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EFFECT OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING COMPONENTS ON THE CONSUMER BASED BRAND EQUITY: A RESEARCH IN THE FURNITURE SECTOR (*)

(Araştırma Makalesi)

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Abstract

In a competitive environment, the desire of businesses to earn huge profits with little expense leads businesses to gain strong brands. The products or services offered by businesses with strong brands to the market are preferred by consumers, even if they are expensive compared to other products or services that have the same or similar characteristics in many ways. One of the main challenges of the marketing world is to create emotions in consumers in different segments and turn this emotion into purchasing. Brand equity; It is the most valuable fundamental building block that makes a brand strong. The marketing world, which focuses on brand equity, has provided a new approach to marketing since the late 1990s. One of these marketing concepts is relationship marketing, the subject of the study. Relationship marketing includes a perspective of consumer-based brand equity. In the study, it is aimed to find out the relationship between the values of brands using relationship marketing applications that appeal to the branded national and international market in the furniture sector and to reveal what the results are. In this context, in this study, the relationships between relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity for certain brands operating in the furniture industry are analyzed with the structural equation modeling approach. The study is conducted with 639 participants. In the analysis of the study; the structural equation modeling method is used. The findings of the study show that when international furniture brands strengthen their relationship marketing practices and dimensions, they increase consumer-based brand equities. Among

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the relationship marketing dimensions, respectively; It has been concluded that trust, loyalty, and communication have an effect on consumer-based brand equities, whereas shared value and empathy, also among the relationship marketing dimensions, have no effect on consumer-based brand equity dimensions. This work is important in terms of eliminating the lack of relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity issues in the literature and supporting those who want to work on this issue later.

Keywords: Marketing, Relationship Marketing, Branding, Brand Equity, Consumer-Based Brand Value.

JEL: M31

İlişkisel Pazarlama Boyutlarının Tüketici Temelli Marka Değerine Etkisi: Mobilya Sektöründe Bir Araştırma

Öz

Rekabet ortamında işletmelerin az masraf ile çok büyük karlar elde etmek isteği, işletmeleri güçlü markalar elde etmeye yönlendirmektedir. Güçlü markaya sahip olan işletmelerin pazara sunduğu ürün veya hizmetler pazardaki birçok yönden aynı veya benzer özellik gösteren diğer ürün veya hizmetlere göre pahalı da olsalar tüketiciler tarafından tercih edilmektedirler. Pazarlama dünyasının temel zorluklarından biri, farklı segmentlerdeki tüketicilerde duygu yaratarak bu duyguyu satın almaya dönüştürmektir. Marka değeri; bir markayı güçlü kılan, en değerli temel yapı taşıdır. Marka değerine odaklanan pazarlama dünyası, 1990'ların sonlarından bu yana pazarlamada yeni bir yaklaşım sağlanmıştır. Bu pazarlama kavramlarından biri, çalışmanın konusu olan ilişkisel pazarlamadır. İlişkisel pazarlama, tüketici temelli marka değerinin bir perspektifini içermektedir. Çalışmada, mobilya sektöründeki markalaşmış ulusal ve uluslararası pazara hitap eden ilişkisel pazarlama uygulamaları kullanan markaların değerlerinin ilişkisel pazarlama ile olan ilgisini bulmak ve bulunan sonuçların neler olduğu ortaya çıkarılmak istenmektedir. Bu çerçevede çalışmada, mobilya sektöründe faaliyet gösteren belli markalar için ilişkisel pazarlama ve tüketici temelli marka değeri arasındaki ilişkiler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi yaklaşımı ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma 639 katılımcı ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmanın analizinde; yapısal eşitlik modelleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları, uluslararası düzeyde mobilya markalarının ilişkisel pazarlama uygulamalarını ve boyutlarını güçlendirdiklerinde tüketici temelli marka değerlerini artırdığını göstermektedir. İlişkisel pazarlama boyutlarından sırası ile; güven, bağlılık, ve iletişimin tüketici temelli marka değerlerine etkisi olduğu sonucuna varılırken, yine ilişkisel pazarlama boyutlarından paylaşılan değer ve empatinin tüketici temelli marka değeri boyutları üzerinde etkisi olmadığı saptanmıştır. Bu çalışma; literatürde ilişkisel pazarlama ve tüketici temelli marka değeri konularının eksikliğini gidermek ve daha sonra bu konuda çalışmak isteyenleri desteklemek açısından önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pazarlama, İlişkisel Pazarlama, Marka, Marka Değeri, Tüketici Temelli Marka Değeri.

JEL: M31

1. Introduction

Developing an effective, efficient, and profitable marketing understanding of enterprises is an indispensable strategy for combating competition in the world market. While this strategy has been focused on products in traditional marketing methods, it has become consumer-oriented with the development of technology and rapid change in the market. This has increased the emphasis on branding and the search for new marketing concepts. Brands create intangible and consumer confidence in the product or service, create customer loyalty, etc. living creatures that contribute. On the other hand, it is a financial impact on the enterprise. Trademark value is seen as an asset-based on a non-business market; because brand equity is related to the brand's relationship with its end users. In other words, it is stated that long-term relationships with consumers have started to be formed and developed (Falkenberg, 1996; Hooley, Greenley, Cadogan, and Fahy, 2005). In this study, which emerged with the assumption that relationship marketing may have an impact on brand value rather than a product, the answer to the following question is sought: "Is there an effect of relationship marketing above consumer-based brand equity?"

