

INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF THE TREND TOWARDS CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION ON BRAND PREFERENCE, MEDIATED BY BRAND SENSE AND BRAND AWARENESS IN THE TURKISH APPAREL SECTOR¹

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ABSTRACT

While the understanding of consumption is based on meeting basic human needs, consumers have begun to purchase for different reasons, including social status. Consumers exhibit purchasing behaviour to improve self-perception and raise their social status even in the absence of basic need. The primary purpose of this research was to investigate this mechanism and how conspicuous consumption affects brand sense and brand awareness. The study sample consisted of 922 consumers shopping in the apparel sector in the Marmara region. It is found that the tendency to conspicuous consumption, brand sense, and brand awareness eventually affect brand preference process. Significant results were obtained by analyzing a survey conducted over the Internet. There were positive effects of the conspicuous consumption trend in the apparel sector on brand preference coupled with mediatory effects of brand sense and brand awareness.

Keywords: Apparel Sector, The Tendency to Conspicuous Consumption, Brand Sense, Brand Awareness, Brand Preference.

JEL: M3, M31, M39.

1. INTRODUCTION

The understanding of consumption is a long-term topic that is constantly changing. As social structure, consumption motives, and consumption processes have changed, consumers have recently been satisfied with luxury and exhibited conspicuous consumption (Yin and Huang, 2022: 617). This process transforms consumption motives into desires and needs, benefiting from consumption's social and psychological functions (Gürbüz and Çetinkaya Bozkurt, 2022: 197). Consumers no longer behave

¹ Kocaeli University, Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, decision dated 22.03.2023 and numbered E-10017888-100-388858.

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Makale Geçmiři/Article History

Başvuru Tarihi / Date of Application : 23 Mart / March 2023

Düzeltilme Tarihi / Revision Date : 1 Haziran / June 2023

Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date : 20 Haziran / June 2023

to meet their basic needs but for social status and to show off to peers (Becan and Eaghanioskoui, 2019: 86). Consumers share what they buy while shopping, the meals they eat, and the places they stay on vacation and try to create a new image on social media.

In marketing, emotions have been considered to explain buying behaviour only for rational reasons. Consumers create an emotional bond between them and the purchased products, and symbolic meanings are attached to these products (Tosun et al., 2019: 1831). In this branding context, companies need to create a consumer perception of their brand and products as status symbols. This situation relates to the feelings, awareness, and trust generated toward brands (Önen, 2018: 619). Consumers tend to consume more to show off and impress others, so they feel good psychologically (Öztaş and Bozyiğit, 2019: 124).

The relationship of consumption with social status is established, especially in the postmodernist era with different meanings assigned to consumption (Hız, 2011; Gürbüz and Çetinkaya Bozkurt, 2022). There is a transition process to hedonistic consumption and conspicuous consumption and away from utilitarian consumption (Dal and Akbaba, 2019: 959). In this context, achieving status and emotions such as pleasure and fun are significant (Turancı et al., 2022: 110). It is becoming critical for brands that need to analyze this changing process to be aware of the brand and affect consumers emotionally to compete successfully (Yazıcı and Çelikol, 2021: 105).

The starting point of this study was to investigate how the conspicuous consumption tendencies of consumers have emerged. In this context, the factors affecting the trend to conspicuous consumption, especially in the apparel sector, have been focused on as a research gap in the literature. Later, the theoretical framework will be put forward, by reviewing the existing literature, on how the concepts of brand sense and brand awareness affect brand preference. The findings obtained from the empirical study are compared with the current results in the literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Apparel Sector

The apparel sector, which has been developing rapidly in Turkey, especially since the 1980s, has a close relationship with European countries and, at the same time, competes with world brands (Özbek et al., 2020: 183). The Turkish apparel sector is one of the most important sources of employment, investment, and added value in the country's economy (Adıgüzel, 2019: 3489). In recent years, Turkish apparel brands have been improving markedly but must compete with globally recognized brands. The contract production method, standard in many sectors, is decreasing in parallel with the importance of branding in the apparel sector (Esi, 2017: 649). This situation makes it important to research the relationship between branding and consumer behaviour in the Turkish apparel sector. In this way, it will

be possible for the apparel sector to achieve the highest standards and compete with the best in a global marketplace (Özbek and Esmer, 2022: 148).

The textile sector, in general, and the apparel sector, in particular, drive the country's economy (Dal and Özbek, 2006). Especially with increasing international trade due to globalization, the textile and branded apparel sectors play an essential role. Apparel clothing products constitute a vital consumption area and are considered crucial, especially with products that have become brands (Onurlubaş and Öztürk, 2020: 113). Hedonistic, luxury, and conspicuous consumer products also attract attention in addition to primary consumer products in the apparel sector, considered one of the driving sectors in the Turkish economy (Adıgüzel, 2019: 3489). Local products must be branded to compete with global brands accepted on world markets. Studies in the apparel sector, one of the most dynamic sectors, are essential in this respect, and such studies are guiding the brands in the industry (Tuzcu and Büyüker İşler, 2018; Bilik and Tuncalı Yaman, 2020).

