisfaction.

According to Ashraf et al. (2017:1369), this phenomenon subsequently enhances client loyalty and elevates their level of organizational dedication. Cuesta-Valiño vd. (2018) conducted a study in Spain with 667 participants, aiming to measure participants' perceptions of several supermarket brands. The research findings indicate that participants' perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility have a significant positive impact on customer loyalty (p. 763). According to researchers, the perception of Corporate Social Responsibility among participants directly influences their brand image and perceived quality in a positive manner, hence increasing their average level of customer satisfaction and enhancing their loyalty towards the respective organization (brand) (p. 767).

The first hypothesis of the study has been developed based on the aforementioned examples:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between corporate social responsibility perception and customer loyalty.

2.3. Perception of Website Service Quality & Customer Loyalty

The proliferation of internet marketing operations has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly in light of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic. The majority of consumers currently exhibit a preference for internet purchasing. The present circumstances have led to an increased significance of website quality for firms. The rise in internet users has corresponded with the emergence of online purchasing, as noted by Joines et al. (2003). Online shopping refers to the act of individuals making purchasing decisions for goods or services within the digital realm of the internet economy (Puranik & Bansal, 2014). Currently, the field of internet marketing is undergoing a rapid and distinct transformation, which surpasses the pace of change observed in customer behavior, corporate strategies, industry dynamics, and value chain configurations. This transformation is evident in the products and services offered by organizations, the manner in which they interact with their consumers, the decision-making procedures they employ, the organizational structures and strategies they adopt, and their collaborations with other enterprises. The rapid pace of technology advancement facilitates expedited access to a wide range of products, services, and information, through diverse channels. The proliferation of smartphones and tablets, together with the widespread use of social media and a plethora of mobile applications, has empowered customers with the ability to access an abundance of information that is essential during the shopping journey (Smith, 2011: 492).

Polities et al. (2012) provide a definition of website quality as the consumer's assessment of the overall excellence of a specific site and its appropriateness for online shopping (Giao et al., 2020: 354). The assessment of electronic service quality plays a crucial role in providing valuable information to both current and prospective clients within the target market. Hence, it is imperative to investigate if the service provided aligns with the users' preferences on the website (Chang et al., 2009: 423). Based on the findings of the research, it has been identified that there exist four primary dimensions that constitute the criterion for evaluating the quality of website services. The criteria outlined in the study by Chang et al. (2009:425) and the research conducted by Giao et al. (2020:354) are as follows:

- Website design encompasses a range of anticipated design-related qualities, as well as factors that pertain to personalisation.
- The reliability of a product can be assessed based on its accurate presentation, timely delivery, and fulfillment of correct orders.
- Privacy and Security: Experiencing a sense of safety and establishing trust in the website.
- The concept of customer service entails the convergence of a genuine inclination towards problem-solving and the readiness of staff members to provide assistance.

An examination of the existing body of scholarly works indicates that numerous studies have been conducted to explore the influence of website quality on customer loyalty. In their study, Chang et al. (2009) examined a sample of 330 employees from Chungwa Telecom in Taiwan, of which 85% belonged to the millennial generation (born between 1976 and 1985). The researchers discovered a significant positive relationship between website service quality and customer loyalty, indicating that higher levels of website service quality lead to increased customer loyalty (Chang et al., 2009, p. 431). The researchers highlighted that the provision of high-quality e-services by website owners has the potential to decrease the expenses associated with consumers' access to e-services, thus fostering

customer loyalty. Within this particular context, the augmentation of online service quality resulted in heightened levels of customer satisfaction, thereby fostering a greater sense of loyalty among clients towards the firm (Chang et al., 2009: 440). According to a study conducted by Giau et al. (2020) in Vietnam, the participants consisted of 594 individuals aged 16 years and above who had engaged in online purchasing at least once. The findings of the study indicate that the quality of website services has a notable and favorable impact on customer loyalty (p. 359). According to the findings of the study, there is a positive correlation between customers' low perceived online risk perception, indicating their confidence in the reliability of online buying, and their increased propensity to engage in repeated online shopping behavior. In the given context, the level of customer loyalty towards an organization is directly influenced by the extent to which companies offering online shopping services prioritize the security of their virtual stores through the establishment of a dependable e-commerce infrastructure, as well as their ability to deliver orders to customers within the promised timeframe and with the expected level of quality (Giao et al., 2020: 365).