This study, which combines the consumer-based brand equity approach of the enterprise and the relationship marketing strategy, examines the importance of consumer-based brand equity in the marketing sector, starting with traditional marketing methods and extending to various marketing strategies, in the development of the relationship marketing in which consumer demands and needs come to the forefront aims to offer solutions and at the same time fill the literature gap.

2. Literature Review

Based on the common features of the definitions made in the literature; relationship marketing, one of the leading marketing paradigms of recent times, is the transition from traditional marketing that brings innovations and changes with the aim of keeping current consumers rather than finding new consumers, developing relationships. Trust and commitment-based relationships with one-to-one communication and consumer-specific applications intended to be established with consumers; it is a strategic process that involves the awareness of all the employees of the enterprise, from the strong, economic and social standards to the achievement of the common goals, including the creation, development, maintenance, and strengthening.

There are many components of relationship marketing. Although it isn't possible to provide all of these components at the same time, they make it inevitable for businesses to be successful without having an intermediary between them and the consumer. Study; Sin, Tse, Yau, and Chow (2005), which is generally accepted in the literature, trust, commitment, communication, shared values, and empathy components are emphasized.

Brand; it can be defined as objective or non-objective to meet demand, need, or demand, which can be presented to the market addressed to provide consumption and benefit (Guest, 1942).

Brand equity; are the assets and identities associated with the brand, brand name, or symbols added to or subtracted from the value provided to the product or services about the consumers of a business or entity (Aaker and Jacobson, 2001).

Consumer-based brand equity; as an abstract entity created by marketing activities, it is the sum of the values that depend on the distinctive features of the brand, such as the name or symbol, which increases or decreases the value of the products and services offered to consumers (Aaker, 1991).

Aaker (1991, p.15) shows the dimensions of brand equity; "Brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other property rights". Here, other property rights; patents, trademarks, channel relationships. In this study, brand awareness/brand association (They are combined under a single factor in the confirmatory factor analysis of the original study.), perceived quality, and brand loyalty dimensions are used because of the scale developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001).

3. Methodology

In the study conducted between May 2018 and December 2018, the survey technique is used to measure the effectiveness of the perceptions of the residents of Ankara province on relationship marketing. The questionnaires are structured using the questions to reveal the research problem and the structural forms are designed to get the correct information from the sample (Nakip, 2013). It is designed as 3 sections. In the first part of the demographic characteristics of people participating in the study to determine the brand preference and brand satisfaction, it has been used 11 closed-end statement. In the second part, Sin et al. (2005) are used to determine the participant's perceptions of relationship marketing in the study by using the scale of the questions are prepared. In the third chapter, the scale used by Yoo and Donthu (2001) to determine the brand equity is used. The participants' perceptions of scale expressions are scored as "1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree in the 5-point Likert scale format" (Özdamar, 2001, p. 145). The data obtained from the residents of Karabuk province are analyzed by using LISREL 8.5 package programs within the framework of the SPSS 21 and structural equation model. The structure validity and reliability of the data set are tested in the first stage of the analysis.

Both descriptive and confirmatory factor analyzes are performed. Reliability analysis is performed to determine the reliability of the scale used in the research. Reliability refers to the consistency of repetitions during the analysis process (Alpár, 2010) hypotheses included in the study are tested with structural equation modeling.

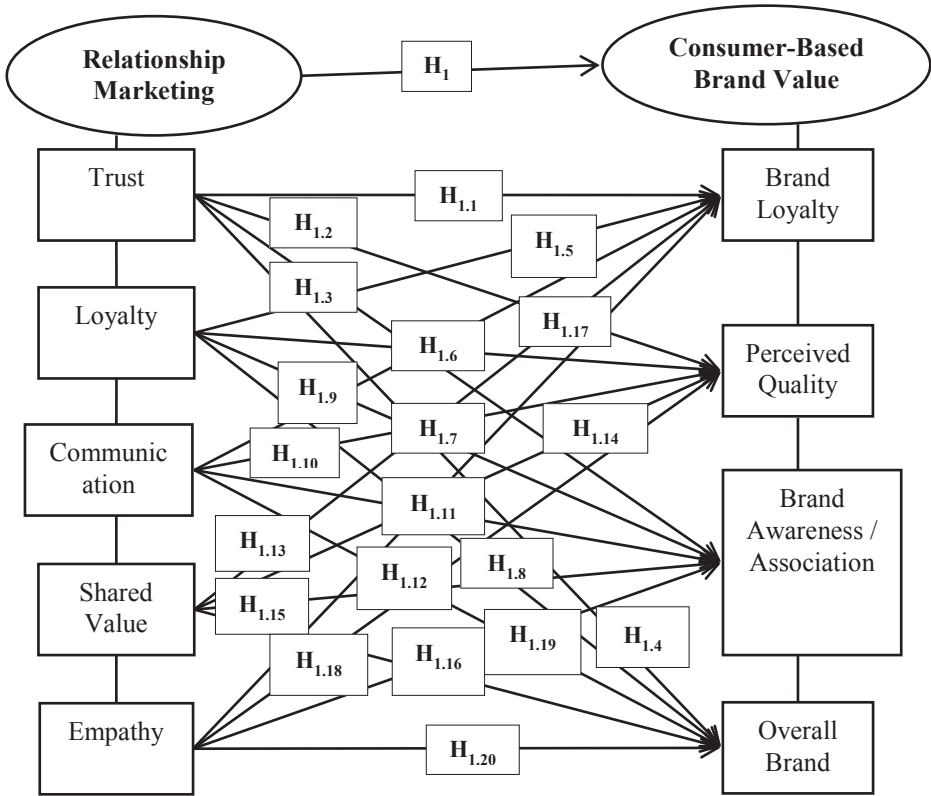


Figure 1. Research model.

