The Relationship between Organizational Image and Student Loyalty within the scope of Resource-Based Theory

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the relationship between organizational image and student loyalty within the scope of resource-based theory. Organizational image were examined in two aspects: tangible (sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, entertainment and accommodation-food image) and intangible (quality and program image, social atmosphere image). Student loyalty was conceptualized as organizational identification, determination and self-commitment. Data were obtained from 326 university students by using convenience sampling method. This study showed that quality and program image positively affects all dimensions of student loyalty. Besides, social atmosphere image positively affects organizational identification and determination dimensions of student loyalty. The results indicated that intangible aspect of organizational image affects student loyalty positively. In that sense, it was suggested that intangible aspect of organizational image might provide competitive advantage to universities by enhancing student loyalty within the scope of resource-based theory.

Keywords: Resource-Based Theory, Student Loyalty, Organizational Image, University Image.

Article Type: Research Article

Kaynak Temelli Teori Çerçevesinde Örgütsel İmaj ve Öğrenci Sadakati Arasındaki İlişki

Öz

Bu araştırma, kaynak temelli teori kapsamında örgütsel imaj ile öğrenci sadakati arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Örgütsel imaj, somut (spor imajı, genel görünüm ve altyapı imajı, eğlence ve barınma-beslenme imajı) ve soyut (kalite ve program imajı, sosyal ortam imajı) imaj olmak üzere iki açıdan incelenmiştir. Öğrenci sadakati, örgütsel özdeşleşme, kararlılık ve kendini adama olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 326 üniversite öğrencisinden veri elde edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, kalite ve program imajının öğrenci sadakatinin tüm boyutlarını olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermiştir. Ayrıca sosyal ortam imajı, öğrenci sadakatinin örgütsel özdeşleşme ve kararlılık boyutlarını olumlu yönde etkilemektedir. Sonuçlara göre, örgütsel imajın soyut yönünün öğrenci sadakatini olumlu yönde etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Kaynak temelli teori kapsamında örgütsel imajın soyut yönünün öğrenci sadakatini geliştirerek üniversitelere rekabet avantajı sağlayabileceği ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimler: Kaynak Temelli Teori, Öğrenci Sadakati, Örgütsel İmaj, Üniversite İmajı.

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions produce graduates for the labor market and thus contribute to economic development. Worldwide universities not only become institutions that provide an environment for information production and educating students but also become major business enterprises to meet the market demand for educational services (Çetin, 2004). Therefore, universities need to legitimize themselves by providing value. This situation has led universities to compete with each other, whether they are public or private. Assuming that a university's capacity to attract new students, as well as keep existing ones, is positively correlated to student loyalty (SL) (Helgesen and Nesset, 2007). When it is thought that the most important factor affecting purchasing decisions is loyalty, it is possible to propose that organizational image (OI) affects customer loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994). Since students are stated as the major customers of higher education organizations (Köse, 2012), it is possible to predict that the image of the university is important for increasing their students' sense of loyalty towards them and also for attracting other students (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009).

According to resource-based theory (RBT), which evaluates the relationship between an organizations' resources and competitive advantage, hardly imitable and valuable organizational resources provide sustainable competitive advantage to organizations (Barney, 1991). Although many resources act as mediators for the organization to gain a competitive advantage in compliance with RBT, these resources must be valuable and scarce, and not easily and completely imitated in order to maintain sustainability. Moreover, a resource to be considered as a source of competitive advantage, it must be specific to the organization, and transfer or trade of them must be very difficult or impossible (Barney, Wright and Ketchen, 2001). It is also emphasized that the most important criterion for organizations to provide competitive advantage is to have covert and socially complex resources (O'Driscoll, Carson and Gilmore, 2000) which are obtained by experiences and cannot be imitated by other organizations easily. When it is believed that OI is one of the elements of socially complex resources, OI is seen as crucial in terms of developing resource utilization skills, turning these skills into core competencies, and providing a sustainable competitive advantage (Reyhanoğlu and Örs, 2005).