The formulation of the second hypothesis was informed by the aforementioned examples.

Hypothesis 2: A notable correlation exists between the quality of online services and the level of consumer loyalty.

2.4. Public Relations Perception & Customer Loyalty

In contemporary circumstances, the significance of corporate and brand reputation is paramount for organizations seeking to gain a competitive edge over their rivals. Public relations activities are crucial practices that contribute to the enhancement of an organization's reputation. According to Cultip et al. (1985), public relations can be defined as a managerial activity that aims to build and sustain a mutually advantageous relationship between a business and the public communities that play a crucial role in the firm's success (Hsieh and Li, 2008: 27). Public relations practices play a significant role in facilitating communication within organizations and with external stakeholders. These practices primarily focus on understanding the target audience and effectively introducing the organization to them. This process can also be referred to as reputation management.

The implementation of public relations strategies has a beneficial role in effectively controlling the perception of reputation and communication. Uzunoğlu and Öksüz (2008: 112) argue that these techniques serve as a safeguard for businesses and brands, protecting them from various negative consequences. These strategies hold significant strategic value in corporate communication since they possess the ability to shape consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards the business, product, service, and brand, both positively and negatively. As stated by Diker and Koçyiğit (2017: 575), the establishment of a robust and trustworthy reputation for a company and its brand has the potential to result in a substantial augmentation of brand value and consumer loyalty.

Understanding consumers' inclination to identify a brand with other entities, like as individuals, locations, and merchandise, holds significant importance. When considering the association between a brand and a product, implementing a public relations strategy has the potential to enhance brand familiarity and establish brand consciousness by means of recall and recognition (Keller, 2003). The alignment between an individual's self-image and the image projected by a product has a significant impact on various aspects of consumer behavior. This includes the formation of brand preferences, the development of attitudes towards the brand, the decision-making process regarding the purchase of the product, as well as the overall satisfaction levels and subsequent attitudes and behaviors related to repurchase intentions (Ekinçi & Riley, 2003). The manner in which consumers see an effective public relations strategy might result in two outcomes: an augmentation in the quantity of devoted customers and a reinforcement of loyalty among current customers.

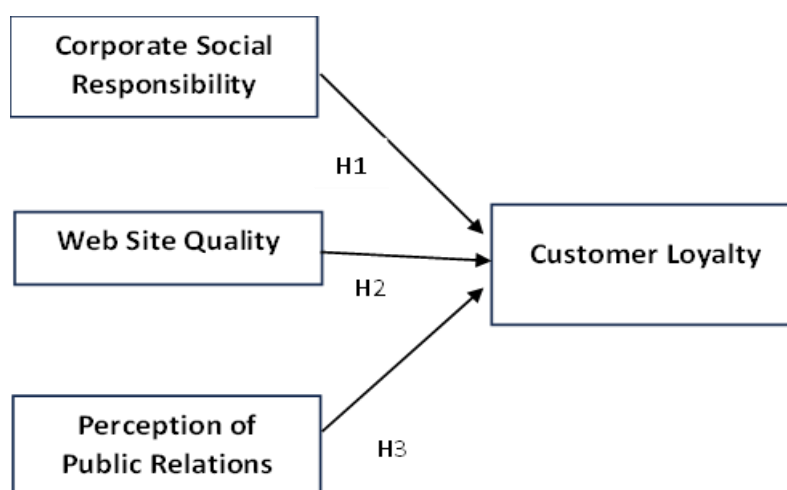
Numerous scholarly works have been dedicated to investigating the correlation between public relations perception and customer loyalty within the existing body of literature. In their study, Hsieh and Li (2008) examined the purchasing experience of insurance policies among 367 participants in Taiwan. They specifically investigated the impact of public relations perception on customer loyalty. The findings of their research revealed a direct and positive relationship between public relations perception and customer loyalty among the participants. Within this particular context, it was noted that the public relations endeavors undertaken by the insurance firm had a direct and evident impact on enhancing client