Research Hypotheses:

This study focuses on the relationship between relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity. In the study, it is aimed to find out the relationship between the value of the brands using the relationship marketing applications addressing the branded national and international markets in the furniture sector and the results found. In this context, perceptions of brand equity of consumers within the framework of relationship marketing components are examined within the framework of the following hypotheses:

H₁: Relationship marketing has an impact on consumer-based brand equity.

H_{1.1}: Trust in relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand loyalty, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.2}: Trust in relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the perceived quality that has a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.3}: Trust in relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand awareness and branding, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.4}: Trust in relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on general brand equity, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.5}: Commitment to relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand loyalty, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.6}: Commitment from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the perceived quality that has a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.7}: Commitment to relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand awareness and branding, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.8}: Commitment from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on general brand equity, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.9}: Communication from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand loyalty, which is the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.10}: Communication from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the perceived quality that has a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.11}: Communication from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand awareness and branding, which is the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.12}: Communication from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on general brand equity, which is the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.13}: The shared value from the relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand loyalty, which is the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.14}: The shared value from the relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the perceived quality of the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.15}: The shared value from the relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the awareness and association of the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.16}: The shared value from the relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the general brand equity of the consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.17}: Empathy from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand loyalty, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.18}: Empathy from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the perceived quality that has a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.19}: Empathy from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on brand awareness and branding, which is a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

H_{1.20}: Empathy from relationship marketing dimensions has an impact on the general brand equity with a consumer-based brand equity dimension.

4. Research Findings

In the first part of the questionnaire prepared for collecting data for the research, questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants are included. Among these questions, specially included in the study; there are also questions to determine the preferences of the furniture brand that the participants are considering purchasing or if the brand they are currently using, their satisfaction with this brand, and the frequency of shopping from the brand. These questions are collected in predefined grouped categories. In this context, the findings of the demographic data of 639 people participating in the study. The demographic characteristics of the participants are examined, 54.9% of the participants are female, 45.1% are male, 50.2% are single, 49.8% are married, 15.1% have a high school or below education level, 44.1% of the university, 40.8% of the graduate or higher education level. While 13.8% of the participants are determined to be between 18-24 years old, 52.4% between the ages of 25-35, and 25% between the ages of 36-44, 8.8% of the participants are determined to be 45 years old and above. the majority of them are private-sector employees (26.0%) and physicians (23.8%).

The majority of the participants is determined their choice of brand Bellona by 33.6%, they buy the products of the brands they prefer to 74.5% of the participants of the brand of their choice of 78.7% of the product is determined that they use now or in the past at least once. 35.8% of the participants are satisfied with the brand they bought, 27.1% are very satisfied, while 22.2% of the participants do not shop for the brand they have chosen (marked), 44.0% It has been determined that they shop from the brand they have chosen at least once.

with participants of their choice and brands, they buy brands that are not satisfied with the given level. Accordingly, 83% of the participants from Bellona, 66% from Istikbal, 66.7% from Mondi, 77.10% from Doğtaş, 80% from İdaş, 100.0% from the Divan, Yataş they are satisfied with 28.60%, 75.7%, and 87.10% with other brands.

4.1. Explanatory Factor Analysis (AFA) Findings for Scales

4.1.1. AFA Findings on the Relationship Marketing Scale

Table 1. AFA Findings Related to Relationship Marketing Scale

Expressions	Common Factor Variance	1	2	3	4	5
G1	0,765		0,779			
G2	0,785		0,763			
G3	0,852		0,819			
G4	0,760		0,715			
B1	0,857	0,853				
B2	0,802	0,809				
B3	0,773	0,775				
B4	0,774	0,804				
İ1	0,858				0,832	
İ2	0,869				0,845	
İ3	0,841				0,838	
PD1	0,935			0,907		
PD2	0,899			0,881		
PD3	0,910			0,883		
E1	0,871					0,802
E2	0,887					0,828
E3	0,902					0,827
The eigenvalues		8,992	1,903	1,347	1,058	1,039
Variance Description Rate		52,897	11,193	7,922	6,224	6,113
Total Variance Description Rate					84,349	

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0,918 Bartlett : $\chi^2 = 10041,40$; $p=0,000$

As seen in Table 1; $0,918 > 0,60$ and the Barlett sphericity test $p < 0,01$ are significantly significant. These values indicate that the sample size is suitable for factor analysis and that the data are obtained from the multivariate normal distribution (Kan and Akbaş, 2005). According to Table 1, the relationship marketing scale has a 5-factor structure with an eigenvalue greater than 1.00. The first factor is 52.897% of the total variance; the second factor is 11,193% of the total variance; the third factor is 7.922% of the total variance; The fourth factor explains 6,224% of the total variance of the fifth factor and 6,113% of its total variance. It is determined that five factors explain 84,349% of the total variance. 40% to 60% of the variance explained in social sciences is considered sufficient (Scherer et al., 1988), 84.349% of the total variance is quite sufficient.