SL is an important resource for competitive advantage in higher education organizations (Gunarto, Wibowo, and Hurriyati, 2016; Thomas, 2011). SL in higher education paves the way to being efficient and effective in future investments and education planning, with the predictable service demand for universities (Korumaz and Tekel, 2016). The effects of image and reputation (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2001), student satisfaction and reputation (Helgesen and Nesset, 2007), education quality, commitment, trust and satisfaction (Rojas-Méndez, Vasquez-Parraga, Kara and Cerda-Urrutia, 2009), trust, quality, cognitive and emotional commitment (Henning-Thurau, Langer and Hansen, 2001) on SL are studied. Although the effects of these two core competitive advantage phenomenon (especially OI) are frequently examined in the literature (Karatekin Alkoç, 2017; Masserini, Bini and Pratesi, 2019; Schleisinger, Cervera and Pérez-Cabañero, 2017), there is no theory-driven explanations or evaluation made within the framework of the sub-dimensions suggested in this study. Thus, this stands out as a gap in the literature. In this vein, this study aims to investigate the effect of perceived university image dimensions on the SL dimensions within the framework of RBT.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Organizational Image

Kotler and Fox (1995) describe the image as the sum of beliefs, opinions, and impressions of an individual towards something. The image of an institution is a cluster of the individuals'

perceptions about the institution rather than being a clear definition of tangible concept (Terkla and Pagano, 1993). OI is extremely important for organizations that want to be competitive in the short, medium, and long term with high demand for their products or services and want to guarantee their permanence in the market (Perez and Torres, 2016). It is known that OI plays an essential role in purchasing decisions of consumers (Barich and Kotler, 1991). In the context of higher education organizations, concepts such as purchasing intention and loyalty appear to be at the point of affecting students' university choices and even decisions such as graduate programs, as students choose to continue at the same university (Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2001).

The OI of a university with its academic, social, political, and formal dimensions, is effective not only in terms of being preferred by students but also in the context of being a university preferred by academic members to work in (Terkla and Pagano, 1993). Although the image of a university cannot be described as an absolute value, it can be determined by comparing other universities' images (Ivy, 2001). Qualifications like academic reputation and OI are also formed by the media, other individuals' opinions, and direct experience. For this reason, although the image of the university is about the level of peoples' perception of an institution, it does not necessarily reflect the true nature of the university. The current image of a university depends on its previous successes, physical properties, history, rituals, and management activities (Çetin, 2004). Many factors such as infrastructure, personal relations, environmental factors, academic properties, teaching and research, education quality, academic practices, facilities, and employment opportunities are assumed as composing university image (Aghaza, Hashemia, and Atashgaha, 2015; Arpan, Raney, and Ziynuska, 2003; Duarte, Alves and Raposo, 2010).

Since OI means an individuals' perception towards an organization at a certain time, change of these perceptions is natural in time (Kazoleas, Kim and Moffit, 2001). For this reason, the OI should be managed in a planned way. OI management consists of a three-step process. Firstly, stakeholders of the organization should be aware of the OI. The second step is to conduct image perception studies in constant communication with the stakeholders of the organization. Lastly, provided OI should be protected and made sustainable (Polat, 2011). When OI is evaluated in terms of universities, these steps should be carefully followed and implemented by university administrators.

2.2. Student Loyalty

SL in terms of educational organizations means developing a strong relationship with students who provide a financial basis for future university activities (Rojas-Mendes et al, 2009). SL in the higher education sector aids university managers in making convenient programs, that encourage, constitute and sustain successful and long-term relationships with current students but also alumni (Annamdevula and Bellamkonda, 2016). Loyal students can affect education quality positively with active involvement and stable behaviors (Thomas, 2011); participate in research activities by proposing innovative research opinions and help to collect data for research projects (Dehghan, Dugger, Dobrzykowski and Balazs, 2014).

SL states students' loyalty during and after their time at a university (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001). Therefore, SL can be associated with not only the period that a student is officially registered but also the period after graduation (Helgesen and Nesset, 2007). Loyal students advise their friends, family, employers, and organizations about the university by using positive expressions (Kunanusorn and Puttawong, 2015). Students loyal to their universities are more likely to associate themselves with their university and form a strong emotional tie with it. These students create a positive rumor about their university and have a vigorous wish to serve their university even after graduation (Yu and Kim,

2008). Moreover, loyal students can be considered good advocates, recommending the institution to others (Thomas, 2011).

