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Refugee crisis (RC) after the Arab Spring (AS) and its impacts on Turkish tourism industry: The case of Istanbul

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Abstract

The Arab Spring began as social movements in Middle East and shortly after uprisings, regime changes and civil wars emerged. Apart from all, more than five million people are forced to refuge from Syria to neighbouring countries. The article is intended to explore the effects of the refugees on Turkish tourism industry with evidences from Istanbul. A semi-structured elite interviews have been used as the data collection method. Eight face to face interviews are conducted in Istanbul with scholars, professionals and specialists from different areas and study fields. Five common themes are derived from the collected data. These are illegal employment, tourism investment, tourism demand, social conflict and tourist experience. The case study makes important theoretical contribution to the tourism literature since it examines the impacts of refugee crisis with a different perspective of migration-led tourism.

Keywords: Arab Spring (AS), Refugee crisis (RC), Tourism-migration nexus

Introduction

Until the beginning of Arab Spring (AS), as a consequence of the radical foreign policy decisions; Turkish government opted to practice a more flexible visa regime with neighbouring countries to strengthen the economic, political and socio-cultural relationships (Dede, 2011). Arguably, this approach was a necessity to eradicate the hostility remaining from Cold War (Akturk, 2013). Quoting from Davutoglu (Former Prime Minister of Turkey);

“... not integration but reintegration with our neighbours will continue. Antep and Aleppo, Edirne and Plovdiv or Filibe, Istanbul and Selanik, Izmir and Athens, Rize and Batumi will be reintegrated... (MFA, 2011).”

In order to achieve this goal, between the years of 2009 and 2010 Turkey lifted visa requirements with key Arab countries such as Syria, Libya, Jordan and so on through bilateral agreements. However, the political crisis, riots, civil wars and terrorist attacks in Middle East undermined this process. In parallel with this, changes occurred on the general policy of Middle East countries (Anderson, 2011) and their neighbours such as Turkey. In this environment, it would be naive to think that tourism industry and tourism activities in Turkey and Middle East will not be affected due to aforementioned developments. Hence, the political and social incidents in Middle East have substantial potential to shape the tourism activities in the region. Particularly, political instabilities, conflicts and their results had key

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roles in this process since the security problems are the Achilles' heel of the tourism activities (Neumayer, 2004).

In the light of aforesaid arguments; it can be clearly stated that AS and its aftermaths have visually left some effects on Turkey in many aspects but the tourism activities seem to be the victim of this process in particular. Additionally, as implied, the nitty-gritty of Turkish tourism industry is the future threats of AS (Fargues & Fandrich, 2012). In this context, the most important threats originated from Syria since Turkey has a direct border with Syria. For this reason, the developments in Syria is directly threatening Turkey. AS triggered many economic, social, security and political problems in Turkey. However, the most important threat perhaps became the refugee crisis in this process. Hence, refugee crisis created permanent social, economic, cultural, demographic and political problems while other conflicts temporarily affect the neighbouring countries in the aspects of economy and security.

On the other hand, there are some studies exploring the relationship between migration and tourism though these studies generally investigate the effects of voluntary migration such as tourism-led migration and migration-led tourism. However, there is no sufficient attention towards investigating the effects of refugees on tourism industry. For this reason, the effects of the Refugee Crisis (RC) on tourism industry is determined as the focal point of the study to fill a gap in the literature. As for the empirical analysis, Istanbul is chosen for various reasons. Firstly, Istanbul is one of the most visited city in the world. Istanbul is attracting almost 10 million tourists each year. Secondly, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), the refugees allegedly in Turkey stay in Istanbul (UNCHR, 2016). These reasons rendered Istanbul as a suitable area to analyse the effects of refugees on tourism.

Aftermaths of AS and Root Causes of RC

The Arab Region countries and communities including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestinian Territories, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Iraq share the similar culture, geography, life styles and mentality. Hence, any development in one of them can influence the other in social, political and economic aspects. For this reason, AS successively occurred (Lotan et al., 2011; Amin et al., 2012; Dodge, 2012). The AS and revolution first started in Tunisia by a man setting himself alight in public after his business had been shut down by government. By the means of social media, the video of this protest spread out to other groups and finally caused uprisings along the country (Goodwin, 2011; Dalacoura, 2012). Following these uprisings, the president of Tunisia, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. Tunisian protests sparked a domino effect in the region (Schraeder, 2012). In this sense, one of the country that was affected by the protests was Egypt. Egyptian dissident groups gathered in Tahrir Square. Egyptian uprisings led to resignation of Hosni Mubarak who had been the president of Egypt since 1981 (Nagarajan, 2013). Another country is influenced by riots was Libya and social events in this country continued with the murder of president Moammar Gaddafi (Kamrava, 2014). By the same token, the leader of Yemen is also ousted (Avraham, 2015).

It is possible to sort the root causes of these uprisings as unemployment, the majority of dissatisfied youth, human rights violations and political issues including the current regime (Rifai, 2011). Perchance, because of this reason AS is also called as "Democratization of Islamism". Similar pictures are also painted for Syria too. The fall of Bashar al-Assad is virtually assumed though contrary to popular belief, Bashar al-Assad is not ousted and Baath regime is continued at the expense of civil war in Syria (Serwer, 2012). Post-Arab Spring period made a beginning (Rabinovich, 2014; Susser, 2015) which is also referred to as "Arab Winter" rather than a spring (Vassefi, 2013).

Aforementioned turmoil and political instabilities in Middle East created three main threats for Turkish tourism industry. Firstly, some terrorist organizations emerged such as Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham's (ISIS), Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD) and People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG). However, the most serious terrorist threats are created by ISIS. At the first glance, ISIS may seem like an ordinary marauding paramilitary force (Gambhir, 2015) though it is such a powerful terrorist organization that besides the numerous attacks, lootings, ransoms, it controls up to %40 of Iraqi wheat production and most of Syrian's oil and gas production (Cockburn, 2014; Woertz, 2014). It also has a growing number of sympathizer from many countries. For instance, it is claimed that 50 British women have joined to ISIS (Sherwood et al., 2014). Indeed, ISIS is not just terrorizing in Middle East but it became a global threat (Jenkins, 2015). Consequently, ISIS and other terrorist organizations became a significant security threat for the tourism activities in Turkey.

Secondly, unexpected political upheavals are erupted among third countries. However, the most violent political conflict has occurred between Turkey and Russia. Turkish army downed Russian plane due to the air space violation. Immediately after, Russia restricted imports from Turkey and most of Russian tour operators stopped selling vacation packages to Turkey (MacFarquhar, 2015). In a sense, the conflict in these countries directly influenced the tourism demand for Turkey. Thirdly, the civil war in Syria and other developments forced people to flee from their old countries to relatively safer places particularly Turkey.

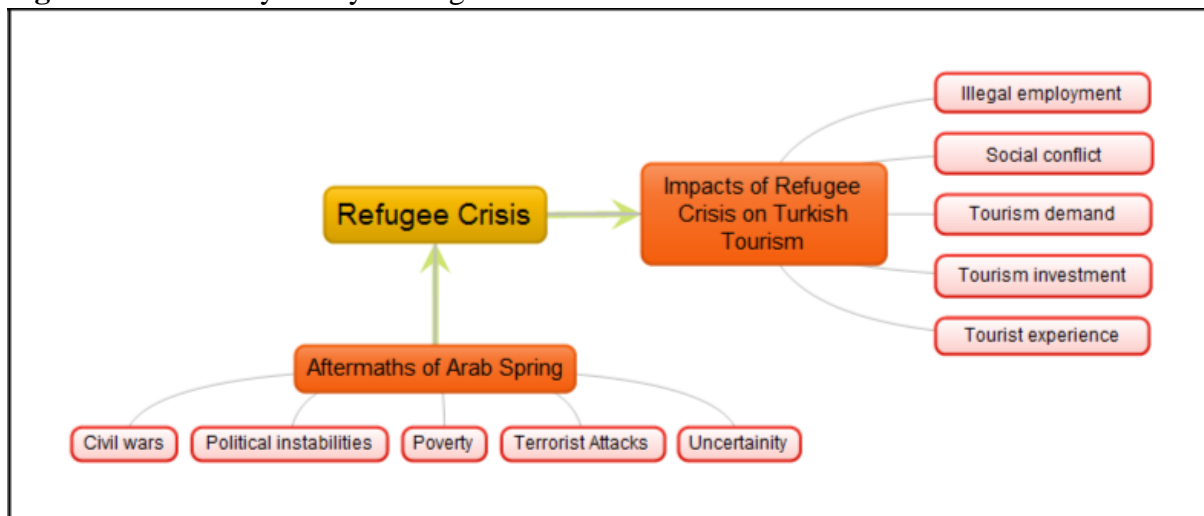
Refugee Crisis

As it is partially mentioned above, AS have potential to affect the performance of Turkey in many areas including foreign policy, security, economy and so on. However, RC is determined as the focal point of the study for two main reasons. Firstly, it is evident that there is a relatively modest literature that endeavours to clarify the relationship between migration and tourism, impact of migration on tourism or impact of tourism on migration. Notwithstanding, none of the study embraces social, cultural and economic effects of RC on tourism industry at once.

On the other hand, there are some studies that examine the relationship between migration and tourism though these studies generally deal with the migration movements which has commercial motivations such as entrepreneurial migration and labour migration. Another stream of the literature investigates the migration of people who has peripatetic life styles. In this regard, rural-urban migration, retirement migration and second homes are second type of migrations that are examined in the context of tourism (Williams & Hall, 2000; Paniagua, 2002; Benson & O'reilly, 2009; Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010).

The common feature of these migrations which are handled in cited studies is the voluntary characteristics (i.e. tourism-led-migration, migration-led-tourism). The distinctive feature of the human movement which is explored in the scope of this study is the different push and pull factors of migration. In parallel with these differences, it can be said that the study gained rare findings which can make substantial contribution to the literature. Hence, refugees have completely different behaviours than voluntary migrants. In this sense, it may be claimed that this paper can be one of the unique studies since it does not examine the tourism-migration nexus but examine the impacts of RC on tourism industry as can be seen from Figure 1.

Fig. 1. The summary of key findings



However, it should also be kept in mind that RC is a human movement that is totally different from other migrations though it is a very difficult task to put the RC in a migration category since there is considerable confusion about grouping human movements. Nevertheless, the RC mainly has the feature of forced migration since refugees did not have power to decide to leave from fatherland (Petersen, 1958).

Addition to above argument, another reason that led authors to focus on RC is the quantity of refugees. RC that took place is one of the biggest human movement of history. For this reason, it is considered worth to explore the effects of RC on tourism industry. According to the statistics of UNCHR a total of almost five million Syrians have taken refuge in various countries. Meanwhile, Turkey has admitted more than half of these refugees (UNCHR, 2016).

Methodology

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the effects of RC on tourism industry with references from Istanbul. In this sense, as RC has recently taken place, statistics or written materials such as articles, books, reports etc. were not sufficient to analyse the impacts of RC on Turkish tourism industry. There are only few number of written sources that partly deal with RC though those do not specifically examine the phenomenon in the context of tourism industry. For this reason, experts and scholars are addressed. Qualitative research methods have been used to shed light on this type of little known and complex research topics (Barker et. al, 2002: 72-93).

Data collection technique

The semi-structured interview has been employed as data collection technique since a semi-structured interview does not have the limitations of structured interviews owing to its flexibility to enquire for participants' observations as well as giving opportunity to researchers to prompt with participants about the research topics. (Barribal & While, 1994; Mathers et al., 1998). The harmony between characteristics of semi-structured interviews and the complex nature of the research topic is taken into consideration in choosing this method.

Sample

Eight face to face interviews have been conducted with diverse experts, professionals and scholars from different areas and study fields. The structure of sample is designed based on Patton's (1990) maximum variation sampling strategy which permits researchers to get high-

quality, unique and rich data through its heterogeneity. In this sense, core competency of scholars can be listed as labour economics (P1), journalism (P2), political science and international relations (P3 and P4) and tourism management (P5 and P6). On the other hand, one of the professional was the chairman of one of the most influential tourism union in Turkey (P7). The second industry professional who has PHD related to Middle East tourism market and was also the owner of a travel agency serving for tourists from Middle East (P8).

The interviewees being concentrated in the areas of AS, RC, Arab Region, Middle East, Tourism Policy and Planning and similar issues that played a significant role to render the findings of the study more reliable. From this aspect, the data collection technique can also be referred to as elite interviews since all participants are experts in their fields. Where they are knowledgeable about research topic and can provide better insights into research (Harvey, 2011; Cetin, 2014). All of the scholar also had scientific research about AS, RC or Tourism Policy and Planning.