4.1.2. AFA Findings Regarding Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale

The principal component analysis is used to determine the result of the factor analysis (EFA) of the consumer-based brand equity scale. Varimax vertical rotation method, one of the vertical rotation methods, is preferred to determine how to rotate the factors. To decide whether the items in the scale will remain or not, factor load values of 0.45 and above are taken as criteria (Büyüköztürk, 2009). Table 2 shows the findings for the analysis.

Table 2. AFA Findings Regarding Consumer-Based Scale

Expressions	Common Factor Variance	1	2	3	4
MS1	0,920			0,931	
MS2	0,947			0,947	
MS3	0,913			0,902	
AK1	0,949				0,916
AK2	0,949				0,913
MB1	0,892	0,893			
MB2	0,864	0,883			
MB3	0,833	0,855			
MB4	0,847	0,892			
MB5	0,793	0,869			
GM1	0,967		0,916		
GM2	0,904		0,864		
GM3	0,897		0,885		
GM4	0,911		0,896		
The eigenvalues		7,224	2,333	1,891	1,137
Variance Description Rate		51,603	16,666	13,509	8,119
Total Variance Description Rate				89,897	

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)=0,852 Bartlett : $\chi^2 = 11243,76; p=0,000$

As shown in Table 2, $0.852 > 0.60$ and Bartlett sphericity test is significant at $p < 0.01$ significance level. These values show that the sample size is suitable for factor analysis and that the data are obtained from a multivariate normal distribution (Kan & Akbaş, 2005).

According to Table 2, the consumer-based brand equity scale shows a structure with 4 factors greater than 1.00. The first factor is 51.603% of the total variance; the second factor is 16.666% of the total variance; The third factor explains 13.509% of the total variance, and the fourth factor explains 8.119% of the total variance. It is determined that

four factors explained 89,897% of the total variance. The variance explained in social sciences is between 40% and 60% (Scherer et al., 1988) and 89.897% of the total variance is sufficient.

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (DFA) Findings for Scales

4.2.1. DFA Findings on the Relationship Marketing Scale

Table 3 presents the findings of item statistics obtained as a result of the DFA analysis conducted to test the relationship marketing scale factor structure.

Table 3. DFA Findings Regarding the Relationship Marketing Scale

Factor	Item	Faktor Loads	R ²	Error Variance	T
Confidence	G1	0,76	0,58	0,42	21,95**
	G2	0,80	0,64	0,36	23,67**
	G3	0,91	0,83	0,17	29,20**
	G4	0,88	0,77	0,23	27,41**
Loyalty	B1	0,86	0,74	0,26	26,40**
	B2	0,88	0,77	0,22	27,46**
	B3	0,86	0,74	0,27	26,33**
	B4	0,78	0,61	0,39	22,70**
Contact	İ1	0,89	0,79	0,21	28,10**
	İ2	0,90	0,81	0,19	28,49**
	İ3	0,86	0,74	0,25	26,79**
Shared Value	PD1	0,96	0,92	0,08	32,46**
	PD2	0,91	0,83	0,17	29,84**
	PD3	0,93	0,86	0,14	30,84**
Empathy	E1	0,90	0,81	0,20	28,72**
	E2	0,91	0,83	0,18	29,31**
	E3	0,93	0,86	0,13	30,69**

When Table 3 is analyzed, it can be said that the factor structure obtained from the AFA as a result of the relationship marketing scale is also confirmed by DFA findings in terms of item statistics. Accordingly, the factor loadings of items vary between 0.76 (item 1) and 0.96 (item 12). These values can be considered as high factor load. On the other hand, values for the multiple correlation square (R²) ranged from 0.58 (item 1) to R 20.92 (item 12). In this context, it can be said that the value of R² is in high and medium context

(Kline, 2010). The t values, which are the expression of the statistical significance level of the relations between the items and the implicit variables, are found to be significant at the level of $p < 0.01$, and all values are found to be greater than 2.56. In Figure 1, a path diagram of the relationship marketing scale is presented.

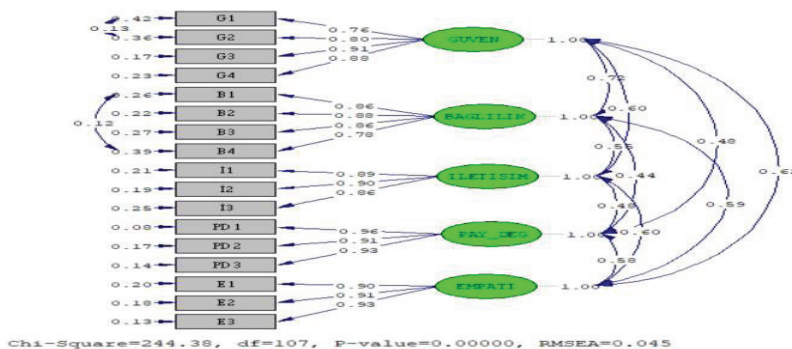


Figure 1. Path diagram of relationship marketing scale.

In Table 4, the relationship marketing scale goodness of fit values are presented. Accordingly, pre-modification X^2 / df , RMSEA, and NNFI values are seen to be slightly above the desired criterion. However, after the modifications (B4-B1, G2-G1), it is seen that the goodness of fit values are at a better level. On the other hand, the goodness of fit values can be said to be true to relationship marketing.