SL was taken to be a structure with one dimension in many studies (Annamdevula and Bellamkonda, 2016; Dehghan et al, 2014; Gunarto et al., 2016). However, SL has a three-dimensional structure (Çalık Var, 2013). Organization identification, one of these dimensions, means that an individual feel that s/he belongs to an organization, sees herself/himself as a part of the organization, and acts together with her/his organization (Kalasak, Özcan, and Dağyar, 2019). The second dimension, self-commitment, can be expressed as the individuals' dedication to the university and protecting the interests of the university beyond his interests, based on other loyalty studies (such as manager loyalty) (Ceylan and Doğanyılmaz, 2007). The last dimension, determination, means students' preference for the university also in the future, recommendations to others, and willingness to continue its relationship with the university (Çalık Var, 2013).

2.3. Relationship Between Organizational Image and Student Loyalty

OI is important in enhancing the feelings of loyalty of existing students and it also provides universities with the opportunity to gain new students (Köse, 2012). In the pertinent literature, there are many studies conducted in different countries investigating the relationship between OI and SL. Sung and Yang (2008) conceptualized OI as a structure composed of university character, perceived prestige, and university reputation and stated that perceived prestige in particular has a positive effect on supportive attitudes of students such as being proud of the institution, belonging and trustworthiness perceptions. Hwang and Choi (2019), express that OI perceived by students directly affects behavioral intentions. Also, studies present that OI has a positive effect on students' satisfaction and loyalty (Masserini et al., 2019; Nguyen and LeBlanc, 2001). Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) found that OI has a positive effect on loyalty. Even though researchers analyze OI as one-dimensional, they state that communication components like academics and other personnel can be critical factors for determining students' image perceptions. Brown and Mazzarol (2009), in their research in which they take the OI as three dimensional namely, work environment, practicality, and conservativeness, precipitated that image affects perceived value and customer satisfaction positively, while higher perceived value and higher customer satisfaction increases customer loyalty. In another study OI is viewed with dimensions of prestige, modernity, famousness, and labor market relation and proved that these had a positive effect on SL (Masserini et al., 2019).

When we look at the situation in Turkey, it is seen that the number of universities operating has been growing with increasing momentum for years. While 32 universities were operating in Turkey in 1992, this number increased to 78 in 2000, 175 in 2010, and reached 207 by the year 2021 (The Council of Higher Education, 2021). Assuming that higher education organizations have to differentiate in terms of the OI to take an advantageous position in an increasingly competitive environment and to be a preferred university by students (Parameswar and Glowacki, 1995), it is thought that perceived OI of universities in Turkey and their relationship with SL should be revealed. In one of the first studies on university image for students conducted in Turkey, the perception of the institutional image of Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University students was examined and positive perceptions of students were found (Örer, 2006). Also in Cerits' (2006) study, in the sample of Abant İzzet Baysal University perceived OI is found as medium-level. In a study, with the sample of Uludağ University students, it is suggested that the most important factor affecting SL is university image (Karatekin Alkoç, 2017).

When the studies examining the relationship between the OI and SL are considered, it is seen

that both image and loyalty are taken as one-dimensional (Karatekin Alkoç, 2017). Firstly, Kazoleas et al. (2001) obtained a 7-dimensional structure composed of general image, program image, the importance given to education, education quality, environmental conditions, financial reasons, and sports programs, by evaluating OI in the context of the university. Polat (2011) in line with Kazoleas et al (2001), examined the OI level of university students. The dimensions in Polats' study were named as quality, program, general outlook and physical infrastructure, social atmosphere, entertainment, sports image, and accommodation-food image, and the OI perception of students were determined using these dimensions.