loyalty towards the corporation (pp. 34 - 35). According to Hsieh and Li (2008: 29), it was observed by the researchers that when customers (referred to as respondents) hold a positive perception of the brand image, it results in a halo effect, causing them to exhibit positive responses towards additional brand-related messages. Over a moderate duration, these favorable dispositions foster a favorable perception of the company among clientele, perhaps generating heightened interest in the organization's public relations endeavors (p. 35). According to Rahi and Ghani (2016), a research conducted in Lahore and Islamabad, Pakistan, including 437 clients of commercial banks, revealed that the perception of public relations among these customers, in conjunction with the bank's brand image, had a notable and favorable influence on their loyalty towards the bank (p. 15). The researchers further underlined that the primary objective of public relations operations is to cultivate a sense of comfort and ease among customers. It was noted that these actions are designed to establish a mutually beneficial cycle, wherein customer pleasure is achieved and positive feedback is generated for the firm (p. 3).

The formulation of the third hypothesis was derived from the aforementioned examples. Hypothesis 3: A noteworthy correlation exists between the perception of public relations and the level of client loyalty.

The Research Model was devised in the following manner.

Figure 1. Research Model



3. METHODOLOGY

The research employed 5-point Likert-type attitude scales for all measurements. The 5-item scale developed by Dehghan and Shahin (2011, p. 11) was employed to measure customer loyalty items. The scale created by Maignan (2001, p. 67) was employed to assess corporate social responsibility items. The 5-item scale developed by Rasli et al. (2018, p. 41) was employed to assess the service quality elements on the website. The perception items related to public relations were derived from the 5-item scale created by Gonzalez (2014, p. 51).

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This study examines the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through the use of a 5-item independent variable. The independent variable consists of five components, namely CSR1, CSR2, CSR3, CSR4, and CSR5.

The independent variable is Website Service Quality (WQ), which consists of five items: WQ1, WQ2, WQ3, WQ4, and WQ5.

The study incorporates the use of a 5-item independent variable, namely PRP1, PRP2, PRP3, PRP4, and PRP5, to assess Public Relations Perception (PRP).

The dependent variable is customer loyalty (CL), which is measured using a 5-item scale consisting of CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, and CL5.

For the purpose of conducting all analyses, the statistical software SPSS version 25 was utilized.

The study was carried out from May 1 to July 1, 2023, focusing on white-collar workers residing in Istanbul province who engage in online buying through social media platforms. The data gathering approach employed in the study was the use of a questionnaire form. A portion of the questions were administered via in-person interviews, while others were completed electronically using Google Forms. Out of the initial pool of 457 questionnaires, a total of 93 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete responses or the absence of online purchasing habits among the respondents. Among the questions deemed valid, a majority of 56.8% (208) were completed by female respondents, while the remaining 43.2% (156) were completed by male respondents. A total of 71 respondents, accounting for 21.1% of the sample, fell within the age range of 18 to 25. Similarly, 88 respondents, representing 25.5% of the sample, were aged between 26 and 35. Additionally, 106 respondents, constituting 27.6% of the sample, fell within the age range of 36 to 45. Lastly, 99 respondents, making up 25.8% of the sample, were 46 years of age or older. Among the participants, it was found that 48.2% (n=175) possessed a high school diploma or an associate degree, while 51.8% (n=189) held a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education. Among the participants, 20.1% (77) reported a monthly income falling within the range of 8,506.80 TL to 10,000 TL, which corresponds to the minimum wage. Additionally, 28.9% (111) of the participants indicated a monthly income ranging from 10,001 TL to 15,000 TL. Furthermore, 31.8% (122) of the participants reported a monthly income between 15,001 TL and 20,000 TL. Lastly, 19.3% (74) of the participants stated that their monthly income exceeded 20,001 TL. In relation to the practice of engaging in online shopping through social media platforms, it was found that 24.7% (85) of the respondents indicated a frequency of once a month, while 40.1% (149) reported engaging in this activity two to three times a month. Additionally, 35.2% (130) of the participants revealed that they engage in online shopping through social media channels at least four times a month.