Table 4. Relationship Marketing Goodness Values Scale

Modification	Before	After
X^2/df	3,381	2,833
p	0,000	0,000
RMSEA	0,061	0,045
CFI	0,990	0,990
GFI	0,940	0,960
AGFI	0,910	0,940
NNFI	0,990	0,990
NFI	0,980	0,990
RMR	0,020	0,020
SRMR	0,027	0,027

AVE and CR values for the relationship marketing scale are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Concerning AVE Relationship Marketing and CR Value Table

Dimensions	AVE	Regression Weight Total Frame	CR
Confidence	0,71	11,22	0,90
Loyalty	0,72	11,42	0,91
Contact	0,78	7,02	0,92
Shared Values	0,87	7,84	0,95
Empathy	0,83	7,51	0,94

Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (1998); coefficients above 0.50 for building reliability and 0.60 for the variance described are suitable. Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that if the variance explained is above 0.5, convergence validity is reached for the scales. The condition required for combination validity is that the AVE value for each latent variable is greater than 0.5 and the CR value is greater than 0.7. The requirement for decomposition validity is that the square root of the AVE for a latent variable is greater than the correlation values of the variable with the other variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998). In this framework, the results of the association validity and the variance value of the relationship marketing are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Unity of Relationship Marketing Reliability and Common Variance Value Explained

Variables	CR	AVE	B	G	PD	I	E
Loyalty	0,90	0,72	0,85 ^a				
Confidence	0,91	0,71	0,66	0,84 ^a			
Shared Value	0,95	0,87	0,40	0,47	0,93 ^a		
Contact	0,92	0,78	0,50	0,57	0,45	0,88 ^a	
Empathy	0,94	0,83	0,55	0,59	0,56	0,55	0,91 ^a

According to Table 6; The lowest AVE value calculated for hidden structures is 0.71 and the calculated CR value is 0.90. These results show that common validity is provided for all latent structures in the measurement model. Also, when the square root values of AVE and correlations between variables are examined, it is determined that separation validity is provided for all hidden structures.

4.2.2. DFA Findings Regarding Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale

Table 7 presents the findings of the item statistics obtained as a result of the DFA analysis conducted to test the factor structure of the consumer-based brand equity scale.

Table 7. DFA Findings Regarding Consumer Based Scale

Factor	Item	Factor Loads	R ²	Error Variance	T
Brand Loyalty	BL1	0,92	0,85	0,15	30,45**
	BL2	0,98	0,96	0,14	33,97**
	BL3	0,93	0,86	0,14	32,29**
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0,94	0,88	0,11	28,84**
	PQ2	0,95	0,90	0,10	29,15**
Brand Awareness	BA1	0,94	0,88	0,12	31,48**
	BA2	0,92	0,85	0,16	30,23**
	BC1	0,89	0,80	0,20	28,90**
	BC2	0,89	0,79	0,21	28,45**
	BC3	0,84	0,71	0,29	26,13**
General Brand Value	GBV1	0,98	0,97	0,04	34,06**
	GBV2	0,94	0,87	0,21	33,09**
	GBV3	0,92	0,85	0,15	30,54**
	GBV4	0,92	0,85	0,16	30,17**

When Table 7 is analyzed, it can be said that the factor structure obtained from the AFA as a result of the consumer-based brand equity scale is confirmed by DFA findings in terms of item statistics. Accordingly, the factor loadings of the items ranged from 0.84 (item 10) to 0.98 (item 11). These values can be considered as high factor load. On the other hand, values for the multiple correlation square (R²) ranged from 0.71 (item 10) to 0.97 (item 11). In this context, it can be said that the value of R² is in high and medium context (Kline, 2010). The t values, which are the expression of the statistical significance level of the relations between the items and the implicit variables, are found to be significant at the level of $p < .01$ and all values are found to be greater than 2.56. Figure 2. presents the path diagram of the consumer-based brand equity scale.

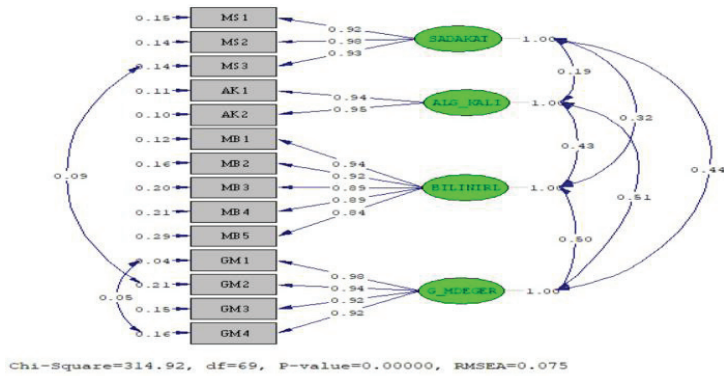


Figure 2. Diagram of consumer-based brand equity scale.

Table 8 presents the values of the good-value-to-consumer-based brand equity scale. Accordingly, pre-modification X^2 / df , RMSEA, and NNFI values are above the desired criterion. However, after the modifications (GM4-GM1, GM2-MS3), it is seen that the goodness of fit values are at a better level. On the other hand, it can be said that the values of the goodness of fit confirm the consumer-based brand equity.

Table 8. Consumer Based Brand Equity Scale

Modification	Before	After
X^2/df	8,430	4,564
p	0,000	0,000
RMSEA	0,108	0,075
CFI	0,960	0,980
GFI	0,880	0,930
AGFI	0,830	0,900
NNFI	0,950	0,98
NFI	0,960	0,980
RMR	0,027	0,031
SRMR	0,032	0,033

AVE and CR values for the consumer-based brand equity scale are given in Table 9.