Kennedy (1977), investigated OI in two dimensions; the dimension related to easily measurable tangible elements and the dimension related to the psychological conditions that emerge with feelings and attitudes. Landrum, Turrisi, and Harless (1998) defined the OI for a university as a concept, consisting of tangible elements and intangible organizational elements consisting of communication, and personal and social values. RBT argues that hardly imitable organizational resources provide a sustainable competitive advantage. In other words, stating that hardly imitable distinguishing features will provide competitive advantage to organizations (Reyhanoğlu and Örs, 2005). In this context, when the OI is taken with its sub-dimensions, it is seen that some dimensions are tangible elements that universities can easily imitate. For instance, sports image represents sports facilities on campus, sports teams within the university, and their quality. Further, universities will not have difficulty in building of sports facilities. General outlook and physical infrastructure image refers to a campus' physical conditions which can be developed by universities. While accommodation-food image means the quality of a university's cafeteria, café, and dormitories, entertainment image refers to festivals and entertainments arranged for students. It would not be wrong to say that these image dimensions are more easily measurable and improvable tangible dimensions. On the other hand, quality and program image and social atmosphere image dimensions are not easily imitable intangible dimensions. Quality and program image presents the quality of given education and it is not possible to develop this feature for universities with low-quality education. Quality of education means that the lecturers are experts in their fields and that the university prepares its students adequately for the business world. This feature of universities, who have a high quality and program image, is developed thanks to the structure constructed over years. Accordingly, for universities with a low quality and program image, competing with higher ones is extremely difficult. A university's social atmosphere image is an inimitable and intangible concept like quality image. The social atmosphere image of the university means characteristics of social relations within the university. Among the factors that increase the social atmosphere image of the university are that the university administrators act in accordance with the legislation, different political opinions are respected at the university, everybody and every segment is treated equally, and that the university has a democratic management style (Kazoleas et al., 2001).

2.4. Purpose of the Study

Higher education institutions, which are increasing in number today, have to place importance on their OI to gain an advantage in an environment where competition is intense. In order to meet the expectations of students and to be a preferred and recommended university even after graduation, universities aim to meet quality standards in many aspects such as education, general appearance and social environment. Considering students are the most important customers for universities, previous studies have also demonstrated that the service offered to students by universities and the OI perceived by students can have an impact on SL (Erkmen and Çerik, 2007; Karatekin Alkoç, 2017; Tayyar and Dilşeker, 2012; Tehci, 2020). However, in the literature, it is seen that the sub-dimensions of OI and

loyalty are not analyzed in studies examining the relationship between OI and SL. In this study, the concepts of OI and loyalty will be examined together with their sub-dimensions and the OI will be discussed in terms of the imitative and non-imitable characteristics of universities within the framework of RBT. Although, describing that a positive university image increases SL, the OI consists of tangible and intangible dimensions, and some dimensions are thought to be more effective than others. In that sense, this study contributes to the literature with regards to explaining which dimensions of the OI should be developed for universities.

2.5. Problem of the Study

The study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived university image and loyalty for students studying at a state university (Eskişehir Osmangazi University) in the 2020-2021 academic year. The study will seek to answer the following question: What is the relationship between perceived university image sub-dimensions and loyalty sub-dimensions towards the university?

3. METHODOLOGY

In the study, the correlational survey model was used, and the data were collected by an online survey. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the questionnaire forms were prepared online and delivered to the students via the distance education portal of Eskişehir Osmangazi University. Because of the distance education in the 2020-2021 academic year due to the pandemic, students who are in their first year at university were excluded from the study, with the thought that they could not have enough information about the university image. Authors complied with research and publication ethics in all phases of the study, and approval was obtained from Eskişehir Osmangazi University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 07.01.2021 and numbered 2021-01/09 for the study.

3.1. Participants

Research data were obtained from 326 students who completed their first year at Eskişehir Osmangazi University by convenience sampling method. Accordingly, a total of 781 students from different faculties in Eskişehir Osmangazi University were sent a questionnaire within the scope of the study, but successful returns were received from 326 students. It was paid attention that the sample size of the study was at least five times the number of items belonging to the scales included in the study (Bryman and Cramer, 2005).

One hundred sixty-nine (51.8%) of the participants are male and 157 (41.2%) are female. The average age of the participants is 21.87 (SD = 2.53). The average of the years at the university was determined as 3.48 (SD = 1.3). 215 of the participants (66%) were at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 55 (16.9%) at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, 40 (12.3%) at the Faculty of Tourism, 12 (3.7%) studied at the Faculty of Science and Literature, 3 (0.9%) at the Vocational School (1 participant did not indicate). 197 of the students were daytime education (60.4%) and 129 (39.6%) were evening education.