To determine the sample size, theoretical sampling technique is used which suggests ending interviews if similar responds emerge. As Glaser and Strauss" (2009) claim to getting similar or same feedback for the same questions indicates that the research has come to the saturation point. Thus within the scope of research, eight interviews are made and each interview has taken an average of 40-50 minutes. Finally, recorded interviews are typed verbatim then notes are coded systematically and analysed. Consequently, five common themes are obtained.

Findings

The result of research indicates that RC affected Turkish tourism in several ways. These effects generally occurred in different aspects of industry though some socio-cultural effects also emerged. Three of the five research themes confirm that RC is affected the industry in the employment, investment and demand areas. On the one hand, content of other two themes indicates that local people as one of the most important stakeholder of the industry also encountered some social problems. Likewise, research outcomes also indicate that tourist experiences are also influenced in a negative way due to the behaviours of refugees.

Theme 1: Illegal Employment

Undoubtedly, refugees are in the need of income to survive except those who stay in refugee camps. In this context, P7 declared that refugees head for western part of Turkey which is relatively developed and naturally have plenty of job opportunities. Most of the participants emphasized that refugees may be employed in various businesses from different industries which do not have an institutional identity. Participants also reached a consensus on that refugees are seen as low cost labour in businesses including hotels, restaurants and catering composing HORECA sector (Joppe, 2012) and travel agencies (Kirisci, 2014). It is also pointed out that this notion is strongly favoured by business owners in Turkey. It is claimed that the wage levels in Hotel and Restaurants are likely to have decreased due to the informal employment of refugees (Balkan & Tumen, 2016).

According to the opinions of participants, it is inferred that other than refugees being seen as low cost labour, there are three main reasons to employ them in HORECA sector. One of these reason is higher informal employment rate of Turkish tourism industry compared to other industries. Secondly, business owners in such places as Istanbul where a growing number of businesses serving for Arabic tourists have a common belief. It is possible to summarize this common belief by the word of P1;

"For better performance Syrian refugees can be hired for lower salaries instead of Turkish employees besides refugees are capable of speaking Arabic"

The third reason why Syrians are more likely to be employed in tourism sector can be stated as the job vacancies in stewarding and housekeeping positions. Graduates from related universities or colleges who refuse to take up these jobs as occupations on the grounds of low wages and unfavourable working conditions. For this reason, the refugees are generally employed in tourism jobs which are described as dirty, difficult and dangerous (3D) by International Labour Organization (ILO) (Lee et al., 2011) as well as in other industries. Despite this, there may also be some qualified refugees who can take better jobs in tourism or in other industries. By the same token, a small number of refugees who has work permit are perhaps employed legally. However, at the risk of over generalization, it is possible to say that most of the refugees who are illegally employed work hard and get peanuts.

Theme 2: Tourism Investments

According to the participants", another economic reaction of this process is likely to be seen in the field of tourism investment in short and midterm. It is thought that classifying the investments on the basis of their origin can be useful in order to create a better understanding for present and future effects of RC since the multidirectional and nebulous nature of phenomenon inhibits the measurement of overall effects. In this connection, three main types of investors are determined within the scope of this study as Turkish, Arabic and all other countries which have not been exposed to the AS (i.e. Western Countries). At the first glance, there seems to be a common perception about that the political environment can discourage the potential Western investors due to the location of Turkey which is close to hotspot in Middle East and the attacks of ISIS, YPG and PYD. Addition to that perception, admission of refugees to Turkey may also cause a decrease in the amount of tourism and other sectoral investment.

However, none of the participant pointed out a possible drop in tourism investments at least in short term. As opposed to popular belief, it can be said that most of the participants have the expectation of an increase due to the capital flow from Arabic countries to Turkey. Within this context, one may clearly say that the capital flow from Syria confirms the participants" estimation. In this sense, it is stated that there is an increasing number of firms entering business that belong to Syrian people in Istanbul (Valarini, 2015). On the other hand, small scale businesses are opened by refugees such as ethnic restaurants and grocery stores. In addition to this, it is also stated that cultural and religious background, geographical proximity and political stability rendered Turkey an attractive investment zone in the eyes of Arabic investors. Different from others, P5 declared that;

"Some changes can be seen in the structure of tourism facilities such as hotels serving for halal tourism instead of traditional hotels that serve for sea-sun-sand (3S) type of tourism..."

It is possible to say that participants agree regarding the attitudes of Turkish and other group of investors in this process. The reason that led these groups to continue to make investments may rely on two factors. Firstly, it may be said that their concerns are eliminated through the increasing tourism demand, generous incentives of government and the international image of Turkey. Another reason is that since AS turned to winter, tourism investment planned to be made in these countries may change direction. In other words, prevailing chaotic situation and authority gap in some Arabic countries is diverting investors into Turkey. By the same token, some Turkish entrepreneurs can also start to delay their tourism investments to be made in Middle East.

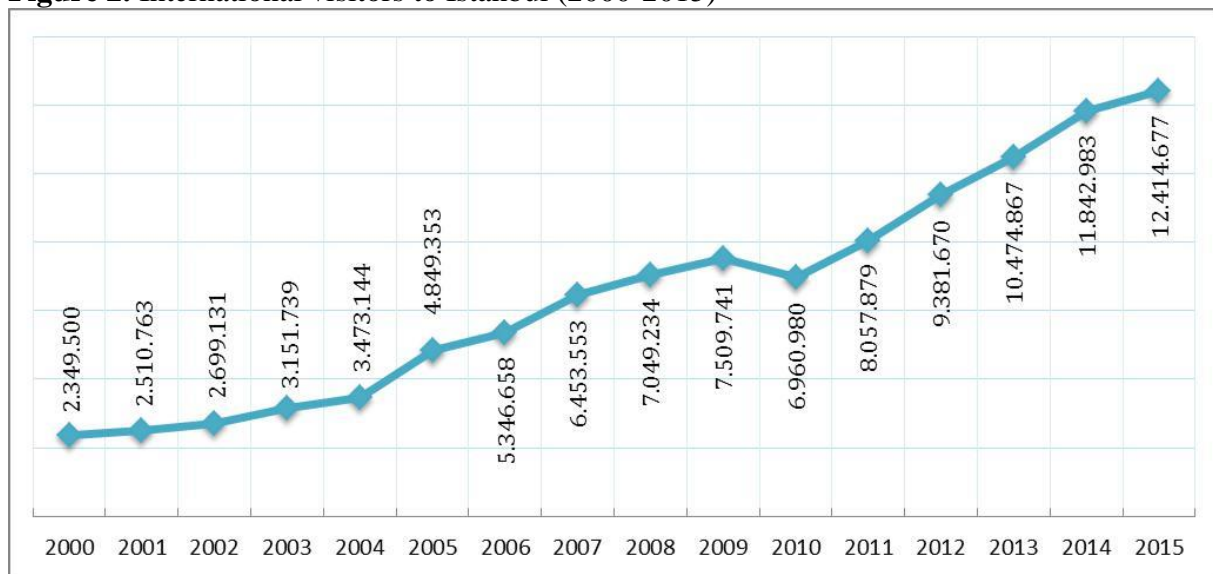
Theme 3: Tourism Demand

It is stated by participants that social changes and news about refugees may also have an effect on tourism demand for Istanbul. By keeping in mind the different types of tourist, the

impacts of the refugees on tourism demand for Turkey may be analysed under a classification since there are various types of effects mentioned by participants. In this context, in terms of evaluating foreign tourist demand effects, the participants mostly claimed that there would not be quantitative decrease in the long or midterm owing to cheap price policy which provide competitive advantage to Turkey among tourism destinations in Mediterranean Region (Tosun, 1997). As can be seen from Figure 2., there is no quantitative decrease in numbers of inbound tourists.

Participants also mentioned that there is a media hype in European Union (EU). Most of the journals tarred Turkey and Arabic countries with the same brush. Turkey is defined as dangerous zone because of geographical proximity to hot spot and having open door policy to refugees. However, it is specified by most participants that there is and will not be a reduction on tourist numbers coming from EU countries thanks to being accessible, familiar, quality but cheap tourism product. However, it is also estimated by P5 that there will be a short term decrease in some types of tourism demand which consist of a minority of people who are wealthy, well-educated, and people who like cultural tours and alternative tourism types (Fielding & Shortland, 2011). Nevertheless, if such official statements or direct interventions continue which imply Turkey as a safety-critical chaotic case, there might be a decrease in the number of package tours such as the cancelled package tours from Russia (MacFarquhar, 2015).

Figure 2. International visitors to Istanbul (2000-2015)



Source: Istanbul Culture and Tourism Office (2016)

However, P6 claimed that existence of refugees will not affect the tourism demand for Istanbul since these types of human movements could have occurred anywhere in the world specifically in recent years. This statements also can be summarized with the words of another participant. In this sense, P7 pointed out that the tourists became apathetic to conflicts. By quoting him;

“In Tel Aviv, despite the fact that the bombs explode, tourists still go to beaches...”

Lastly, it is also voiced by some participants that some countries’ hospitality industry affected from AS positively since tourists prefer travelling to safer places such as Malaysia (AlBattat et al., 2013). In the same manner with Malaysia, Turkey can be one of the winners of this process. As for domestic tourism demand, it is stated by P5 that number of visits can decrease in some tourism destinations such as Gaziantep, Hatay and Mersin which are close to hot spot.

In brief, none of the participants mentioned any possible drop in foreign and domestic tourism demand for Istanbul.

Theme 4: Social Conflict

One of the most important stakeholder of tourism industry is local residents who live in the destination (Swarbrooke, 1999). Thus, by interpretation of participants' opinions, there might be some crucial effects of refugees on local residents. It is already known that even if people who share a common culture can have conflicts due to different personalities and education levels. In this sense, all of the participants claimed that conflicts will be inevitable between locals and refugees unless refugee flow stops.

P4 stated that due to the common ground in the religious values, acceptance and tolerance of locals are high. However, most of the participants stated that even if locals show hospitality to refugees, the tolerance of the locals may have been lowered as a result of the events that has brought dissatisfaction. According to the report which is gathered by collaboration of Center For Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) and The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), the social problems between locals and refugees are listed as polygamy, abuse of children and women, social, ethnical and sectarian polarization, growing drug and woman trafficking, urban sprawl, child labour, demographic change and insecurity due to growing refugee population (Gwadz et al., 2009; Orhan & Gundogar, 2015).

Depending on the participants' opinions, it is concluded that the effects of RC can be witnessed as social conflicts particularly stemming from illegal employment of the refugees instead of locals, aggressive attitudes of refugees, illegal use of electricity, etc. and it is feared that these problems will intensify in the long term. In this context, it is also stated that refugees may often be misidentified as tourists because of their foreign language and culture. It is interpreted by P5 that if undesirable events continue to take place in their lives, local residents may reflect similar hostile attitudes that they have shown against refugees towards any tourist as defined by Doxey's (1975) irritation index.

Theme 5: Tourist Experience

Perhaps, creating memorable tourist experience is pivotal for sustainability of tourism activities in a destination. In a similar manner, offering quality tourist experience makes more contribution to the companies than service characteristic and product features and leads to competitive advantage (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016). However, offering tourist experience is relatively a harder task than improving physical quality of services because of its emotional structure. If experience conflicts with expectations of tourist, dissatisfaction will be inevitable. In this sense, participants mentioned that possible undesired interactions between refugees and tourists can cause sense of stress.

It is thought that dividing these possible effects into two parts on the basis of refugees living conditions can be reasonable since these types of social interactions are uncontrollable and may occur in various forms. In this sense, there seems two groups of refugees as the rich and the poor though it is very difficult to distinguish them statistically. However, there may be some clues based on participants' observations. As stated by participants, refugees generally are not allowed to buy or rent a proper house due to the legislation, attitudes of landlords and other similar reasons even if they have purchasing power. For this reason, except for the poor ones staying in refugee camps, streets, parks, slums and elsewhere, some refugees (i.e. economic migrants) can afford to stay in hotels permanently. Naturally, refugees staying at hotels share the same ambience with tourists. In the context of this situation, P5 who has notable publications related to tourist experience pointed out that refugee families are generally crowded and have different habits and life styles than tourists coming from West

since refugees are not in holiday mood. Hence, they may disturb the tourists for various reasons which could be anything from refugees' life style to habits such as unusual way of dressing, polygamy etc. which do not meet the general expectations of Western tourists.

Furthermore, as it is discussed above, poor refugees can have an influence over experiences of tourist in a different way. Observations gained from the majority of participants indicate that some refugees panhandle particularly in the most attractive tourism spots to get money or food since some of them suffer from meeting their felt-needs. In line with this, these refugees can be considered as thieves by tourists due to their views even if they are not. This perception can naturally lead tourists to have a feeling of insecurity which is undesired and damaging the image of the destination.