Table 9. AVE and CR Values Table for Consumer-Based Brand Equity

Dimensions	AVE	Regression Weight Total Frame	CR
Brand Loyalty	0,89	8,01	0,96
Perceived Quality	0,88	3,57	0,94
Brand awareness	0,80	20,07	0,95
General Brand Value	0,88	14,14	0,97

According to the data in Table 9, the consumer-based brand equity scale is appropriate because the CR values of the dimensions are higher than 0.70 and AVE values are higher than 0.5. Table 10 presents the results regarding the combination validity and variance value of the consumer-based brand equity.

Table 10. The Relationship between the Validity of the Scale and the Common Variance Explained Value

Variables	CR	AVE	MS	AK	MB	GM
Brand Loyalty	0,96	0,89	0,94 ^a			
Perceived Quality	0,94	0,88	0,18	0,94 ^a		
Brand awareness	0,95	0,80	0,32	0,41	0,89 ^a	
Overall brand value	0,97	0,88	0,44	0,48	0,48	0,94 ^a

According to Table 10, it is seen that the lowest AVE value calculated for hidden structures is 0.80 and the lowest calculated CR value is 0.94. These results show that common validity is provided for all latent structures in the measurement model. When the correlations between the square root values of AVE and the variables are examined, it is determined that the separation validity is provided for all hidden structures.

4.3. Findings for Reliability of Scales

4.3.1. Reliability Findings Related to Relationship Marketing Scale

The first item analysis related to the relationship marketing scale is analyzed. At this stage it is sufficient that the relationship of a substance with other substances isn't less than 0.30; however, it is known that receiving more than 0.45 in more sensitive studies will increase reliability (Büyüköztürk, 2009).

The reliability findings of the scale show that the correlation between the items in the relationship marketing scale and the other items isn't less than 0.45, so the power of item measurement is strong enough and it contributes enough to determine the level of

the structure expected to be measured by the scale. Cronbach's Alpha findings of the scale are given in Table 11.

Table 11. Cronbach's Alpha of Scale Findings

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Loyalty	0.916
Trust	0.908
Shared Value	0,952
Communication	0.915
Empathy	0.936
Total scale	0.943

Based on these findings, the scale and subscale said to be adequate overall coefficient (Singh, 2007). The relationship between the items related to the relationship marketing scale with each other and with the total scale is examined; the relations at $r > 0.30$ indicate the suitability of the data set for factor analysis. When the findings are examined, it is seen that the relation between the scale items and the total scale meets the mentioned criteria. The relationship between the items and the total scale varies between 0,681-0,774. However, all of the relationships presented in the matrix are significant at $p < 0.01$. These findings indicate that the relationship between the items in the scale and the total score is high and there is no problem in terms of consistency in the items.

Item-total correlations and item-based analyzes are performed according to the difference of the upper 27% lower group average to determine how sufficient the relational marketing scale is in distinguishing individuals in terms of the characteristics it measures. (Büyüköztürk, Şekercioğlu, & Çokluk, 2010). The Independent samples t-test method is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the scores calculated by the scale and the lower 27% groups determined according to the scores.

When the reliability analysis coefficients of the relational marketing scale dimensions are examined; It is observed that the differences in the mean scores of 27% subgroups are significant ($p < ,01$). These findings show that the internal consistency of the scale items is high and sufficient to distinguish individuals.

4.3.2. Confidence Findings Regarding Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale

Reliability analysis findings of the scale substance to which the relationship between each agent other substances than 0.45 less than that of the material measuring force is strong enough and measuring this scale are determined to contribute sufficiently to determine the level of the expected structure. Cronbach's Alpha findings of the scale are given in Table 12.

Table 12. Cronbach's Alpha of Scale Findings

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Brand Awareness /Brand Association	0,953
General Brand Value	0.970
Brand Loyalty	0.959
Perceived Quality	0.945
Total scale	0.927

Based on these findings, it can be said that the coefficients of the scale in terms of sub-dimensions and overall are sufficient (Singh, 2007). According to the findings of the correlation analysis; relationships at $r > 0.30$ indicate the suitability of the data set for factor analysis. In the findings, it is seen that the relationship between the scale items and the total scale meets the criterion. The relationships between the items and the total scale vary between 0.668-0.774. However, all the relationships presented in the matrix are significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. These findings show that the items in the scale are highly correlated with the total score and there is no problem in terms of consistency in the items.

4.4. Findings on Structural Equation Model

The hypotheses included in the study are tested with structural equation modeling. Two different structural equation models have been established. Figure 3 dimensions of relationship-based marketing, confidence, commitment, communication, shared value, and empathy with consumer-based brand value dimensions; brand loyalty, perceived quality is the model showing the relationship between brand awareness/connotation.

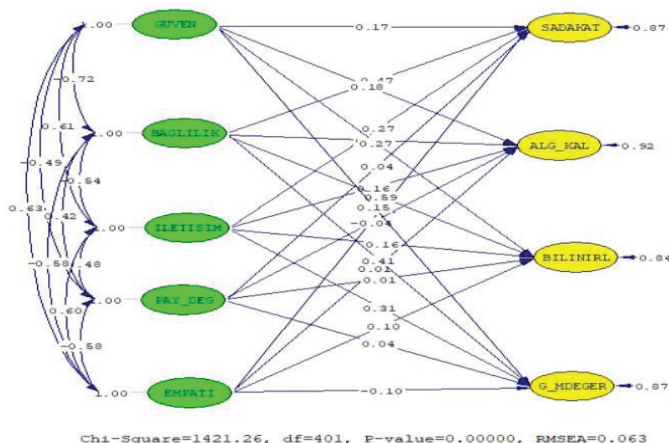


Figure 3. Structural equation model for cross-dimensional relations (path diagram).