Table 1. Characteristic Values

	Statistics			
	CSS	WQ	PRP	CL
N	364	364	364	364
Arithmetic mean	3,88	3,92	3,97	4,09
Median	4,03	4,01	4,21	4,26
Mod	4,22	4,00	4,20	4,50
Standard deviation	0,72	0,73	0,74	0,84
Skewness	-1,436	-,1,270	-,1,309	-1,846
Curtosis	1,936	1,260	1,265	1,267

As seen from the data presented in Table 1, the arithmetic mean of all variables exhibits a high degree of proximity, falling within the range of 3.88-4.09. In the present context, it can be asserted that the respondents exhibited a predominantly favorable response towards all the items included in the survey. According to Fuey and Idris (2017, p. 286), in SPSS data outputs, it is recommended that skewness values fall within the range of -2 to +2, whereas kurtosis values should be between the range of -7 to +7. Upon examination of the skewness and kurtosis values, it was noted that they fell within the specified range. The typical distribution was deemed to be acceptable.

In the subsequent phase, the data underwent first assessment by the use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and the Bartlett Sphericity Test. It is anticipated that all scales will be categorized inside a unified factor. In exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the application of rotation techniques facilitates the comprehension of the data. The items represented by each scale are elucidated to a significant extent, while the items represented by other scales are explicated to a lesser extent. The procedure of utilizing the Rotated Component Matrix involves the amplification of factor loadings that were initially substantial, while diminishing those that were initially insignificant (Turanlı et al., 2012, pp. 53-54). The Rotated Component Matrix was selected as the optimal method for doing factor analysis.

Table 2 presents the results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which includes the outcomes of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett Sphericity Tests, the Cronbach's Alpha reliabilities, and the values indicating the total variance explained for all scales.

Table 2. EFA, Cronbach's Alpha (α) Reliability and Total Variance Explained Results

(CSR)	
Item	Factor Load
CSR 1	0,868
CSR 2	0,855
CSR 3	0,820
CSR 4	0,815
CSR 5	0,829
KMO Concordance Value	0,896
Bartlett Sphericity Test (p<0.05)	0.000
Cronbach's Alpha (α) Reliability	0,896
Total Variance Explained (%)	71,49
(WQ)	
Item	Factor Load
WQ 1	0,822
WQ 2	0,833
WQ 3	0,845
WQ 4	0,854
WQ 5	0,834
KMO Concordance Value	0,895
Bartlett Sphericity Test (p<0.05)	0.000
Cronbach's Alpha (α) Reliability	0,895
Total Variance Explained (%)	71,53
(PRP)	
Item	Factor Load
PRP 1	0,849
PRP 2	0,829
PRP 3	0,836
PRP 4	0,838
PRP 5	0,847
KMO Concordance Value	0,897
Bartlett Sphericity Test (p<0.05)	0.000
Cronbach's Alpha (α) Reliability	0,896
Total Variance Explained (%)	71,89
(CL)	
Item	Factor Load
CL 1	0,899
CL 2	0,889
CL 3	0,868
CL 4	0,875
CL 5	0,878
KMO Concordance Value	0,877
Bartlett Sphericity Test (p<0.05)	0.000
Cronbach's Alpha (α) Reliability	0,925
Total Variance Explained (%)	78,26

Nunnally (1978) underscored, "the significance of a Cronbach's Alpha (α) reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher as an acceptable threshold for researchers embarking on his study (p. 245). Çokluk et al. (2012) posit that a range of 40% to 60% for the total explained variance is deemed "adequate and good," whilst a ratio over 60% is regarded as "very good" (p. 245). The findings of the research indicated that all scales were categorized into a singular component. All items exhibited factor loadings that above the established threshold value of 0.32. The dependability of all scales, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, exceeds 0.80. Furthermore, the collective variance accounted for by all measures can be assessed as "highly satisfactory".