There is another possible effect taking its source from both groups. Above discussion confirms that some refugees either have small businesses in touristic places or work in locally owned businesses. As was intimated, there is an increasing number of Arabic tourists that travel to Istanbul. The main motivations of most tourists are to escape from daily routine or get to know a new culture, facing with Arabic businesses and Arabic staff during their travels can displease those Arab tourists. In other words, they may feel themselves at their hometown rather than travelling abroad.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the effects of RC on tourism industry in Istanbul based on the observations of participants and literature review. However, attacks and threats of terrorist organizations and political conflicts between countries that emerged in Post-Arab Spring period are also referenced as needed alongside RC in order to clarify the matter. Very clearly, both literature review and empirical findings of the study are inadequate to measure the impacts of RC on tourism industry in Istanbul for some reasons. Firstly, written materials, statistics and other sources are limited since RC is a recent issue. Secondly, the empirical findings of the study only reflect the observation of participants in Istanbul. In this circumstances, it seems impossible to make definitive conclusions. For this reason, comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis should be made in Istanbul and elsewhere such as smaller coastal and inland cities. However, it should be noted that unsettled issues in Middle East perhaps render the findings of study meaningless. By keeping in mind the aforementioned limitations, some conclusions can be made.

The paper has five main findings and none of them asserts any serious effect on tourism industry in Turkey, at least in the context of Istanbul. Firstly, as can be seen from Figure 2. tourism demand for Istanbul has continued to increase. Indeed, it is a very difficult task to measure the effects of RC on tourism demand. Nevertheless, based on the participants' opinions, it can clearly be stated that RC is not affected tourism demand for Istanbul in a negative way and there is no evidence that confute the statements of participants. Secondly, by the same token, none of the participants pointed out any possible drop in tourism investment. Although no specific data is found to confirm the observation of participants, it may be said that capital flow from Middle East has made positive contribution to the tourism industry in Istanbul particularly in the context of small-scale tourism businesses. That is to say, tourism investments and tourism demand for Istanbul are not affected negatively in general.

In the contrary to above discussion, other findings of the study mentioned some negative effects of refugees on tourism industry. One of that finding is about the employment of refugees instead of local people in tourism businesses. In this sense, one side of this finding reveals that the 3D job opportunities in the tourism industry facilitate and contribute to the integration of refugees. However, other side indicates that illegal employment of refugees in

tourism businesses influence the dissatisfaction of citizens. Indeed, the factor that increasing local dissatisfaction is not limited with the employment of refugees. As intimated before, the problems may range from illegal electricity usage to overcrowding in public transportation. In a similar vein, it is also pointed out by some participants that behaviours of refugees can also increase the discontentment of tourists. In this regard, it may be said that there is no evidence that identified refugees as the source of dissatisfaction since both locals and tourists show hospitality and tolerance to refugees.

Based on the above argument, it can be said that the most important effect of refugees on tourism industry is the illegal employment of them. Turkey perhaps have few main choices. First, to develop socio-economic plans and make regulations. For instance, employment of refugees with work permit can be allowed by government. This way integration of refugees to the social and working life can be fostered, but this can probably sustain the dissatisfaction of locals since applying this choice necessitates considerable financial supports and will probably increase the rate of unemployment. Hence, there is a considerable number of refugees and Turkey has already spent more than US\$ 8 billion on refugees (Aiyar et al., 2016). That is to say, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to solve this problem with the internal dynamics of Turkey. In this regard, it is obvious that financial support of international donor agencies and developed countries are needed. However, both donor agencies and developed countries remained reluctant to aid refugees from the beginning of RC until now. Nevertheless, it seems unrealistic to eradicate the overall effects of refugees on tourism industry unless the number of refugees decreases.

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The Relationship Between Hotel Brand Personality And Customer Loyalty

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty in the five-star business hotel and propose an effective way for developing a remarkable hotel brand and improving its customer loyalty. The reason for choosing a particular hotel is that it is a member of a famous international hotel chain with a well-known brand name. According to the literature, business hotels usually have stronger brand names comparing to leisure hotels. Literature review of the problem is presented along with a conceptual framework of brand personality and customer loyalty adopted for hotel industry. Using the data collected from a 5-star business hotel guests, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted in order to measure the impact of brand personality on customer loyalty. Although brand personality dimensions were similar with Aaker's (1997) dimensions, "competence" dimension was switched with an "up-to-date" dimension in this new scale. As a result, brand personality has a positive effect on customer loyalty in this study. However, brand personality dimensions cannot be fully implemented and some dimensions are not appropriate for tourism industry. It is suggested that tourism marketing managers should be more focused on features of tourism while creating touristic brand personality.

Keywords: Brand Personality, Customer Loyalty, Hotel Brand, Hospitality.

Introduction

Turkey ranks as the sixth most popular tourist destination in the world, according to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (UNWTO, 2016). Turkey is currently attracting more than 30 million tourists annually and continuing to show positive growth every year. Foreign travelers arriving in Turkey in 2014 was 39.8 million, up to 5 percent compared to 2013 (UNWTO, 2016) This number is expected to increase, as the Turkish Ministry of Culture & Tourism has set an annual target of 50 million tourists and revenues of \$50 billion by 2023 (Horwath HTL, 2015).

The purpose of this study is thus to explore the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty in the five-star business hotel to propose an effective way to develop a remarkable hotel brand and customer loyalty. The study was conducted in one of well-known old city hotels in Istanbul. A survey was distributed during hotel guests'

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check-ins starting from March to May 2016. After eliminating the unusable responses, 110 responses were coded for data analysis.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The Conceptual framework of brand personality and customer loyalty is developed from general and hotel industry perspective. Discussion of the findings and limitations of the study is presented in conclusion part.

Brand Personality

In the past twenty-five years, the values of branding become an essential component of marketing strategy in the hotel industry (Zhou, Brown, & Dev, 2009). Guest's value provided by brands and hotel companies stimulates hotel branding because it fosters brand loyalty. With its set of promises to consumers, brand differentiates hotels identity where the functional characteristics of the products are not differentiated for the most part. Hotel guests also rely on brand names in order to reduce risks that arise while staying at an otherwise unknown property (O'Neill and Xiao, 2006). Because of that, brand personality may be the main reason for selecting one brand over another (Siguaw, Mattila, & Austin, 1999).

The American Marketing Association describe the term of the brand as a "name, term, symbol, or design, intended to identify the goods and services of the seller and to differentiate them from other competitors" (<http://www.marketing-dictionary.org/ama>, 2015). In addition, the concept of brand has been represented as a useful tool for both the supply and demand sides in the marketplace. For example, according to the hotels, brands are used to take a competitive advantage and consumers usually rely on brands to make purchase decisions (Huang and Cai, 2014).

Hence the notion of brand personality has been described as "a set of human characteristics associated with a brand". Personality traits are associated with person's behavior, physical attributes, attitudes, beliefs, and demographic characteristics. Brand personality traits are derived from any kind of communication between the brand and the consumer (Aaker J. L., 1997; Klipfel, Barclay, & Bockorny, 2014). At this point, the differences between the base of human being and brand personality are clearly seen.

Aaker (1997) describes brand personality as associations in consumer's subconscious level. These associations are created by two aspects: rational brand image and perception of the typical consumer. From Aaker's point of view, brand personality is derived from three sources: brand associations perceived by consumers, the image of the company that produces the brand (corporate image) and product attributes (Seimiene, 2012). As a result, the factors combined are the reason why consumers tend to compare different brands with human beings.

In the Aaker's research, participants were asked to rate personality attributes seen in commercial brands using a Likert's scale. The analyses showed that consumers perceive brands through five personality dimensions (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001):

1. Sincerity (domestic, honest, genuine, and cheerful...)
2. Excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date...)
3. Competence (reliable, responsible, dependable, efficient...)
4. Sophistication (glamorous, pretentious, charming, romantic...)
5. Ruggedness (tough, strong, outdoorsy, rugged...)

Depending on this description and dimensions, various studies were conducted upon this basis. Researchers examined brand personality dimensions across different cultures

(Aaker, et al., 2001; Murase and Bojanic, 2004; Matzler, et al., 2015) and countries (Kurtulus, 2008). Several studies investigated the impact of brand personality and brand image on consumers' purchase decision-making process (Ozgun, 2010), the relationships among brand experience, brand personality and customer experiential value (Keng, Tran, & Thi, Relationships among Brand Experience, Brand Personality And Customer Experiential Value, 2013).

Brand personality scale developed by J. Aaker has been used in many studies. However, it has been criticized, too. The main criticism is questioning whether the brand personality scale really measures brand personality.

Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) argue that the concept of Aaker's brand personality is not defined properly. That is why brand personality scales, in fact, do not measure brand personality but merge altogether a number of dimensions of a brand identity. Therefore, according to them, "personality" and other concepts such as "self" are taken from psychology and adaptation of these concepts in marketing is needed. They suggest that the concept of brand personality should be described as a unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands. The other criticism concerns the non-generalizability of the factor structure for analyses at the respondent level (Seimiene, 2012; Geuens, Weijters, & Wulf, 2009).

Hotel brand personality

In the marketing literature, there is a discussion whether the principles of branding within goods marketing could be applied to hotels and restaurants where the service is a dominant issue (Nam, Ekici, & Whyatt, 2011). However, tourism literature consists of many studies exploring branding concepts for hotels, restaurants, destinations etc. Some of them are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Brand personality in tourism destinations was applied by Pereira et al. (2015), Hosany et al. (2007), Ekinci et al. (2006; 2007), Henderson (2007), Prayag (2007), Yuksel and Bilim (2009), Murphy et al. (2007), Crockett and Wood (1999), Cai (2002). Cai proposed one of the first conceptual destinations branding models. Hosany et al. (2007) tried to fill the gap between brand image and brand personality in the context of tourism destinations. According to their results, both concepts are related.

Brand personality in restaurants was applied by Austin et al. (2003), Kim et al. (2011), Siguaw et al. (1999). Murase et al. (2004) examined the differences in perceptions of brand personalities of three quick-service restaurants' across U.S. and Japan. According to the findings, little cultural differences in the perception of brand personalities of three brands were shown, but significant differences across brands appeared.

Lee and Back (2010) made a remarkable contribution to the applicability of brand personality in the lodging industry. Their research was only concentrated on upper upscale hotel brand and cannot be generalized to other hotel sectors. To further the knowledge of brand personality in other segments of a hotel industry, researchers tried to find the applicability of brand personality in the economy hotel field. They also searched whether hotel personality can differentiate between similar hotel brands (Xiangping, Li, Yen, & Uysal, 2014). Only two brand personality dimensions (competence and sophistication) arose in this study.

A hotel brand that has a set of promises to hotel guests and reflects their desires using its brand personality can have a critical result. Since the functional characteristics of a hotel have become less of a factor, consumers started to evaluate hotel performance based more on hotel brand quality.

In one study Tran et al. (2013) tried to explore the relationship between brand personality and brand quality in the hotel business in order to propose the most effective way of a hotel brand value and loyalty development.

Hsu (2014) examined the perceived brand performance of foreign and domestic luxury hotel brands among Chinese domestic consumers. Findings showed that Chinese domestic consumers do not differ in their rating and satisfaction between foreign and domestic luxury hotel brands.

Sun et al. (2014) studied the brands of China youth hostels for the international travel market. The findings showed that the congruity of consumers' self-image and brand personality correlate positively with their intention to choose a youth hostel brand in China.

All these studies show that hospitality and tourism studies have made attempts to apply brand personality concept. For all that, more efforts are seen in tourism destinations and restaurants and little research is found exploring the applicability of brand personality in the lodging industry (Xiangping, Li, Yen, & Uysal, 2014).

Customer loyalty

The concept of loyalty is a multidimensional notion and there are many definitions in the literature (Soderlund, 2002). Generally, loyalty has been and continues to be defined as a deeply held commitment to buy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver R. , 1997). Jacoby and Chesnut (1978) noted that as a result of an evaluative decision-making process, customer loyalty is the behavioral outcome of a customer's choice for a particular brand from a preference of similar brands, over a period of time (McMullan and Gilmore, 2003).

Oliver in 1997 came with a new theory on customer's loyalty. Oliver defined loyalty as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that have the potential to cause switching behavior. According to him, loyalty is a learning process that highlights the relationship between attitude and behaviour. He observed that loyalty would be developed in three stages. "Loyalty is first in a cognitive sense, later in an affective sense and still later in a conative manner". These three stages are always associated with the definitions of attitude. Many studies conducted all over the world has proved that attitude should be divided into three classes such as cognition, affect and conation which can be otherwise called as behavioral intention (S.Suranya & Murale, 2007).