3.2. Measurement

The OI scale (OI-S) used in the study is a scale consisting of 35 items developed by Kazoleas et al. (2001) and adapted to Turkish by Polat (2011). Scale items were scored in the range of "1: I do not agree at all, 7: I completely agree" statements. Polat (2011) found that the scale is reliable (Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is ,91) in his study. As a result of the factor analysis in Polat's study, the OI scale was consisted of 7 dimensions. These dimensions consist of quality image,

program image, sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, social atmosphere image, entertainment image, and accommodation-food image.

The loyalty scale (SL-S) was developed by Çalık Var (2013) and consists of 24 items. The scale items were scored in the range of "1: I do not agree at all, 7: I completely agree". Çalık Var (2013) found that the scale consisted of 3 dimensions and it was reliable (Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is ,94). These dimensions are organizational identification, determination, and self-commitment.

3.3. Preliminary Analyzes

Before analyzing the data, the data set was checked for missing values and examined in terms of normal distribution. Table 1 includes the mean and standard deviation values, correlation coefficients, skewness, and kurtosis values of the variables in the study.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Values, Correlation Coefficients, Skewness and Kurtosis Values for the Variables

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Quality and Program Image	4,44[1]	1,41	1							
(2) Sports Image	3,46[1]	1,53	,58**	1						
(3) Ent. and Acc. Food Image	3,16[1]	1,53	,66**	,61**	1					
(4) Gen. Outlook & Phy. Inf. Image	3,87[1]	1,47	,71**	,67**	,70**	1				
(5) Social Atmopshere Image	4,27[1]	1,55	,77**	,52**	,64**	,67**	1			
(6) Org. Identification	4,76[1]	1,30	,60**	,35**	,38**	,40**	,55**	1		
(7) Determinmation	4,30[1]	1,66	,80**	,45**	,52**	,58**	,66**	,62**	1	
(8) Self-commitment	3,66[1]	1,44	,67**	,46**	,49**	,54**	,57**	,69**	,70**	1
Skewness	-	-	-,45	,12	,48	,09	-,26	-,46	-,28	,09
Kurtosis	-	-	-,37	-,72	-,58	-,77	-,49	-,39	-,89	-,84

* The means are fit for a 7-point Likert type scale; **p<,01

When the skewness and kurtosis values of the variables included in the study were examined, it was found that the values were in the ± 3 range and the data was fit for normal distribution (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Finally, the correlation coefficients between the independent variables (quality and program image, sports image, entertainment, and accommodation-food image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, social atmosphere image) were below 0.80. Thus, it was found that there was no multicollinearity problem (Stevens, 2016) and it provides a basis for divergence validity (Brown, 2006).

3.4. Validity and Reliability Analyzes

In the study, the validity of the scales was examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and their reliability was checked with the Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient. Table 2 presents the findings of SL-S on EFA.

Table 2: EFA Results Regarding SL-S

Scale	Factors	Item	Factor Loading Range	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient (α)
				60,945	,942
		OI5	,762*		
		OI10	,722*		
		OI1	,692*		
		OI2	,668*		
		OI4	,664*		
	Organizational Identification	OI9	,651*	25,680	,912
		OI7	,642*		
		OI8	,617*		
		OI3	,605*		
		OI11	,603*		
Student Loyalty Scale (SL-S)		OI6	,540*		
		D2	,827*		
		D1	,791*		
	Determination	D3	,726*	19,726	,905
		D5	,726*		
		D6	,715*		
		SC1	,707*		
		SC6	,670*		
	Self-commitment	SC2	,616*	15,539	,817
		SC3	,590*		
		SC5	,583*		

KMO:,942; Barlett: 4211,015; df=210; p=,000 < ,001

*Item total correlation values are between ,34 and ,79.

The KMO sampling adequacy coefficient of SL-S is ,942 and Bartletts' Test of Sphericity (p<,001) is significant. From this point of view, it is understood that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis and the measurement tool is suitable for factor extraction. Item D4 was excluded from the analysis because it had a negative load and the correlation value between negative items; OI12 and then SC4 were excluded from the analysis because they loaded on the other factor. When the relevant items were removed from the analysis, the explained variance increased from 60,352 to 60,945. Scale reliability increased from ,934 to ,942. The scale has a three-factor structure in line with the literature. The reliability of the scale and its sub-factors is sufficiently high when evaluated through the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient (Churchill and Peter, 1984).