Following the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a subsequent statistical procedure including multiple regression analysis was performed. The initial stage of this study involves the construction of an ANOVA table. Table 3 displays the ANOVA table output of the model in SPSS.

Table 3. ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Average of Squares	F	Sig. (p)
1	Regression	189,468	3	64,489	320,637	,000 ^b
	Residual	75,681	370	,214		
	Total	265,149	373			

a. Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

b. Independent Variables: (Fixed), perception of public relations, website service quality, corporate social responsibility.

When the p-value (p) is less than 0.05, it is appropriate to reject the null hypothesis (H₀). This implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable and one or more independent factors. In the present context, it is observed that at least one of the three independent variables provides an explanation for the dependent variable. In the subsequent phase, Table 4 examines the initial three hypotheses of the study by assessing the statistical significance of the independent variables in the regression model, so determining which variable(s) among the three are significant.

Table 4. Testing Hypotheses H₁, H₂ and H₃

Coefficients^a

Model		Non-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig. (p)
		B ₀	Standard Deviation	Beta (β)			
1	Constant (B ₀)	,083	,133			0,621	,535
	CSS	-,284	,069	,373		6,426	,000
	WQ	-,284	,084	,250		3,454	,001
	PRP	-,309	,080	,257		3,592	,000

a. Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

The regression analysis revealed that the three independent variables incorporated in the model, namely perception of corporate social responsibility, perception of website service quality, and perception of public relations, collectively accounted for a statistically significant portion of the variation in the dependent variable, customer loyalty (pCSR = pPRP = 0.000 & pWQ = 0.001 < 0.05).

Upon examination of the standardized β coefficients, it is worth mentioning that all coefficients associated with the independent variables that elucidate the model exhibit a positive (+) value. Within this particular scenario, a positive correlation exists between the independent factors and the dependent variable. Specifically, when employees develop a heightened awareness of corporate social responsibility, perceive a higher level of quality in the organization's website services, and have a positive opinion of the organization's public relations efforts, their level of customer loyalty is enhanced.

Upon closer examination of the regression coefficients, it becomes evident that the perception of corporate social responsibility ($\beta_{CSR} = 0.373$) exhibits the highest coefficient, while the perception of website service quality ($\beta_{WQ} = 0.250$) displays the lowest coefficient. Therefore, the primary determinant of white-collar employees' loyalty towards the organization they patronize online is their view of the company's commitment to corporate social responsibility.

The efficacy of the model is also contingent upon the utilization of the R2 statistic in conjunction with the regression analysis. The aforementioned statistic is derived from the coefficient of determination (R2), which represents the squared value of the linear correlation coefficient between the Y-dependent variable and the X-independent variables. The coefficient in question serves as an indicator of the degree to which the regression equation aligns with the observed data (Günel, 2003, p. 205).

The coefficient of determination, denoted as R2, ranges from 0 to 1. A value near 0 suggests a weak fitting capability of the model, whereas a value around 1 indicates a good fitting capability. There exist variations in the interpretation of the R2 value among researchers. However, the prevailing approach suggests that if the R2 value is less than 0.25, the model is deemed to be of low strength. If the R2 value falls within the range of 0.25 to less than 0.50, the model is considered to be weak. Models with R2 values ranging from 0.50 to less than 0.75 are regarded as moderately or adequately strong. Finally, models with R2 values exceeding 0.75 are classified as very strong (Hair et al., 2011, p. 145). The efficacy of the model is seen in Table 5:

Table 5. Power of the Model (R2 Statistic)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error of Estimate
1	,833 ^a	,720	,709	,46213

a. Independent Variables: perception of public relations, website service quality, corporate social responsibility.

b. Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

The R2 value presented above indicates that the research model possesses a moderate to adequate level of statistical power. Within this context, the formation of consumer loyalty towards a business may be attributed to three key factors: employees' perceptions of corporate social responsibility, perceptions of website service quality, and public relations perceptions of the firm they engage with for online shopping. These factors collectively account for 72% of the observed variation in customer loyalty

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the significance attributed to corporate social responsibility initiatives by the online platforms utilized by white-collar employees for their online shopping via social media channels emerges as the primary determinant influencing their customer loyalty. The lack of surprise regarding this finding can be attributed to the fact that contemporary white-collar workers are typically encompassed within the conscious consumer groups. However, it is widely recognized among online shoppers that prominent online shopping platforms in our nation engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives. These endeavors encompass supporting educational initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to safeguarding pets, providing sponsorship to sports clubs, promoting the inclusion of women in the digital economy, and fostering the development of women entrepreneurs. In the present scenario, online shopping platforms engage with their clients by means of their corporate social responsibility initiatives, thereby enhancing their corporate reputation and fostering trust, which consequently facilitates the establishment of customer loyalty.

While the perception of corporate social responsibility holds greater significance, online customers also place value on the quality of website services and public relations operations of the relevant business when it comes to fostering customer loyalty.

The quality of a website service has the potential to impact consumer loyalty through two distinct mechanisms: One of the primary concerns is the safeguarding of customers' personal data. Despite the stringent oversight of the Personal Data Protection Authority (KVKK) over online social media sales channels and e-commerce platforms, users may still fall prey to platforms that lack a robust e-commerce infrastructure or engage in the unauthorized sharing of client data with external entities. In the present scenario, the belief that personal data is safeguarded and remains undisclosed to external entities can have a favorable impact on customer allegiance. The second determinant pertains to the degree of informativeness exhibited by the website with regards to the timely and high-quality delivery of the product or service to the consumer. In the present context, when the product or service is delivered to the consumer within the promised timeframe and adheres to the expected quality as stated on the website, it engenders a sense of trust in the customer towards the service rendered by the website. The

establishment of trust can potentially influence customers to engage in repeat transactions on the same website, so fostering the cultivation of customer loyalty.

Public relations operations are the most direct means of engaging with customers on social media sales platforms and e-commerce digital sales channels. The aforementioned operations are predicated upon the organization's endeavor to acquaint itself with its clientele. Currently, promotional endeavors are executed via advertising campaigns, encompassing digital media as well as television broadcasts. Advertisements play a crucial role in establishing the business image and effectively conveying the intended message to the target audience. Engaging in these activities is crucial for achieving successful sales on online platforms, as contemporary online consumers exhibit a reluctance to conduct transactions by divulging personal information and providing debit/credit card details on unfamiliar sites. Within this particular context, it is noteworthy that the customer's awareness and recognition of the business can have a favorable impact on their perception, ultimately leading to an elevation in their level of loyalty towards the institution.

Research findings indicate that there exists a positive correlation between the frequency of engaging in online purchasing and the level of consumer loyalty. At present, it is imperative to underscore the significance of reciprocal connection. As the prevalence of online shopping continues to grow, customers have a heightened sense of affiliation with both the product or service they are purchasing and the organization that offers it. In contrast, customer-driven innovation, which is a prevalent form of innovation in contemporary times, entails the active participation of devoted clients in the process of developing products or services. The Lego Factory application, developed by the Danish toy manufacturer Lego, the miAdidas application, created by the German sportswear manufacturer Adidas (Tidd and Bessant, 2016: 254), and the utilization of high school students who possess a strong affinity for computer games by game developers (Desouza et al., 2008: 40), all serve as illustrations of customer-driven innovation. This approach seeks to establish (digital) platforms that foster a sense of security and comfort for loyal customers, enabling them to transform their unique, unconventional, and imaginative ideas into organizational innovation.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHOR

Declaration of Contribution Rate: This study has a single author.

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