Griffin (1995) categorized customer loyalty into four types: frequently repeated purchasing behavior, willingness to buy other products from the same supplier, a positive evaluation, and willingness to recommend. On the other hand, Jones and Sasser (1995) believed that there are three types of customer loyalty, such as re-buy willingness, basic behavior, and subsequent behavior.

As a quantitative measure, the concept of customer loyalty has been conceptualized from three main perspectives (a) behavioral, (b) attitudinal, and (c) compound considered as a combination of the first two perspectives (McMullan, 2005). Behavioral loyalty is related to consumer's tendency to re-purchase of product or service from the same provider that is measured and directly affects brand sales (Haghighi, Baum, & Shafti, 2014; Hammond, East, & Ehrenberg, 1996). Attitudinal loyalty is the customer's predisposition toward a brand, which is a function of psychological processes (Jacob and Chestnut, 1978). The attitudinal perspective of loyalty is the keen, internal,

emotional, liking of a specific brand (Hochgraeffe, Faulk, & Vieregge, 2012). Much of the previous loyalty research has investigated attitudinal dimension of loyalty (Li and Petrick, 2008; Morais, et al., 2004; La and Yi, 2004). The measurement limitations of behavioral loyalty is obvious, where dimensions simply measure behavioral variables to predict the customer's frequency of purchase and level of cross-buying (Kim, Vogt, & Knutson, 2015). Moreover, Uncles et al. (2003) pointed out that separation of behavioral and attitudinal conceptualizations of loyalty is not convincing. Chen et al.'s (2009) research which is based on the retail industry showed that customers' outcome and environmental quality perceptions can highly influence attitudinal loyalty which in turn leads to higher behavioral loyalty (Haghighi, Baum, & Shafti, 2014).

By adding fourth *action* phase Oliver (1997) developed a four-phase model of customer loyalty development process based on these four dimensions: (a) cognitive loyalty, (b) affective loyalty, (c) conative loyalty, and (d) action loyalty.

Cognitive loyalty as the weakest state of loyalty is based on costs and benefits of a product but is not based on the brand itself. It is the weakest type of loyalty because it consists of costs and benefits of an offering and do not cover the brand itself (Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006). Therefore, consumers are likely to switch when they perceive alternative offerings being superior with a respect to the cost-benefit ratio (Kim, Vogt, & Knutson, 2015).

The second phase is *affective loyalty*, which involves both the liking of the product and experiencing satisfaction with the brand. Affective loyalty is also a subject to deterioration. The deterioration is primarily caused by an increased attractiveness of competitive offerings (Sambandam and Lord, 1995) and is believed to occur through a matching of expectations and perceived performance (McMullan and Gilmore, 2003).

The third phase of loyalty development is *conative loyalty*, which is stronger than cognitive and affective loyalty as it contains what, at first, appears to be the deeply held commitment to buy noted in the loyalty definition (Oliver R. , 1999). At this phase of loyalty development, consumers continue to buy one company's product with their commitment to the company (Oliver, 1999; Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006).

The *action* phase is the last phase added by Oliver (1999) to existing models. According to Oliver (1999): "*Cognitive loyalty focuses on the brand's performance aspects, affective loyalty is directed toward the brand's likeableness, conative loyalty is experienced when the consumer focuses on want or buys the brand, and action loyalty is a commitment to the action of re-buying.*" (Oliver R. , 1999). When a consumer is actual loyal, his/her attitude is transformed into action (Kim, Vogt, & Knutson, 2015).

Although there are many antecedent factors affecting brand loyalty, it is hard to find a study that has examined the effects of all factors simultaneously (Ozer and Aydin, 2005). Some researchers (Guenzi and Pelloni, 2004; Zeithaml, et al., 1996; Parasuraman, et al., 1988) showed service quality as an antecedent of loyalty and found a positive relationship between customers' perceptions of service quality and their willingness to recommend the company (Haghighi, Baum, & Shafti, 2014). The interaction between customer and service provider as a significant driver of customer loyalty is a critical factor for service process understanding (Butcher, Sparks, & O'Callaghan, 2001).

Customer loyalty in hotel industry

For a longime, hospitality firms believed that the goal of marketing was to create more customers. While hotel industry believed it was crucial to fulfilling guests' needs while staying at the hotel, the main goal was to continue to find new customers (Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999). However, because of overpopulated markets, service providers

changed their marketing strategies from customer acquisition to customer loyalty in hospitality industries. They started loyalty programs that were related to getting and keeping customers. Studies have shown that 5% increase in customer loyalty produces a profit increase of 25% to 85% (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990).

Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) examined the economics of customer loyalty and applied them to the luxury hotel segment. Findings showed that loyal customers are less likely to ask about price when making a reservation. Loyal customers also purchased other hotel services more frequently at hotels which they feel loyalty and they are a great source of word-of-mouth advertising.

Getty and Thomson (1994) studied relationships between quality of lodging, satisfaction, and the resulting effect on customers' intentions to recommend the lodging. Research suggested a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer quality.

Mazanec (1995) examined customer satisfaction and customer preference (a dimension of customer loyalty) in luxury hotels. He found an image to be positively related to these two factors. This shows that a desirable image leads to customer satisfaction and customer preference.

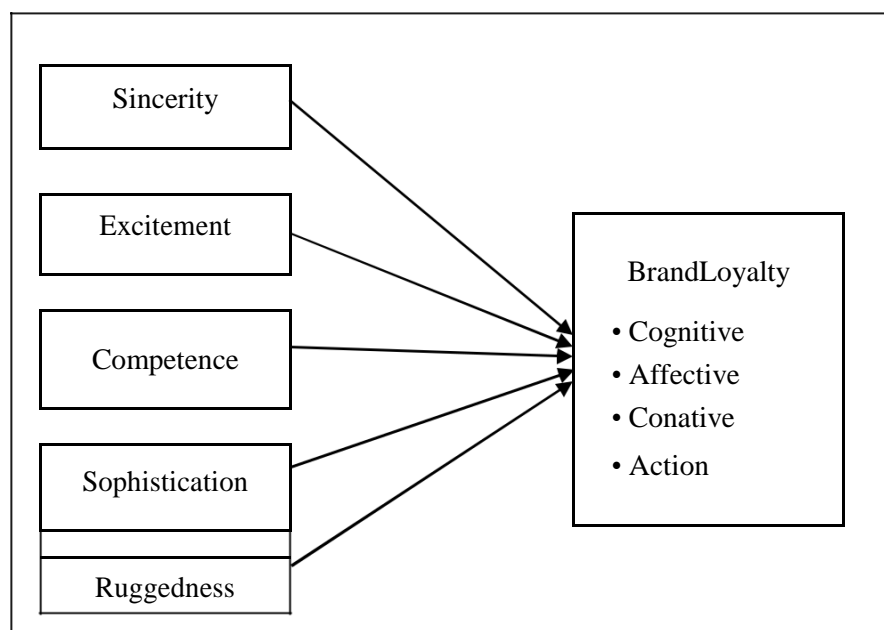
In their study, Kandampully and Suhartano (2000) examined the relationship between customer loyalty and the two prerequisites; customer satisfaction and image in the hotel industry. The research focused on hotel chains because customer loyalty is more important there than in individual hotels.

Research Model and Hypotheses

Our conceptual study points out the four phase cases of customer loyalty which are based on the theoretical findings of prior research in marketing literature. Brand personality and customer loyalty factors are widely used and accepted for investigating the relationship between customer perceptions and the use of products.

The research model is shown on Figure 1. The model suggests that a customer is likely to form favorable feelings towards a hotel brand, which is associated with humanized content. As a consequence, she/he may further establish self-brand connections with this hotel brand. In this case, we expect that if the customer perceives the brand to be sincere, competent, exciting, or sophisticated and rugged then she/he is more likely to become loyal to the brand.

Figure 1: Research model



The investigations carried out by Guo (2003) have shown that brand personality has an important impact on brand preference. Based on some researches (Jacoby, 1971; Bennett, 2001) brand loyalty results from multi-dimensional cognitive attitudes toward a particular brand and the repeated purchasing behavior. In order to understand cognitive loyalty accurately, items should reflect beliefs and opinions rather than feelings and intentions. Based on these findings it is hypothesized that (Figure 1):

H1. Hotel brand personality has an impact on cognitive loyalty.

In their work, Roustasekehravani et al. (2015) have suggested that brand personality has an impact on both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. The notable positive effects of retailer personality (or the personality characteristics) on the consumers' attitude towards the retailer have been examined by Ben Sliman et al. (2005) and Helgeson and Supphellen (2004). In addition, Baloglu (2002) pointed out the importance of emotional loyalty comparing to behavioral one. Based on these studies, it is hypothesized as (Figure 1):

H2. Hotel brand personality has an impact on affective loyalty.

Conative loyalty is defined as customer's deeply held commitment to buy from a certain brand (Oliver, 1999). Action loyalty is described as a commitment to the action of re-buying. As given definitions suggest, these two dimensions of loyalty are mostly related to the concept of behavioral loyalty.

Zentes et.al., (2008) examined the applicability and effect of brand personality on store loyalty in retail setting. According to their findings, brand personality has a direct effect on both attitudinal and behavioral store loyalty. Results revealed that brand personality as compared to attitudinal loyalty explains a much lower percentage of the variance in behavioral loyalty. Congruently, Morschett Dirk and Schramm-Klein (2008) have also shown that the retailer's brand personality can be used to adequately explain the attitudinal loyalty of consumers to the retail brand. Lin (2010) demonstrated that the positive relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty is not completely supported. While brand personality is expected to bring differentiation to customers and increase their preference (Fournier, 1998) and customer service preference is considered to be central to loyalty conceptualization (Gremler, Gwinner, & Brown, 2001) we expect that third and fourth view of loyalty which is based on the attitude - behavior relationship (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Dick and Basu, 1994) is influenced by brand personality. This leads to the next two research hypotheses (Figure 1):

H3. Hotel brand personality has an impact on conative loyalty.

H4. Hotel brand personality has an impact on action loyalty.

Little research has explored the applicability of brand personality in the hotel industry and no research was conducted in order to explore the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty in the hotel industry. The purpose of this study is thus to explore the relationship between brand personality and customer loyalty in a five-star business hotel to propose an effective way for developing a remarkable hotel brand and customer loyalty.

Methodology

Procedures

Research data were collected through written questionnaires that were administered to guests of a five-star business hotel in Istanbul. Hotel guests were considered to qualify as adequate customers of business hotel experience and therefore were approached for the questionnaire survey. A survey was distributed during hotel guests' check-ins starting from March to May 2016. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire regarding their hotel stays. Participation in the survey was voluntary. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed and 130 copies were returned, with an overall response rate of 72%. After eliminating the unusable responses, 110 responses were coded for data analysis.

Measurement

Dimensions of customer loyalty were measured utilizing the scales from two studies Back and Parks (2003) and Bobalca et al. (2012). Table 1 shows the items for measuring the dimensions of loyalty.

Table 1. Loyalty scales items

Items	Dimensions	Author(s)
This hotel provides me superior service quality as compared to any other hotel brands.	<i>Cognitive Loyalty</i>	(Back & Parks, 2003)
No other hotel brand performs better services than this hotel.		
I believe this hotel provides more benefits than other hotels in its category.		
I love staying at this hotel.	<i>Affective Loyalty</i>	(Back & Parks, 2003)
I feel better when I stay at this hotel.		
I like this hotel more so than other hotel brands.		
Even if another hotel brand is offering lower room rate, I still stay at this.	<i>Conative loyalty</i>	(Back & Parks, 2003)
I intend to continue staying at this hotel.		
I consider this hotel to be my first lodging choice.		
I recommend this brand those who ask my advice.	<i>Action Loyalty</i>	(Bobalca, Gatej, & Ciobanu, 2012)
I say positive things about this brand to other persons.		
Even if the other hotels are better, I don't think to stay any other.		

Based on the literature review, Aaker's (1997) scale was adapted for measuring hotel brand personality. In order to measure brand personality, respondents rated how descriptive the 42 traits were of the specific hotel brand used as stimuli in the questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale (1=not at all descriptive, 5 = extremely descriptive).