The measurement model shown in Figure 3 demonstrates the relationship between the observed variables of each latent variable. The unidirectional arrows drawn towards the variables observed from a latent variable indicate how well each element represents its latent variable (factor load).

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between relationship marketing and consumer-based brand value.

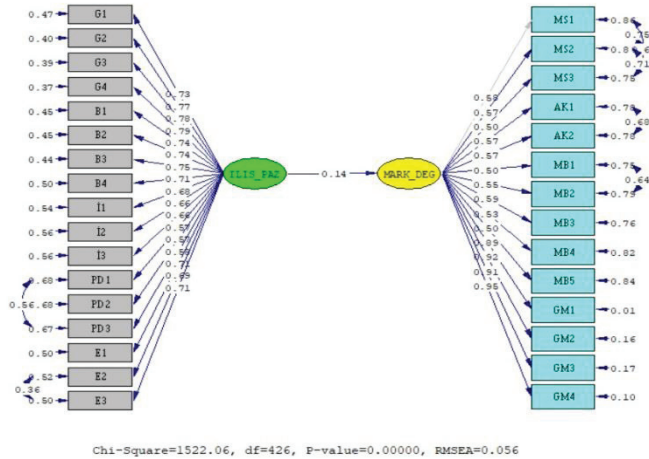


Figure 4. Structural equation model for relation between relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity (path diagram).

The measurement model shown in Figure 4 demonstrates the relationship between the observed variables of each latent variable. The unidirectional arrows drawn towards the variables observed from a latent variable indicate how well each element represents its latent variable (factor load).

The hypotheses included in the study are tested with structural equation modeling. The values of the structural equation model for the relationship between relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity are given in Table 13.

Table 13. Goodwill Goodness Values of Structural Equation Model

Modification	Before	After
X²/df	8,467	3,572
P	0,000	0,000
RMSEA	0,108	0,056
CFI	0,820	0,900
GFI	0,730	0,860
AGFI	0,560	0,830
NNFI	0,800	0,900
NFI	0,810	0,900
RMR	0,102	0,092
SRMR	0,120	0,089

In the study, it is determined that goodness of fit didn't provide in the first evaluation. Accordingly, modification of the error terms between PD3-PD1, E2-E3, MB1-MB2, MS3-MS2, and MS2-MS1 is carried out. After the modification procedures, the goodness of fit values presented in Table 13 is provided.

4.5. Testing Hypotheses

The acceptance/rejection status of the 21 hypotheses presumed for research is given in Table 14.

Table 14. Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	β	t	p	Result
H ₁	0.14	3.20	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.1}	0.17	2.43	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.2}	0.18	2.39	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.3}	0.27	3.83	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.4}	0.15	6.39	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.5}	0.47	7.23	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.6}	0.40	5.96	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.7}	0.59	9.01	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.8}	0.41	6.39	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.9}	0.27	6.65,	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.10}	0.16	2.74	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.11}	0.16	2.72	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.12}	0.31	5.49	<0.05	Accept
H _{1.13}	0.04	0.71	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.14}	0.04	0.81	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.15}	0.02	0.29	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.16}	0.04	0.87	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.17}	0.09	0.16	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.18}	0.01	0.19	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.19}	0.10	1.66	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>
H _{1.20}	0.10	1.79	>0.05	<u>Rejection</u>

As seen in Table 20; 13 of 21 hypotheses developed to reach the research objective are accepted and 8 of them aren't accepted.

5. Conclusion and Further Discussion

The findings of the study show that when furniture brands, which are at the forefront at the international level, strengthen their relationship marketing practices and dimensions, they increase consumer-based brand equities. As a result of the study, it is concluded that relationship marketing and its dimensions have a positive and significant effect on consumer-based brand equity and dimensions. Studies in the literature support our conclusion; Aaker and Jacobson (1994), Wolter (2009), Jesri, Ahmadi, and Fatehipoor (2013), Abeysekera and Wickramasinghe (2013), Ukkwatte and Abeysekera (2015); Yoganathan, Jebarajakirthy and Thaichon (2015), Baran and Taşkın (2015).

Trust dimension in the study; brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness / association have had a positive effect on the overall brand value; previously accepted in the literature; The hypothesis that “trust, one of the relationship marketing dimensions, is the main determinant of brand equity” has been confirmed in this study. This situation supports similar studies in the literature. As a matter of fact, Berry (1995) stated that “customer satisfaction based on trust is effective in creating brand loyalty”. Lau and Lee (1999) in their study on durable and short-lived products; They found a very meaningful relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty, however, they found that trust in the brand created a synergy with the trust felt in the company, and it has a greater effect on brand loyalty. In the research conducted by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) on 107 different brands; It has been determined that there is a positive relationship between brand trust and behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Similarly, Cheng-Hsui (2001) and Sweeney and Swait (2008) determined that trust from the relationship marketing dimensions is an important driving force of brand loyalty as it facilitates exchange relations between buyers and sellers. Harris and Goode (2004) found in their study that brand trust has a significant effect on brand loyalty in online shopping.