2.2. The Trend of Conspicuous Consumption

Consumers' expectations and understanding of consumption are changing, and today consumers are turning to consumption, not only to meet their needs but also to obtain added pleasure from enjoyable purchasing (Efendioğlu, 2019; Gürbüz and Çetinkaya Bozkurt, 2022). The concept of conspicuous consumption can be traced back to Veblen's study "The Theory of the Loafer Class" in the 1900s. Conspicuous consumption was first introduced as the wealthy class's act in their free time to make other people jealous and attract attention (Veblen, 2007). According to this theory, the rich, whose main motive for shopping was to show off, have started to imitate other classes over time (Li et al., 2020: 1217). The basis of conspicuous consumption is making wealthy consumers' wealth visible in society and attracting attention (Şahin and Nasır, 2019; Topçu et al., 2020).

Studies on conspicuous consumption continue today, and the trend of conspicuous consumption is considered in different dimensions (Güleç, 2015; Turancı et al., 2022). In conspicuous consumption, as viewed within the framework of consumer society, the symbolic size of purchasing behaviour outweighs its economic dimension (Klabi, 2020: 101). It is seen that consumers turn to consumption not to consume but to gain respectability, achieve status, and make others jealous (Amatulli et al., 2018; Çetin and Yaylı, 2019; Yayar and Oruç, 2020; Cesur and Çam, 2022). Thus, conspicuous consumption builds a bridge between the consumer and the class to which their purchase symbolically belongs or they want to belong and appears to move them away from the lower classes (Tor Kadioğlu and Yağcı, 2021; Terzi and Bayrakdaroğlu, 2022). Conspicuous consumption shows that consumption trends and culture have changed (Hız, 2011: 118). Conspicuous consumption also refers to brand and image consumption rather than product and service consumption (Çetin and Yaylı, 2019: 228).

Different dimensions express various benefits to expectations in conspicuous consumption (Klabi, 2020: 99). Among these dimensions, wealth, expensive shopping, achieving status, and

uniqueness can be included. In particular, the uniqueness dimension is one of the distinguishing features of conspicuous consumption, and showing that unique products are owned is an essential reason for satisfaction (Liang et al., 2018: 362). Unique products are luxury and prestigious products that have high desirability in society (Aslan, 2021: 273). Thus, the social status achieved by conspicuous consumption will be shown to everyone (Becan and Eaghanioukoui, 2019: 87). In this way, a hedonistic and symbolic consumption style emerges for consumers, which serves the purposes of enhancing reputation, status, and producing ostentation (Zengin and Döngül, 2022; Niesiobędzka and Konaszewski, 2022). Conspicuous consumption makes consumers want to express themselves and show them to others how they wish to be perceived (Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Jacob et al., 2020; Terzi and Bayrakdaroğlu, 2022).

There are many studies conducted into conspicuous consumption (Aydın and Karamehmet, 2015; Koçak, 2017; Özkan Pir, 2017; Becan and Eaghanioukoui, 2019; Dal and Akbaba, 2019; Tor Kadioğlu, 2020; Siepmann et al., 2022; Cesar and Çam, 2022). O’Cass and McEwen (2004) concluded that there is a meaningful difference between the sexes in conspicuous consumption. Another study concluded that conspicuous consumption means that those with high incomes consider themselves in the middle class to spend more than they need due to status and prestige anxiety (Hız, 2011: 126). In another study, conspicuous consumption was taken as a communication tool and suggested that young people especially see products with symbolic meaning in the context of conspicuous consumption (Koçak, 2017: 83). As consumers reach outcomes within the framework of conspicuous consumption, product varieties are constantly expanding (Şahin and Nasır, 2019: 388). In their study, Ural and Hallumoğlu (2018: 48) found that social and monetary value positively and significantly affect the trend to conspicuous consumption. In another study, gender was an essential variable in conspicuous consumption concerning eating out behaviour (Çetin and Yaylı, 2019).

2.3. Brand Sense

Branding is necessary to connect with consumers. Thus, consumers’ feelings can be addressed (Lindstrom, 2008). Brand sense refers to the positive and negative emotions and emotional reactions expected to occur in consumers due to the use of the brand. Ensuring a positive brand feeling is an essential goal for businesses, and the brand will likely give consumers exciting, positive, and satisfying emotions (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001: 84). Brand sense is essential in remembering the brand quickly and primarily for consumers (Sung et al., 2009; Kabadayi and Alan, 2012). Thus, brand emotion influences brand preference, consumer decision-making, and brand loyalty processes (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Kabadayi and Alan, 2012; Bennur and Jin, 2016). Brand sense is an effective precursor to forming brand loyalty (Bennur and Jin, 2016: 1). Many studies show emotions impact consumers’ attitudes and behaviours (Matzler et al., 2006). Consumer behaviour does not always occur according to rational reasons, and consumers’ emotions in marketing should be included in the analyses performed. Brand preferences emerge due to the influence of factors such as perceived quality, brand sense, brand

awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty related to the specific brand (Uzunkaya and Yükselen, 2020: 277).