Findings

Sample Profile

The proportion of male participants is higher (88.2%) than female participants. The respondents' age range varies between 25-31, consisting 40.9 % of the sample. The participants' education level is fairly high, as 44.5% of participants are university graduates. A majority of the participants' monthly income (38.2%) is 500 Euro and below. Among the respondents, 59.1% of them are of Turkish nationality and the remaining belong to different countries. A majority of the respondents (66.4%) indicated that the purpose of their stay is a business-related trip, while 41.9% of them made the hotel choice decision by themselves. Whereas for 20.9% of the participants', hotel choice decision was made by the company they work for. The structure of the sample and sample size, as well as the sampling procedure, are clear limitations of the study that have to be considered when interpreting the results.

Construct validity: exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

The first step of the analysis was an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation. Principal component analysis is a widely used method among other types of factor analysis. The goal of the principal components analysis is to explain the maximum amount of variance with the fewest number of principal components. In order to explain the maximum amount of remaining variance, the second factor is calculated and method is continued in this way. In addition to this, the researcher should be sure that there is no correlation between factors. KMO sample adequacy test should be applied before the factor analysis because of the relevance of the data. KMO values between 0.8 and 1 indicate the adequate sampling (Kalaycı, 2014).

Construct validity of scale items and detailed information of this analysis were summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis for brand personality

	Factor Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
Sophistication			
Successful	0,725	47,33%	0,933
Corporate	0,680		
Upper Class	0,697		
Glamorous	0,752		
Good Looking	0,788		
Charming	0,804		
Outdoorsy	0,622		
Tough	0,661		
Sincerity			
Family-Oriented	0,781	9,89%	0,913
Small-Town	0,800		
Honest	0,793		
Sincere	0,844		
Real	0,816		
Wholesome	0,654		

Table continued on the next page

	Factor Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
Excitement			
Original	0,719	5,38%	0,916
Friendly	0,516		
Daring	0,602		
Exciting	0,710		
Spirited	0,632		
Imaginative	0,620		
Unique	0,707		
Ruggedness			
Feminine	0,612	4,53%	0,839
Masculine	0,742		
Western	0,681		
Rugged	0,633		
Cool	0,660		
Up-To-Date			
Up-To-Date	0,724	4,44%	0,84
Independent	0,470		
Contemporary	0,751		
Cumulative Variance Explained: 71,57%			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure Of Sampling Adequacy(MSA): ,902			

After performing exploratory factor analysis on the brand personality scale, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis coefficients and Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) values of each item were examined. Secondly, by deleting some of the items factor analysis was repeated again. The reason for this was that these items were reducing the reliability of the scale and had low MSA values. This process was repeated until alpha reliability coefficients and MSA values became consistent. At the end of the process, one item from sophistication; three items from sincerity; two items from excitement; seven items from competence dimensions were removed from the scale.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most popular factor for measuring reliability. A coefficient alpha calculates the average of all possible split-half measures that result from different ways of dividing the scale questions. The coefficient value can range from 0 to 1, and, in most cases, a value of less than 0.7 would typically indicate marginal to low (unsatisfactory) internal consistency (Hair et al., 2009). Reliability analysis of the scales used in this research was examined by Cronbach's alpha. The resulting Cronbach's alpha values were high for both the overall brand personality scale (.962) and for the five dimensions of the scale: Sophistication = .933 (8 items), sincerity = .913 (6 items), excitement = .916 (7 items), ruggedness = .839 (5 items), up to date = .840 (3 items). This indicates that each dimension of the brand personality scale is internally consistent and the items measure a common construct (see Table 3). The resulting Cronbach's alpha value was also high for brand loyalty (.949). According to Nakip (2013), alpha coefficients must exceed the minimum recommended standard for reliability of 0.7. Measures above 0.8 are very satisfactory.

Hotel Brand Personality Scale dimensions with the items obtained from our research were compared with Aaker's items and dimensions in Table 3.

Table 3. The comparison of the BP dimensions in this study and Aaker's

	Aaker's Findings	Research Findings	Aaker's Findings	Research Findings
Factor 1	Sophistication	Sophistication	Ruggedness	Ruggedness
	Upper Class	Upper Class	Rugged	Rugged
	Glamorous	Glamorous	Western	Western
	Good Looking	Good Looking	Masculine	Masculine
	Charming	Charming	Outdoorsy	Feminine
	Feminine	Successful	Tough	Cool
	Smooth*	Corporate		
		Outdoorsy		
		Tough		
Factor 2	Sincerity	Sincerity	Competence	Up-To-Date
	Family-Oriented	Family-Oriented	<i>Secure*</i>	Up-To-Date
	Small-Town	Small-Town	<i>Intelligent*</i>	Independent
	Honest	Honest	<i>Technical*</i>	Contemporary
	Sincere	Sincere	Successful	
	Real	Real	Corporate	
	Wholesome	Wholesome	Leader*	
	<i>Down-To-Earth*</i>		<i>Confident*</i>	
	<i>Cheerful*</i>		<i>Reliable*</i>	
	Original		<i>Hard Working*</i>	
	<i>Sentimental*</i>			
	Friendly			
Factor 3	Excitement	Excitement		
	Daring	Daring		
	<i>Trendy*</i>	Friendly		
	Exciting	Exciting		
	Spirited	Spirited		
	Cool	Original		
	<i>Young*</i>	Unique		
	Imaginative	Imaginative		
	Up-To-Date			
	Unique			
	Independent			
	Contemporary			

*removed from the scale.

The sophistication, ruggedness, excitement and sincerity factors were quite similar with the factor structure revealed in most of the previous studies (Li, Yen, & Uysal, 2014; Tran, Dauchez, & Szemik, 2013; Ferguson, Lau, & Phau, 2016). However, additional items such as corporate, outdoorsy and tough were added to the Aaker's (1997) dimension of sophistication findings. This can be explained by the different ways of perceiving the concept of sophistication. Moreover, the majority of the participants

(88%) were male. Different perception of sophistication could be influenced by this study limitation, too.

Different from the Aaker's (1997) study, the dimension of ruggedness consisted of items such as cool and feminine, in our study. According to Aaker (1997), the item 'feminine' is under sophistication dimension. The main difference from the other studies is that participants perceiving the hotel as being strong, at the same time can call it feminine. In other words, the perception of the hotel can be influenced by opposite characteristics.

Two brand personality dimensions, competence and sophistication were included in Lee and Back's (2010) previous study about the upper upscale business hotel industry. However, competence dimension was not included in our study. According to the results of reliability analysis, the items of the competence dimension did not have sufficient reliability values. Therefore these items were excluded out of the assessment. This could be explained by the lack of hotel competence perceived by the hotel guests. Remaining dimensions were used as the same as suggested by Aaker (1997).

The dimension of excitement matched up with the Aaker's (1997) findings. However, due to the distribution of factor loadings, items such as up-to-date, independent and contemporary were excluded from this dimension. A new dimension was formed by these items. According to this, items such as innovative and modern were separated from the item of enthusiasm. Furthermore, the up-to-date item emerged as a separate hotel brand personality dimension. The up-to-date dimension, named as a fifth factor, also emerged in Usakli and Baloglu's (2011) research.

Table 4 reports findings of factor analysis of the hotel's brand loyalty. Unlike previous studies, in our research uni-dimensional brand loyalty scale has emerged. With 65.59% total explanatory variance and ,949 reliability rate the scale came out extremely reliable. The reason why brand loyalty dimensions appeared to be different from previous literature can be explained that hotel customers had difficulties in distinguishing brand loyalty questions with a similar meaning. Thus, items in the scale loaded under one dimension.

Table 4. Factor analysis of hotel's brand loyalty

	Factor Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
This hotel provides me superior service quality as compared to any other hotel brands.	,771		
No other hotel brand performs better services than this hotel.	,668		
I believe this hotel provides more benefits than other hotels in its category.	,732		
I love staying at this hotel.	,841	65,59%	0,949
I feel better when I stay at this hotel.	,874		
I like this hotel more so than other hotel brands.	,849		
Even if another hotel brand is offering lower room rate, I still stay at this.	,839		
I intend to continue staying at this hotel.	,837		

Table continued on the next page

	Factor Loading	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
I consider this hotel to be my first lodging choice.	,876		
I recommend this brand those who ask my advice.	,818		
I say positive things about this brand to other persons.	,794	65,59%	0,949
Even if the other hotels are better, I don't think to stay any other.	,794		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: ,926			

Regression analysis

Using the regression analysis, the impact of brand personality dimensions on brand loyalty was tested. Regression analysis is a strong and responsive analysis modeling the relationship between a response variable and one or more predictor variables. Multiple regression analysis is a technique used for predicting the unknown value of two or more variables (predictors) (Malhotra, 2010).

In this study, multiple regression analysis was carried out using stepwise selection. Stepwise selection involves analysis at each step to determine the contribution of the predictor variable entered previously into the equation. It is possible to understand the contribution of the previous variables now that another variable has been added. If there is a variable which does not contribute to the model it can be removed. Thus, the model is described with the help of a minimum number of variables (Kalaycı, 2014).

The findings obtained from the regression analysis. Although all three regression models are statistically significant ($p < 0,05$), this study continued with model 3 ($p = 0,047$). Because the R-square value of Model 3 is highest. The third model as a final model includes excitement, sophistication and ruggedness as independent variables. R-square value is a measure of how well the variation of independent variable explains the variation of the dependent variables (Kalaycı, 2014). Accordingly, it can be described that 66% of dependent variables were explained by dimensions of excitement, sophistication and ruggedness which were included in the regression model (R Square = 0,66).

Durbin –Watson statistics test has also a significant importance in this regression analysis table. As a measure of autocorrelation, the test statistic values in the range of 1.5 to 2.5 (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, DW statistics with 1,852 value showed there is no autocorrelation in this study. Variance analyses of three models were statistically significant.

Table 5. Coefficients of regression models

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t			
(Constant)	0,299	0,241		1,239	0,218		
F3_Excitemet	0,496	0,087	0,524	5,728	0,000	0,384	2,602
F1_Sophistication	0,211	0,097	0,196	2,178	0,032	0,398	2,513
F4_Ruggedness	0,166	0,083	0,168	2,013	0,047	0,459	2,178
Dependent Variable: F1_Loyalty							

As shown in Table 5, t-statistic values of each parameter were significant with 5% significance level. The size of beta coefficients of each independent variable in the final model emerged in this way: 0,524 for excitement, 0,196 for sophistication and 0,168 for ruggedness. Accordingly, the regression model is summarized as follows:

$$y = 0,299 + 0,496.F3 + 0,211.F1 + 0,166.F4$$

According to the regression model, excitement dimension of brand personality with a value of 0,524 was the most affective on brand loyalty (dependent variable).

The scatter diagrams and regression lines in the regression model were examined. According to the distributional assumptions for the regression model, the data in this research is normally distributed and linear.

Conclusion

Discussion and limitations

This study attempted to explore the impact of hotel brand personality on brand loyalty in tourism industry. The customers' perceptions of the hotel brand personality were revealed through a survey research. Although brand personality dimensions were similar with Aaker's (1997) dimensions, in our scale competence dimension was switched with an up-to-date dimension. The final scale model was influenced by some hotel customers' perceptions. The perception of the competent hotel was not significant, though contemporary and up-to-date hotel image was strong. This result matches with some previous studies in the marketing literature (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Lee and Back, 2010). Hultman et al. (2015) argued that Aaker's (1997) brand personality dimensions can not be fully implemented and some dimensions are not appropriate for tourism industry. Therefore, they suggested that tourism marketing managers should be focused on tourism while creating touristic brand personality.

To sum up, brand personality has a positive effect on brand loyalty in this study. These results show close similarity with some studies in the previous literature (Imrak, 2015; Karjaluoto, et al., 2015; Park and Chung, 2015; Nguyen and Thuy, 2016; Lada, et al., 2014).

As a result of multiple regression analysis, dimensions of excitement, sophistication and ruggedness were included in the regression model. Sincerity and up-to-date dimensions did not have statistically significant effect on brand loyalty and were not included in the model. While some of the personality dimensions had positive effects on brand loyalty, some of them did not have any statistically significant effect. Moreover, hotels creating a feeling of excitement, giving the impression of sophisticated, intellectual or strong and reliable place are also able to create a loyal customer. Therefore, it is very important to stand out from the crowd, to have a creative spirit and to pay attention to the emotional concepts such as being unique while creating a marketing strategy with attention being paid to customer loyalty in the accommodation business.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are some limitations in this study. The study was conducted using the data from one international chain hotel. In the future research, more brands could be investigated in order to compare different hotel brands customers' opinions. Secondly, a limited access to hotel management and the lack of its positive attitude towards scientific

research made it difficult to find a right place for our research. This difficulty reflects on our study's sample size with a number of only 110 respondents.