In the study of commitment, which is the second important dimension of relationship marketing; brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and association have had a positive effect on the overall brand value. The uniqueness of a brand that uses a structural bond increases brand relationships and brand awareness. In addition; Loyalty, which is an indication that the brand takes into account the needs of its customers, also increases perceived quality (Aaker, 1991). This situation coincides with the literature. Hiscock (2001), Chattananon and Trimetsoontorn (2009) say that the ultimate goal of relationship marketing is to create an intense bond between customers and the brand. Loyalty both relieves customers' doubts and contributes to improving their trust and relationships with the business and its employees (Chattananon & Trimetsoontorn, 2009). Jesri et al. according to (2013); loyalty and trust have a positive effect on brand loyalty, and again Yoganathan et al. (2015) suggested that commitment in the context of relationship marketing helps establish and develop brand loyalty. The reason this; it is that customers who are emotionally attached to the business stay loyal to the brand. Commitment is an absolute necessity to establish and maintain the relationship between the brand and the consumer (Shankar, Smith and Rangaswamy, 2003). Morgan and Hunt (1994), by participating in this situation, say that the way to make relationships valuable is through mutual trust and commitment.

In this study, the communication dimension of relationship marketing based on long-term relationships; brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness and association have had a positive effect on the overall brand value. Mutual communication enables consumers to develop a positive attitude towards the brand and brand employees (Kang, 2004). According to Baran and Taşkın (2015); one of the relationship marketing dimensions, communication has an effect on brand association and perceived quality. They concluded that communication has a significant impact on brand equity dimensions and communication has a vital value in establishing a long-term relationship with customers.

The more the brands we work on strengthen their relationship marketing practices to communicate with their customers, the more brand equities will increase. One of the effective ways to achieve this is to add a communication department with the customer to the organizations of top managers of the brand and to be in frequent dialogue with the customers, especially to produce the best solutions for customer needs and problems. One of the ways to strengthen communication is promotion activities.

Shared values, another dimension of relationship marketing, have no effect on consumer-based brand equity dimensions. Our hypothesis is rejected. Confirmed empirically by Mukherjee and Nath (2005) in the context of banking, it contradicts the hypothesis that "If customers come to think that they share the values of an organization, it will increase brand value". In this case; brands should develop shared value practices in a way that will increase brand awareness; brands should reasonably consider including them in their business policies and goals. Brand owners need to constantly conduct marketing research and organize meetings with key customers where they can define their customers' views, beliefs and values.

Empathy dimension, like shared value, has no effect on consumer-based brand equity dimensions and overall brand value. So the hypothesis is rejected. In the literature, Kayaman and Araslı (2007) concluded that there is a positive relationship between empathy and brand image that constitutes brand awareness from the dimensions of brand equity. The result of the hypothesis contradicts with the literature. It is understood from this situation that a brand that wants to increase its brand value should give priority to both listening to its customers and understanding their needs and expectations in order to empathize with its customers. In other words, the employees of the brands who directly deal with their customers should put themselves in their customers' shoes as soon as they serve. Management organizes training programs to help employees to apply these relationship marketing practices, senior executives randomly visit retail stores, mystery shoppers, etc. It is extremely important that they follow the relationship marketing practices implemented in the stores. The brands we focus on need to develop applications for the empathy dimension by taking into account the brand association. While one of these brands is evoking in the mind of the customer, the empathy dimension doesn't fully see its function. E.g; They can pay attention to this when organizing their advertising campaigns or they can use their logos, signs, etc. They can rearrange them in a way that emphasizes empathy. Study can be done on this hypothesis. As a theoretical suggestion, academic research can be made on the hypothesis "There is a direct relationship between shared value and empathy".

Research has proven that relationship marketing components have a positive effect on consumer-based brand value. First of all, this study showed that relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity can be predicted in the furniture industry. For this reason, researchers and strategists aiming to address the subject of the study are among the relationship marketing components; trust, commitment, communication, empathy and

shared value; They have to examine brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and association components from consumer-based brand equity components.

The research reported here revealed the possible effects of relationship marketing dimensions on consumer-based brand equity. The study; Since this subject hasn't been fully studied before, it contributes to the theory of social change in the direction of gaining a theory to the literature and in the direction of analyzing relationship marketing and consumer-based brand equity at the same time by touching the deficiencies of the studies from the past to the present. This theory states that with the establishment of a fluent relationship between consumer and brand, a product provides increased value and benefit with the brand name. In this context; it shows many ways by providing information to other researchers who will work on study topics. In addition to contributing to the theory, the findings of this study have several practical marketing implications for the furniture industry. First, it is suggested that top management of brands inject the relationship marketing mentality into all employee and retail stores in order to successfully implement relationship marketing practices. Brand personnel can increase the perceived value of their brands by providing good service to customers in their relations with consumers (Abeysekera & Wickramasinghe, 2013). Second, if they don't have databases, brands need to create a consumer database to receive customer information, and if there is, they need to increase their relationship marketing practices with this recorded information. As discussed, the increase in trust and loyalty will lead to a relationship between consumer and brand. As a result, the consumer's desire to shop from the brand will increase and long-term relationships will positively increase the brand equity.

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Ek 1: Araştırma İzin Belgesi



T.C.
KARABÜK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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12/12/2018 tarih ve 30734 sayılı Prof.Dr.Ahmet GÜRBÜZ ‘ün dilekçe ve ekleri görüldü.

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ASLI GİBİDİR

Prof. Dr. Zeki TEKİN

Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurul Başkanı