Table 3. EFA Results Regarding OI-S

Scale	Factors	Item	Factor Loading Range	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient (α)
				72,197	,967
Organizational Image Scale (OI-S)	Quality and Program Image	Q3	,840		
		Q2	,831		
		Q8	,796		
		Q7	,785		
		Q1	,781	27,545	,952
		Q5	,756		
		Q4	,747		
		Q6	,725		
		P6	,679		
		Q9	,588		
		P5	,542		
		P3	,522		
		P7	,519		
	General Outlook and Physical Infrastructure Image	GOPI2	,744		
		GOPI1	,724		
		GOPI4	,592	10,812	,852
		GOPI3	,513		
		GOPI6	,491		
	Entertainment and Acoomodation-Food Image	E2	,769	11,936	,848
		E1	,752		

	AF1	,596		
	AF2	,520		
Social Atmosphere Image	SA1	,771		
	SA2	,734		
	SA3	,600	10,659	,899
	SA4	,584		
	S2	,824		
Sports Image	S3	,813	11,244	,907
	S1	,785		

KMO:,960; Barlett: 8206,389; df=406; p=,000 < ,001

* Item total correlation values are between ,38 and ,83.

KMO sampling adequacy coefficient of OI-S is ,960 and Bartletts' Test of Sphericity (p<,001) is significant. Firstly, it was seen that the OI-S was divided into 4 factors in the factor analysis findings. In this case, the explained variance of the scale is 67,055%. However, the number of factors in the scale did not distribute to 7 factors in accordance with the original version of the scale. In this direction, factor analysis was repeated by fixing the number of factors to 7, 6, and 5, respectively. As a result of examining the scree plot and controlling the eigenvalues, it was decided to carry out the analysis on a 5-factor structure. Besides, in other studies in which the scale was used in the literature (Selçuk, 2018; Şanlı and Arabacı, 2016), it was seen that the scale was evaluated on 5 factors. During the analysis process carried out over a 5-factor structure; respectively, since the P1 and P8 items were loaded on three factors with very close factor loads, since P4 is not loaded on any factor; since AF3 is loaded on other factors; since P2 loaded on another factor and GOPI5 loaded on both factors with a very close factor load, they were removed from the analysis and the final factor structure was formed. Thus, the explained variance of the scale increased to 72,197%. Also, when the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were checked for the reliability of the scale and its sub-dimensions, it was found that there was a high level of reliability.

4. FINDINGS

This section of the study includes the findings of multiple linear regression analyzes. Besides, the values of variance inflation factor (VIF) and condition index (CI) are checked for multi-collinearity, and in order to test autocorrelation Durbin-Watson values are used.

Table 4. The effects of OI dimensions on SL dimensions

Variables		Org. Identification	Determination	Self-commitment	VIF	CI
		Adj. R^2: ,382	Adj. R^2: ,643	Adj. R^2: ,456		
		F: 41,140***	F: 118,025***	F: 55,451***		
		Durbin Watson: 1,776	Durbin Watson: 1,910	Durbin Watson: 1,909		
Quality and	β	,500	,732	,497	3,05	7,32

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Program Image	*t*	6,568	12,650	6,955		
	p	,000***	,000***	,000***		
	β	,036	-,035	,075		
Sports Image	*t*	,582	-,743	1,302	1,98	8,78
	p	,561	,458	,194		
	β	,262	,119	,110		
Social Atmosphere Image	*t*	3,635	2,166	1,631	2,74	10,72
	p	,000***	,031*	,104		
	β	-,042	-,043	,016		
Entertainment and Acc. and Food Image	*t*	-,629	-,852	,261	2,37	12,74
	p	,530	,395	,795		
	β	-,129	,037	,048		
General Outlook & Phy. Inf. Image	*t*	-1,738	,662	,689	2,91	15,93
	p	,083	,508	,492		

*p<,05; **p<,01; ***p<,001

VIF and CI values were examined and it was determined that there was no multicollinearity problem since VIF values were less than 5 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017) and CI values were less than 30 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Also, when Durbin-Watson values are checked for each regression analysis, it is seen that there is no autocorrelation problem (Field, 2009).

OI dimensions explain 38% of the variance of the organizational identification dimension of SL. When the standardized regression coefficients and the t-test findings regarding the significance of the regression coefficients are examined, it was found that the quality and program image (=,50; p<,001) and the social atmosphere image (=,26; p<,001) significantly and positively affected the identification dimension of SL.