In this study, it is considered that marketing strategies related to brand personality issues are more often practiced by luxury hotels segment. However, brand personality can have a positive effect on lower hotels segment too. According to this, it is also possible to conduct similar studies for branded lower hotels segment.

Tourism is an essential part of the service industry. Therefore, the effect of service quality on brand personality should be taken into consideration. Moreover, the effects of tangible and intangible attributes associated with the brand image on brand personality and brand loyalty dimensions could be among other future research objectives.

More brands could be investigated in order to compare different hotel brands customers' opinions. This paper encourages hotel managers in developing a remarkable hotel brand by creating a strong hotel's brand personality combined with improved customer loyalty practices. It also fills the gap between the brand personality and customer loyalty in upper-scale hotel management research.

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Exploring Consumer Attitudes Towards Halal Products

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Abstract

Halal products are goods and services those Muslims are allowed to consume according to the Quran. Based on the literature, 'halal' concept has been spreading in different sectors such as tourism, food, entertainment and so on. In this environment, people try to consume in terms of their religious beliefs. In terms of Islamic perspective, the purpose of this study is to look at the tendency of local Muslim people in Kastamonu to halal products and determine the current position of them. The qualitative study findings showed: Local people in Kastamonu will continue to buy halal certified products, halal products are good for health and balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products need to be preserved.

Keywords: Halal Products, Tendency of Consumers, Islam.

Introduction

Consuming is an indispensable need for all people around the world. Dressing, using personal care products, cleaning equipment, having trips, staying in different accommodation establishments and food and drink are the main and common products and services. Many people try to spend effort in order to consume products and services healthy. These points are also mentioned in religions books. Qur'an is one of them. According to Qur'an, people have to consume everything in halal way.

There are many factors that affect consumers' purchasing decisions. One of them is religious belief which is signified as a cultural factor. In the studies related to marketing, it is justified that religion, one of the key cultural elements, has a strong impact on consumer behavior and buying conduct (Essoo and Dibb, 2004: 684; Soesilowati, 2011: 153). Consumers may not buy products or services because they are not appropriate in terms of their religious belief while consumers sometimes buy in accordance with their religious belief. At this point, 'halal product' concept engages as an effective component in terms of product preferences of consumers considering their religious belief (Kurtoglu and Cicek, 2013). Halal product is defined as an output which does not contain any forbidden element according to Islamic rules; prepared, processed, carried and stored in an area which is purified from those components; and which does not any connection directly with food that is prepared by not taking into account any rules (Ambali and Bakar, 2014: 5).

According to the book, 'The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam', written by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who is a worldwide respected person and the chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the locution "Halal" is described as follows: "That is consumable, Allah has permitted to consume that and there is not a restriction for the consumption of that. (Al-Qaradawi, 2013: 25). According to Islam, "Halal" means permitted; "Haram" means unpermitted for Muslims (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). In Islam, food and beverage are important elements of halal concept (Nasir and Pereira, 2008; Baran and Batman, 2015). Hence, Halal has a meaning which is 'allowable' as to Islamic teaching (Sharia law). Additionally, halal can be also evaluated as one of five movements that categorizes the morality of human action in Islam, others being Fard (mandatory), Mustahabb (proposed), Makruh (disliked), and Haram (forbidden) (Faruki, 1966). In respect to the Islamic view, the word "halal" in tourism

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is evaluated as above described points to any implementation or operation in tourism which is 'allowable' according to Islamic teaching (Battour and Ismail, 2016).

For halal product, there are also some crucial points except Islamic rules. Many different authorities can certify the product as halal. A lot of countries from different regions of the world, as well as primary food producers and exporters, attempt to capitalize upon the increasing potential of the world-embracing market for halal products and services. These countries do not only concentrate on the production and supply of halal products and services, but also halal certification. For instance, Turkey, Pakistan, Brunei and Bangladesh have been working on the improvement of halal certification procedures and brokers. Halal certification is not valid only for Muslim countries, but also countries like Thailand and Singapore have some developments and implementations on halal certification. Furthermore, some Muslim foundations, for example, IFANCA (Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America), are involved in halal certification, too (World Halal Forum, 2011). (Halal Certification.pdf). When it is looked at Turkey, GIMDES (Association for the Inspection and Certification of Food and Supplies) and TSE (Turkish Standardization Institute) play key roles in terms of halal certification.

The majority of local Muslim people in Kastamonu have a conservative view. Thus, the city might be considered as suitable to explore consumer attitudes towards halal products in this region. Besides, the concept "halal" and halal product have been defined by referring to different sources and literature has been reviewed. Some of the significant researches related to this topic have been explained. The researchers aimed to determine the tendency of consumers in Kastamonu to halal products and whether local people are interested to consume those products. This research will contribute to raise the awareness of local people against the halal products.

Literature Review

'Halal product' term contains any kind of goods or services that people can consume. Tourism, food, drink, cosmetics, cleaning materials can be shown as examples. With the rising number of Muslim vacationists, there will be a bigger demand for Halal/Muslim friendly products and services (Çetin and Dinçer, 2016; Arpacı and Batman, 2015). According to the study of Carboni et al. (2017) for Tunisia, it is significantly seen that Muslim consumers from the tourism sector and the academic field have certain demands. In this case, attracting Muslim tourists is regarded a decent business chance in an increasing number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Despite Tunisia is a Muslim-majority country, there is not any particular effort in order to attract more tourists and demand on halal products. This research shows that tourism operators are persistently more familiar with the deliberated goods in worldwide for Muslim consumers. The specified demands of this conservative group have been identified and this attitude for Muslim-oriented tourism has made a difference.

Another study shows that Bangladesh has great opportunities to enhance Islamic tourism, as this country has many natural beauties, Islamic heritage, cultural and archeological heritage, historic heritage which has potential tourism destinations. In this case, different establishments including Organization of Islamic Conference play a key role. The authors have approached to the issues on developing Islamic tourism in Bangladesh. Additionally, they have presented some measures to improve new tourism tendencies on accelerating economic development in Bangladesh (Fahim and Dooty, 2014).

Japan, as a country, started to improve its halal tourism business because of the demand from the Muslim market. Goods and services for Muslims began to spread remarkably. People and foundations are conscious of the implications of the huge compliance against Halal. That is why halal tourism is going to be one of the niche products for the tourism sector in Japan (Gakkai, 2016).

According to Samori et al. (2014), the businesses are taking consumers' tendency into account and halal food standard has been developing. This halal food standard in Malaysia changes all regulations related to food and beverages into a standard to be adhered to by producers and marketers. This standard gives a decent advantage to Malaysia in order to promote itself in universal area. Malaysian Government, as the leader of halal sector, has presented important ideas and plans to enhance and encourage participants in this sector. This standard gives quality guarantee in food and drinks for general users while the standard reveals the solutions for their doubt on food purchasing for the specific Muslim consumers. Thus both pure science and humanities concentrate on halal study in academic field, because both sciences have significant contributions on developing the halal industry (Samori et al., 2014).

Consumers' consideration on halal product has been examined and studied in Malaysia and Brunei by Dali et al. (2009). Comparing with non-halal certified products, the prices of these halal certificated goods have been investigated in order to understand whether the consumers find the goods expensive. At the end of research, consumers' evaluations on halal products have been gathered under 11 factors which are promotion, place, attractiveness and quality, halal certification, price, sample product, market demand, small and medium scaled producers, halal certification for Muslim companies, the differences between halal certified and non-halal certified products and clear work. In addition to that, it is seen that promotion, place, price, market demand, small and medium scaled producers and clear work factors play key role in terms of perceiving halal certified products as they are more expensive than non-halal certified products (Kurtoğlu and Cicek, 2013).

The current developments show that movements by Muslims to non-Muslim countries have been increasing rapidly. Thus, those countries needed to meet Muslims' needs based on ways of life and they began to enhance their capacities in order to cater according to their preferences. In a paper done by Halkias et al. (2014), it finds out the case of Italy, where there is a big action to present halal goods and even accommodation and facilities that cover the main tenets of Muslim belief.

A different research aimed to investigate the applicability of "Theory of Planned Behavior" so as to measure the intention of halal cosmetic products preferences of Malaysian consumers. In this study, it was found that subjective norms are positively associated with the intention and attitude of preferring halal cosmetic goods. Furthermore, it has been figured out that attitude has had a small influence on intention of preferring halal cosmetic products (Aziz et al, 2010). Wan-Hassan and Awang (2009) looked into administrative and promotional works on halal food of the restaurants operated in New Zeland. Consequently, the results demonstrated that the majority of restaurants mentioned that Muslim tourist market is not important for them. Furthermore, those restaurants are unwilling to promote halal products and those food and beverage businesses do not want to put any sign in this direction just out of the places.

Hacıoğlu et al. (2015) examined domestic tourists' attitudes towards halal thermal hotels in Afyon. The results show that domestic tourists who prefer halal thermal hotels have positive attitude. According to the research, those kind of tourists attach importance to food and beverage with priority. Most of resorts use pork in food that is why Muslim tourists prefer those enterprises which offer halal certified products (Hacıoğlu et al., 2015).

Research Methodology

The researchers began to study this topic by asking "How is the tendency of people in Kastamonu to halal products?"

The purpose of this study is to look at the tendency of local people in Kastamonu to halal products and determine the current position of them. A purpose of a study is a kind of findings that will able to be found by the end of a research (Kucuk, 2014: 105). This study is important on behalf of seeing the tendency in Kastamonu and stepping forward at that topic.

Population and sample

Local people live in Kastamonu formed the population of study. In this population, the authors have decided to the sample. Convenience sampling, one of the non-probability sampling methods, has been implemented in the research. In convenience sampling method, which is also known accidental or appropriate sampling, researcher tries to collect data from the easiest and reachable subjects up to reaching the large sample size needed for the study (Gurbuz and Sahin, 2015).

Measurement tool

The data has been collected by questionnaire technique which is one of quantitative data collection methods. When the authors prepared the scale, they have benefited from a research named, "A study on the Preferences of Consumers of Halal-Certified Products: A Case Study of Istanbul" by Ozdemir et al. (2014). It is understood from the reliability test, this measuring tool is reliable to use it.

Data collection

The authors have handed out 340 questionnaires by drop-collect method to the people who live in apartments in Kastamonu city center. 1 week later, the surveys have been collected by the authors, but 15 of them were invalid. Therefore 325 surveys have been taken into account for this study.

Research Findings

The questionnaire has been implemented to 325 respondents by drop and collect technique. The majority of these respondents "325 participants" are cooks, farmers, retired, waiters, state officers, students and drivers.

According to the results, socio-demographic features and tendency of consumers to halal products are seen in the following table.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Variants	Distribution	n	%
Gender	Male	222	68,3
	Female	103	31,7
	Total	325	100,0
Age	18-24	150	46,2
	25-39	98	30,2
	40-49	42	12,9
	50-64	31	9,5
	65+	3	0,9
	Missing	1	0,3
	Total	325	100,0
Marital Status	Single	189	58,2
	Married	132	40,6
	Missing	4	1,2
	Total	325	100,0

Table continued on the next page

Education Degree	Uneducated	4	1,2
	Literate	12	3,7
	Primary education	94	28,9
	High school	80	24,6
	Associate degree	33	10,2
	Undergraduate	68	20,9
	Master	24	7,4
	Doctorate	3	0,9
	Other	4	1,2
	Missing	3	0,9
Total	325	100,0	
Monthly Income (TL: Turkish Liras)	Less than 1000 TL	109	33,5
	1001-2000 TL	98	30,2
	2001-3000 TL	66	20,3
	3001-4000 TL	37	11,4
	4001 and over	14	4,3
	Missing	1	0,3
	Total	325	100,0

It is clear from the above table that 325 respondents joined to this survey and males were the majority with the number of 222 (68,3%), while female respondents were 103 (31,7%). When it is looked at the ages in Table 1; 18-24 age group has constituted the biggest part of respondents with 150 (46,2%) while only 3 (0,9%) people were 65 or over years old with the minimum number. Table 1 also shows that 189 (58,2%) of respondents were single while 132 (40,6%) of them were married. In the education part of research, there are many different degrees. For example, 94 (28,9%) respondents are 'primary education' graduates while 3 (0,9%) respondents have 'doctorate' degree. Different monthly incomes of respondents can be seen in Table 1 above, too. The participants who have 'less than 1000 TL' monthly income is dramatically high with the number of 109 (33,5%). The participants have '4001 and over' monthly income occur the minority with the number of 14 (4,3%).

Table 2: Using Halal Certified Product

No	Halal Certified Product Used	Frequency	Percent
1	Personal care products	16	4,9
2	Food	167	51,4
3	Cleaning equipment	16	4,9
4	Personal care products and food	35	10,8
5	Personal care products and cleaning equipment	3	0,9
6	Food and cleaning equipment	25	7,7
7	Personal care products, food and cleaning equipment	59	18,2
	Missing	4	1,2
	Total	325	100,0

It has been also asked whether the respondents use the halal certified products. The question was "What kind of products group that have halal certification do you use? (You can mark more than one option). According to the answers, 167 (51,4%) of total respondents have showed that they consume 'halal food'. 16 (4,9%) respondents mentioned that they use halal certified 'personal care products' while the same number had been formed for 'cleaning equipment with the number of 16 (4,9%). 59 (18,2%) people agreed that they use halal certified 'personal care

products, food and cleaning equipment' while only 3 (0,9%) respondents emphasized that they use halal certified 'personal care products and cleaning equipment'. The answers of 4 (1,2%) respondents were invalid. They have been mentioned in Table 2 as missing answers.

Table 3: Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0,923	0,925	19

'Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products' part of the survey which is formed by 19 expressions has been tested in order to see whether it is reliable and it seemed that the scale is reliable with the number of 0,923.

Table 4: Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products

No	Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products	Numbers of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Consuming halal certified products is beneficial for health.	324	4,12	1,199
2	I am going to continue to buy halal certified products.	324	4,13	1,121
3	Halal certified products always satisfy consumers' expectations.	322	3,67	1,261
4	Advertisements of halal certified products lead me to buy them.	319	3,60	1,307
5	If the product I will buy has halal certified, it becomes one of the reasons affects my purchase choice.	324	3,91	1,172
6	Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved.	323	4,09	1,071
7	Even halal certified products cannot be found in the city that I live in; I buy them by online shopping.	319	3,26	1,259
8	I suggest to my friends and surroundings the halal certified products that I buy, too.	323	3,96	1,125
9	I want to pay more to the halal certified products.	320	3,43	1,328
10	I want to take a long haul in order to buy halal certified products.	321	3,44	1,293
11	Buying halal certified products gives warm-and-fuzzy to me.	321	3,94	1,156
12	Halal certified products are more proper for palatal delight.	319	3,92	1,061
13	I also care to packaging while I buy halal certified products.	322	3,91	1,155
14	The brand of halal products is important.	324	3,99	1,148

Table continued on the next page

15	I prefer to buy halal certified products after I try the sample one.	314	3,87	1,183
16	It is difficult to find halal certified products.	321	3,36	1,315
17	I take care to use the halal certified cleaning equipment.	323	3,50	1,291
18	It is important for me to buy halal certified products.	321	4,08	1,020
19	I think, nutritive value of halal certified products are higher than others.	323	3,80	1,148

(1: Totally Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Totally Agree)

In the last part of survey, tendency of consumers in Kastamonu to halal products has been tried to determine by 19 expressions. Those statements have measured how far local people in Kastamonu are enthusiastic to consume halal certified products based on a five point Likert scale. Although the number of respondents answered this questions change, it can be still said that almost all of respondents expressed their ideas to the statements. The number of respondents replied to the expressions can be seen in Table 4.

As can be seen from Table 4; according to answers by given 324 respondents, they emphasized that they will continue to buy halal certified products with highest average which is 4,13 with 1,121 standard deviation. Following this, 324 respondents believe that halal certified products are good for health with 4,12 with 1,199 standard deviation Apart from those, 'Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved' and 'It is important for me to buy halal certified products' expressions also have high mean average with 4,09 and 1,071 standard deviation (323 respondents), 4,08 and 1,020 standard deviation (321 respondents).

When it is looked at the minimum averages of expressions; according to the opinions given by 319 respondents, people are not willing to buy halal certified products by online shopping if they do not find in the city they live in. The mean of this expression was 3,26 with 1,259 standard deviation which is between 'Neutral' and 'Agree'. Additionally, 321 respondents have given ideas to 'It is difficult to find halal certified products' with the average of 3,36 and 1,315 standard deviation.

There can be also seen that there are some differences among standard deviations of expressions. The highest standard deviations are 1,328 (I am willing to pay more to the halal certified products), 1,315 (It is difficult to find halal certified products) and 1,307 (Advertisements of halal certified products lead me to buy them) which means that significant differences can be seen between answers for each expression given by respondents. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviations are 1,020 (It is important for me to buy halal certified products), 1,061 (Halal certified products are more proper for palatal delight) and 1,071 (Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved) which means that minor alterations can be found among responses given by participants.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The world presents more and more options and opportunities to the people. People can easily reach to many things in different sectors. At this point, humanity may forget health condition. Halal products are the good examples of health. Every detail about human health had been thought in Qur'an. As it is known, halal term comes from the book.

In this study, majority of the respondents have mentioned that they want to consume halal products. For the sake of example, most of respondents emphasized that they will continue to buy halal products and they think that halal products are good for health. Besides, respondents agreed that there should be a balance between affordable price and good quality. When the issue

is addressed in this way, it can be said that local Muslim people in Kastamonu do not avoid from the necessary cost in order to consume halal products.

This research should be considered within the constraints like all other researches. The scale has been implemented only to the residents in apartments. People who stay in other kind of houses remain out of the research. In addition, due to economic and time constraints, the research was limited to 340 respondents. It is suggested that researchers who are interested in halal products can study similar topics. Same scale might be implemented in another cities and those results can be compared in order to see the differences between communities. Apart from those, the scale also can be developed and it can only focus on halal cosmetics, halal transportation or halal travel agency etc. So every category can be better understood.

As a new trend, halal products may include lots of things such as food, hotel, cleaning equipment, personal care products etc. For determining the consumers' tendency, the authors of this research have done the study by implementing questionnaire in Kastamonu. According to the results, as it had been already mentioned in research findings part, there are some important points regarding the tendency of consumers. For instance, halal certified products have been mentioned as a benefit for health with a high average of agreement. Willingness of continuing to buy halal certified products also has been emphasized by respondents. Furthermore, most of the respondents agreed that buying halal certified products is important for them.

According to expressions that participants answered in Table 4, people live in Kastamonu have a high tendency of consuming halal certified products. In the light of this information, those recommendations might be given:

- Promotions about halal products in order to raise the awareness,
- Promotional campaigns in accordance with different cultural preferences,
- Benefits of using halal products can be transmitted by brochures,
- Number of halal markets can be increased,
- Halal products' prices can be reduced to satisfy more people,
- Quality attributes required by Islamic standards for halal products should be consistent with the needs and preferences of consumers,
- Different strategies for different consumer demands,
- Halal products actions for each type of halal products should be determined by component authorities,
- Local governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions etc. should involve to the subject and create a common structure.

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The Relationship Between Brand Quality and Brand Relationship: Delivering The Hotel Brand as Promised

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to understand how the difference between advertised brand and experienced brand during employee-customer interaction affects relationship quality of hotel guests. A quantitative research was adopted by surveying hotels guests to understand the moderating role of the gap between promised brand and experienced brand. The results of study indicate that if the difference between promised and experienced brand is low, hotel guests are more likely to develop trust and continue their brand relation with the hotel. Therefore, hotels need to include their employees in branding in order to deliver a brand experience as it is promised.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Brand Relationship, Brand Promise, Brand Experience

Introduction

Branding is especially important in service industry to increase differentiation and to develop competitive advantage (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). As a part of the service industry, hospitality industry has also recognized the importance of internal branding and creating corporate brands. Hotels not only the chain hotels but also the stand alone hotels are trying to create an identity for themselves (Hales, 1997). The reason is that branding is the most effective way for hotel chains to identify, to differentiate themselves, and to gain competitive advantage in the hotel industry (Prasad & Dev, 2000). As a result, hospitality organizations have started to focus on the behaviors of their employees in service delivery to position their brands successfully (Samli & Frohlich, 1992).

Why employees, especially customer contact employees, are so important for hospitality branding is due to their effect on brand equity. Hospitality employees directly affect brand equity of consumers (Nam, Ekinici, & Whyatt, 2011) which in turn helps to develop long-term successful relationship with customers. In other terms, hospitality employees are positioned to deliver the brand experience to the customers and this experience forms the brand meaning for consumers (Berry, 2000). Therefore, if employees can deliver the brand as it is promised, they are more likely to achieve a higher brand performance (Tsang, Lee, & Li, 2011).

As a result, service organizations have started to employ internal branding so that employees can fulfill the brand promise as advertised by external communications (de Chernatony, 2001; Tosti & Stotz, 2001). The reason is that brand equity for services is formed by both brand awareness and brand meaning. While brand awareness is created by external communication activities, brand meaning depends on service experience (Berry, 2000; So & King, 2010). Therefore, there should be consistency between what is promised and what is delivered.

Even previous research investigated the role of employees in branding; there is not any empirical study that looks at how any difference between promised brand and experienced brand affect consumers' relation with the brand. As a result the purpose of this study is to understand the moderating role of the difference between promised and experienced brand on consumers' relation with the brand in hotel industry.

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Therefore, this research contributes to the previous studies in branding for the hotel industry in several ways. First, the study analyzed how perceived brand quality affected relationship quality of hotel guests in terms of their brand trust and brand satisfaction. Second, the study looked at how satisfaction with the brand and trust in the brand affect relationship quality. Lastly, this research also analyzed empirically how the gap between advertised and experienced brand moderated the link between perceived brand quality and brand relationship quality in terms of trust and satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Services Branding

Service branding is about delivering the service promise through direct interaction between employees and consumers. As it is understood from definition, interaction is the key concept for services branding. Therefore, in services marketing literature, it has been argued that marketing of services is a challenge compared to marketing of tangible goods (Grönroos, 1978; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry., 1985). The primary reason is the limited tangible attributes to communicate the brand values to consumers (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). As a result, a strong brand usually serves as a tangible clue for customers to have an idea about a service.

One way to measure how strong a brand is the investigation of brand equity, which is also considered an asset especially for service companies (Aaker, 2003; Keller, 2003). In their study of Ambler et al. (2002), it has been argued that two different perspectives might be adopted to understand brand equity concept. While the first one focuses on financial outcomes, the second perspective looks at the consumers' perceptions of a brand. Therefore, the second perspective is usually called as Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE). Ambler et al. (2002) has further argued that customer based brand equity perspective is more relevant for service industries due to the role of consumers.

The benefits of a successful brand in the hospitality industry and the importance of a strong brand equity for the hotels have been also well documented in the literature (Prasad & Dev, 2000; Kim & Kim, 2005; So & King, 2010). First of all, a strong brand name for hotel industry helps customers to differentiate the hotels from each other. Second, hotels with successful brands were found to achieve higher financial performance. Lastly, from the perspective of customers, a strong brand has been found to increase brand awareness and brand meaning. Therefore, it is especially important for hospitality organizations to manage their brand equity and understand how it works.

Brand Equity in the Hospitality Industry

One of the commonly adopted models of brand equity is the framework of Aaker (1991). The model argues that brand equity results in value both to the customer and to the firm as well as that brand equity consists of different dimensions. However, the model has been criticized for not explaining how the process works for brand equity. In order to address this paucity, Keller (1993) proposed a different model to explain customer based brand equity. The model has mainly argued that brand equity has two dimensions that are brand awareness and brand image.

Even these two models have tried to understand the brand equity concept; they are developed based on manufacturing industries. As a result, Berry (2000) has come up with another brand equity model that is specifically developed for service industries. The proposed framework has argued that brand equity is affected by company's presented brand and external communications such as advertising, promotions, word of mouth, and publicity. In their study of Accor Hotels, Demirçiftçi and Kızıllırmak (2016) also mentioned that external communication activities help hotels to improve their brands, their recognition as well as

differentiation through creating brand awareness. On the other hand, brand meaning is affected by customer experience with the company. Because Berry's (2000) service branding model includes consumer service experience, So and King (2010) has adopted this model to better understand the hotel brand equity in the hospitality industry. The research has found that company's presented brand and customer brand experience are important sources of brand equity for hotels through influencing brand awareness and brand meaning. This is the reason why the focus has shifted to internal branding activities due to the increased role of service experience to create a strong brand for hotels. In other terms, a brand relies on how well employees can meet consumer expectations when consumers interact with the brand (Berry & Lampo, 2004).

Employees' Role in Branding

Berry (2000) suggests that consumers form the meaning of a brand based on their service experience. Therefore, consumers' interaction with a service provider shapes the meaning of a brand in their minds. More specifically, the interaction between frontline employees and customers is important for the success of branding activities (de Chernatony, Drury, & Segal-Horn, 2003).