OI dimensions explain 64% of the variance of the determination dimension of SL. Among the OI dimensions, quality and program image (β =,73; p<,001) and social atmosphere image (=,12; p<,05) affect the determination dimension of SL positively. While quality and program image have a strong effect on the determination dimension, the social atmosphere image has a weak impact power. Finally, OI dimensions explained 46% of the variance of the self-commitment dimension of SL. In this regression model, it was found that only the quality and program image variables had a positive effect (=,50; p<,001) on the self-commitment dimension of SL.

5. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both OI and customer loyalty are expressed as important sources of competitive advantage within the RBT framework. When OI is considered as university image and customer loyalty considered as SL, the literature supports the relationship between these two variables in the direction of university image affecting SL (Brown and Mazzarol, 2009; Masserini et al., 2019; Palacio et al., 2002). This study differs from previous studies in terms of examining both OI and SL with sub-

dimensions. Moreover, the relationship between these variables was interpreted within the framework of RBT in this study.

When the research findings were examined according to the results of multiple linear regression analysis, quality and program image dimensions of the OI positively affect the organizational identification, determination, and self-commitment dimensions of SL. Besides this, the social atmosphere image dimension positively predicted the organizational identification and determination dimensions of SL.

While RBT emphasizes resource heterogeneity, it draws attention to the importance of resources being scarce, valuable, and being difficult to imitate and substitute. At this point, it is more difficult to imitate and substitute intangible abstract resources than tangible resources according to RBT. Within the framework of the dimensions of the OI examined in this study, while the quality and program image and social atmosphere image represent the intangible aspect of the OI; sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, and entertainment and accommodation-food image represent the tangible aspect of the OI. Although tangible dimensions have rare and valuable features, their imitability and substitutability are easier than intangible dimensions, and this view is also supported by RBT. For example, considering the expressions representing the sports image entertainment and accommodation-food image and general outlook, and physical infrastructure image, an organization (university) can imitate these from their competitors and overcome their deficiencies over time. When it is considered particularly in terms of state universities, the universities can accelerate the process by getting support from the government. However, intangible resources are not like that, nor should they be. The factors that determine the quality of a program or a university are qualitative components rather than quantitative ones. It is not easy to obtain, imitate, or substitute qualitative components like the quality and program image, and the social atmosphere image which are considered intangible. This fact is confirmed by the agreement level in the statements regarding the quality and program image dimension and the social atmosphere dimension in a city where university culture has dominated for years such as Eskişehir. In this respect, it is possible to explain the fact that image dimensions considered as intangible in the research findings positively affect the dimensions of SL, while the image dimensions considered tangible do not affect SL dimensions.

In the globalizing world, with the ever-evolving technology, the borders have disappeared in terms of access to information, and competition in the field of higher education has started to be experienced not only at a national but also at international level. So much so, that the results of this competition are announced every year using various instruments and universities are subject to success rankings by various institutions. Besides that, student exchange programs, both nationally and internationally, push universities into a race to be preferred institutions by students. While the concepts of public, private, national, or international lose their importance, universities face competition in every field. In such an environment, universities can gain a competitive advantage and sustain this advantage by creating a strong OI.

This study has several limitations since it was conducted on Eskişehir Osmangazi University students and the convenience sampling method was adopted in the sampling process. It will be beneficial to conduct future studies in different universities, with different samples, taking into account the founding years of the universities. Also, in the study, the relationship between OI and SL was tried to be interpreted at the organizational level in terms of strategy and management. It will be beneficial to carry out future studies by including other disciplines. For example, in further studies examining the effects of variables such as students' preference process or career plan on this relationship within the framework of the educational discipline; or the inclusion of other variables that

affect customer loyalty or OI within the framework of the marketing discipline, will create depth in the literature to evaluate the different aspects of the relationship between these two variables.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The authors hereby declare that they have not used any sources other than those listed in the references. Authors complied with research and publication ethics in all phases of the study, and approval was obtained from Eskişehir Osmangazi University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 07.01.2021 and numbered 2021-01/09 for the study.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors contributed equally to all parts of the research.

Statement of Interest

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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