Employees also contribute to the branding efforts in hospitality industry. The behaviors and attitudes of employees are especially important in hospitality organizations due to their effect on employee-consumer interaction (Teng & Barrows, 2009). In other terms, hospitality employees are in a position to affect how consumers perceive the brand and how consumers form the brand image (Tsang et al., 2011). Therefore, brand supporting behaviors of employees have increased their importance in literature. The reason is that consistency of guest experience is ensured through consistent employee behaviors with the brand during a service delivery (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007).

Based on the proposed models of Berry (2000), So and King (2010), and the discussions related to employees' brand supporting role in the literature, it is reasonable to argue that employees' brand behaviors during a service experience affect the brand perception of consumers which in turn influences their brand equity. In other terms, if consumers experience a high difference between company's presented brand and the experienced brand, they would be more likely having negative perception regarding the brand. This negative experience might also hinder their long-term relations with the brand because strong brands z

Brand Relationship in the Hospitality Industry

Even brands are the sources of relationship with consumers; they have a more important role for hospitality services. The primary reason is the personal interaction with consumers during a service delivery (O'Loughlin, Szmigin, & Turnbull, 2004). In the study of hotels by Kim, Han, and Lee. (2001), guest contact has been found to affect relationship quality along with guest confidence and communication. Further, hotel employees' expertise in the service interaction has been also found to affect relation quality positively (Kim & Cha, 2002). Therefore, perceived service quality might be an important indicator to explain relationship quality because service quality depends on the interaction between employees and customers. Service employee behaviors during interaction with consumers transform the brand image into reality, so that employees' performance turns into brand experience for consumers (Berry & Lampo, 2004). As a result, perceived brand quality might positively affect the relation quality for consumers with the brand.

How consumers form their relation with a brand and what determined this relationship quality are explained through satisfaction and trust in the hotel industry (Kim & Cha, 2002). The study has proposed that guests form their relationship quality based on their satisfaction and trust. In addition, Mattila (2001) has argued that it is not only the satisfaction but it is also the trust that shapes consumers' relation with a brand. Therefore, this research has also adopted

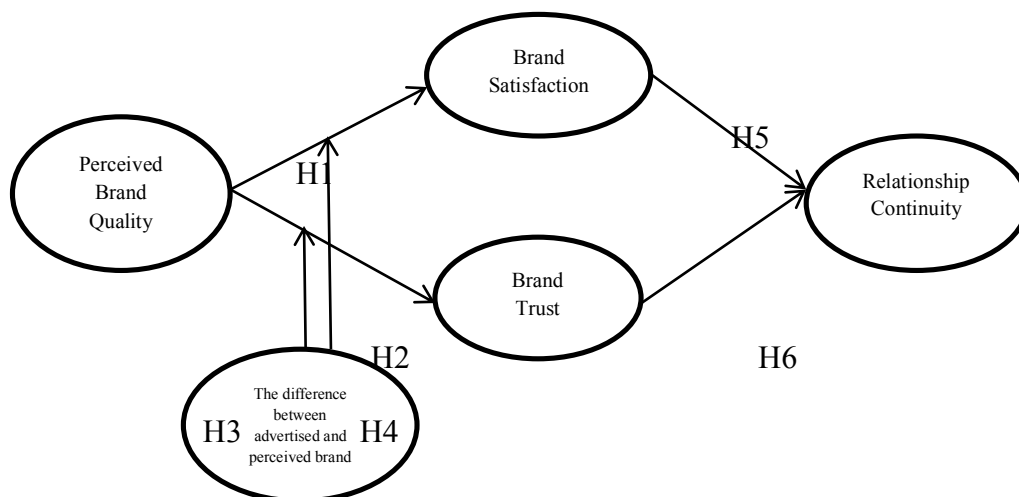
the satisfaction and trust to determine the relationship quality of hotel guests which in turn affects their relationship continuity.

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Based on the reviewed literature and above discussions, it has been argued that perceived brand quality would positively affect guests’ satisfaction with the hotel and their trust to the brand by enhancing relationship quality which in turn would positively affect the hotel guests’ relationship continuity. However, this research further argues that because employees are the source of experience, the difference between advertised brand and the experienced brand through brand supporting behaviors of employees would moderate the relation between perceived brand quality and relationship quality. As a result the following hypotheses and the conceptual model have been proposed:

- H1: Perceived brand quality will have a direct and positive effect on consumer brand satisfaction.
- H2: Perceived brand quality will have a direct and positive effect on consumer brand trust.
- H3: The difference between advertised brand and experienced brand moderates the link between perceived brand quality and satisfaction.
- H4: The difference between advertised brand and experienced brand moderates the link between perceived brand quality and trust.
- H5: Brand satisfaction of consumer will have a direct and positive effect on consumer relationship continuity.
- H6: Brand trust of consumer will have a direct and positive effect on consumer relationship continuity.

Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual research model



Methods

Data Collection

The sample was initiated by contacting 4 five-star hotels in Istanbul to collect data from their guests who were accommodating in the hotel at least three days. The front desk employees asked hotel guests whether they were willing to participate in the study. At the end of the date collection through December 2014 and first 2 weeks of January 2015, 147 questionnaires

were obtained. From these questionnaires, 123 questionnaires were identified as usable for data analysis.

Measurement

A self-administered structured questionnaire was conducted to survey the hotel guests. The structured-questionnaires to measure the constructs were designed based on the measurement scales adopted from previous studies. Participants were asked to assess their brand related attitudes and behaviors on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The measures are explained in detail below;

Perceived Brand Quality; “Perceived quality measures consumers' subjective judgment about a brand's overall excellence or superiority and addresses overall quality rather than individual elements of quality” (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). This study adopted six-item measure of perceived brand quality to measure hotel guests' perception regarding brand quality.

Brand Satisfaction & Brand Trust; Relationship quality was identified as having two main indicators satisfaction and trust. The measurement scale items were adopted from the study of Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990). Five-item measure of trust and a four-item measure of satisfaction were used to assess the relationship quality of hotel guests.

Relationship Continuity; To measure the result of relationship quality, relationship continuity was selected for this study. The construct was measured by three-item scale adopted from a previous study (Kim & Cha, 2002).

The difference between presented and experienced brand; The presented brand was measured based on eight-item scale adopted from So & King (2010). On the other hand, experienced brand was measured through how consumers perceive brand supporting behaviors of employees. After measuring these two constructs, new variable was created by taking their difference.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by using structural equation modeling (SEM) through AMOS. Before conducting SEM, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test the measurement model for the relations between latent constructs and their respective observed variables.

Results

Before structural model, this research first conducted confirmatory factor analysis to assess the measurement quality of the scales. The internal consistency for each latent variable was evaluated by checking composite reliabilities (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). On the other hand, the discriminant validity was assessed by comparing squared correlation of each pair of constructs with their average of AVEs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As a result, both convergent and discriminant validity were evidenced for the constructs in the study.

The results of the structural equation modeling showed that the model achieved a good fit for the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The model fit statistics for the measurement model were; comparative fit index (CFI) = .951; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .946; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .024.

First, the hypothesized paths were analyzed to test the direct effects. As proposed by H1 and H2, perceived brand quality significantly affected brand satisfaction ($\beta = .64, p \leq .01$) and brand trust ($\beta = .85, p \leq .01$). However, this study did not find a significant relation between brand satisfaction and relationship continuity of customers failing to support H5 ($\beta = .28, p \geq .05$). On the other hand, brand trust was found to affect relationship quality positively supporting H6 ($\beta = .33, p \leq .05$).

After testing the direct effects, moderating effect of the difference between advertised brand and experienced brand was tested using the procedure suggested by Hayes et al. (2009). As

suggested by H4, the difference between advertised and experienced brand was found to moderate the relation between perceived brand quality and brand trust. As the difference decreases between advertised and experienced brand, the effect of perceived brand quality on brand trust increases. However, the study did not find any significant effect for the relation between perceived brand quality and brand satisfaction failing to support H3. The results of the moderating effects were also checked by simple slope analyses to assess any significant interaction (see Figure 2 and 3).

Fig. 2. Simple slope analysis for moderating effect of brand trust

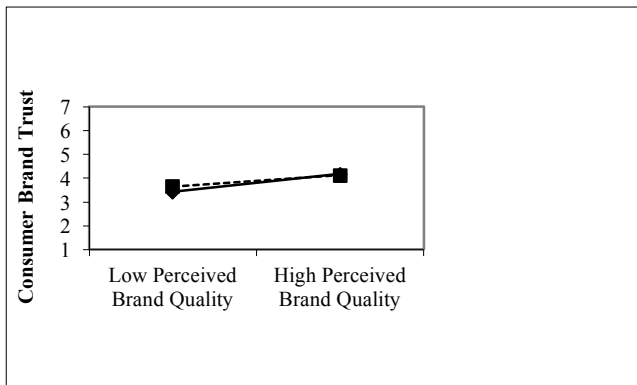
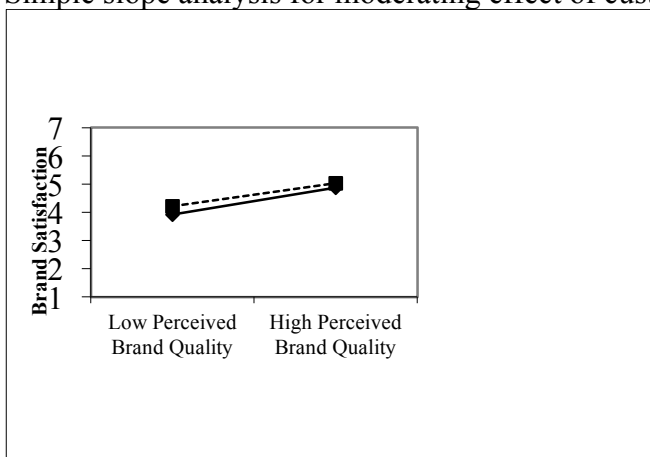


Fig. 3. Simple slope analysis for moderating effect of customer satisfaction



Discussion and Conclusion

With the recognition of employees' role for the delivery of experienced brand, this research aimed to understand how the difference between advertised and experienced brand affects the relation between perceived brand quality and consumers' relationship with the brand in terms of their relationship quality and relationship continuity in the hotel industry. In accordance with this research purpose, a conceptual model was developed to test the moderating role of the difference between advertised and experienced brand on the link between perceived brand quality and guests' relationship between the hotel brands.

Through a sample of hotel guests, this research provided important results regarding how the brand relationship of consumers might be enhanced by closing the gap between advertised and experienced brand in the hospitality industry. As hypothesized, this research found a positive link between perceived brand quality and brand trust as well as brand satisfaction of hotel guests. These results were consistent with previous research for the relationship quality in the hospitality industry (Kim et al., 2001; Cha & Kim, 2002). As the brand is delivered as expected, consumers are more likely to be satisfied with the brand as well as to trust in the

brand. However, only brand trust was found to affect relationship continuity of hotel guests. This finding was also somewhat similar what has been previously suggested in the literature. It was argued that emotional connection is important for customer brand relationship and that it is not only the satisfaction but the customer trust that forms brand relationships (Mattila, 2001).

In addition to direct relations, this study also found that the difference between advertised brand and experience brand moderates the link between perceived brand quality and brand trust. More specifically, if the difference between advertised brand and experienced brand is low, hotel guests are more likely to develop trust to the hotel brands. This finding was also consistent with the previous research regarding the role of employees in delivering a consistent brand as promised. Employee behaviors were found to be an important part of consumer based brand equity which in turn affects the loyalty in the hospitality industry (Nam et al., 2011). Therefore, it could be argued that it is important for hospitality organizations to close the gap between the promised brands through external communications with the experience brand. How the hotels can achieve this depends on managing their employees' brand related behaviors and enhance brand experience. This is the reason why hospitality organizations should start their branding inside by integrating their employees into branding activities.

Limitations and Further Research

Even this study has contributed to existing literature; it also has its own limitations. First of all, the data were collected from 4 five-star hotels in Istanbul. Therefore, making generalizations about the results of the study should be done with caution. Second, convenience sampling might also affect the generalizability of the results for the entire hotel industry. Third, participants were asked to reflect their true opinions so the results depend on whether they reflected their true beliefs and opinions regarding survey questions. Lastly, the study did not investigate all the factors that might affect hotel guests' relation with the brand. Other factors, such as demographics, the level of involvement with the service (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001) and reputation of the brand (Selnes, 1993) might influence the hypothesized relationships.

Based on the limitations and results of the study, further research might be conducted in the following areas. First of all, this study might be employed in other hospitality settings such as restaurants because each hospitality sector has its own dynamics. Second, it was the brand trust that affected relationship continuity but not the satisfaction. Therefore, the role of brand satisfaction can be analyzed further by looking at its effect on trust as a mediator for the relationship.

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