2.4. Brand Awareness

As a result of the intensification of global competition, the number of brands that consumers are exposed to is increasing, and the brand must appear different from other brands to gain a competitive advantage. As the brand value increases, it is essential to position the more recognized and selected brands (Paksoy et al., 2020: 54). Brands need to gain a prominent place in consumers' minds to maintain a competitive advantage. With a strong marketing communication strategy, brands can become a permanent feature for consumers at the end of this process, which starts primarily with brand awareness (Yazıcı and Çelikel, 2021: 105). Brand awareness is mainly about recognizing the brand and then remembering it. Brand recognition and recall stages constitute brand awareness (Aaker, 1996; Özyurt Kaptanoğlu et al., 2019). During the brand awareness process, there is a question of developing positive attitudes and behaviours towards brands in the consumer's memory (Bilgin, 2018: 133). With brand awareness, brand elements such as the name, logo, and symbol are used in consumer memory to make the brand stand out from other brands (Çifci et al., 2016: 3741).

Brand awareness is one of the essential components of brand value in the process of ensuring brand selection and brand loyalty. By gaining a place in the minds of consumers through brand awareness, the preference of the specific brand over the competition is enhanced and may become paramount (Çetin and Yaylı, 2019: 228). There are different levels of brand awareness; recognition, remembering, keeping in mind, brand dominance, brand knowledge, and brand opinion (Aaker, 1996). The concept of brand awareness is connected with brand image, and the abstract features of the brand and the promises it offers to the consumer play an essential role in creating brand awareness (Yazıcı and Çelikel, 2021: 109). A consumer who evaluates the product options will first prefer a particular brand. In addition to strong brand awareness in this selection process, the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours formed during the brand recognition process play a role (Özyurt Kaptanoğlu et al., 2019).

The concept of brand awareness refers to remembering the brand immediately or when a hint is given and being continuously aware of the brand. Aaker (1996), when explaining the concept of brand awareness, mentioned the stages of "being aware of the brand" in the minds of consumers, then "brand recall," and "being the first and only brand that comes to mind" as the last stage in the process that continues with "brand recognition." At the end of the brand awareness process, brand preference is established and purchasing behaviour is changed (Onurlubaş and Öztürk, 2020; Yazıcı and Çelikel, 2021). Studies have shown that brand awareness has a positive effect on keeping the brand in mind and, therefore, maintaining consumers' brand preference, which turns into purchasing intention and modifies purchasing behaviour (Liu et al., 2017: 199). Through brand awareness, enterprises strengthen their

competitive position by increasing their market share and profit margin (Uzunkaya and Yükselen, 2020: 283). Brand experience has been reported to positively affects brand awareness (Can, 2016).

2.5. Brand Preference

In a market environment where competition is intensifying and the number of visible brands is increasing, businesses are moving towards branding on consumer expectations. In consumer behaviour, the concepts related to the brand are kept current and thus increase their importance (Uludağ and Soyer, 2023). Businesses can change consumers' brand preferences by focusing on brand value elements. The concept of brand value includes material and intangible factors, such as consumer attitudes toward the brand and brand image (Uzunkaya and Yükselen, 2020: 281). Brand preference means that brands that consumers decide with their minds and hearts are prioritized over other brands. When consumers make purchasing decisions, they may act on brand preferences, if these have been established (Hwang and Chihyung, 2013).

Consumer brand preference has three components: cognitive, behavioural, and affective (Bartels and Johnson, 2015: 48). Purchasing processes can be complex, and consumers use brand preferences to facilitate decision-making. Brand preferences are influenced by some factors, such as the nature of consumer needs, the brand's characteristics, and the perception of these characteristics (Ülker Demirel and Yıldız, 2015: 84). Brand preferences are shaped by consumers' attitudes and beliefs about the brand and continue until the purchase decision is made due to this process. While consumers put their preferred brands in the background, they bring some concepts to the fore, and these brands are engraved in their minds by consumers (Hwang and Chihyung, 2013: 122).

Organisations with strong brands influence brand preferences by investing to increase their own brand value. Brand preference is understood to be consumers' preference for a particular brand over other brands, based on personal experiences (Correa and Parente-Laverde, 2017: 1114). Original brands are primarily preferred by consumers when they may provide an unusual or different purchasing experience (Önen, 2018: 612). A brand should provide consumers with a positive and unique consumption experience to become a preferred brand. Many social, psychological, and environmental factors are influential in the process of brand preference, characteristics of consumer needs, consumer perceptions, the effectiveness of marketing activities, and brand image (Aytekin and Taştepe, 2020). There is also a close relationship between brand preference and purchasing intention. Studies have shown that the constant perception of a brand in a different way from other brands usually, if not always, turns into purchasing intention (Chang and Liu, 2009: 1690).

There have been some studies on the branding process in the apparel sector (Tamas, 2021). It was reported that the trend to branding is necessary for the apparel sector, mainly because the competition is intense and there is also a risk of counterfeit products (Malinowska-Olszowy, 2005: 50). Altıntaş and Ağaç (2008) concluded that the branding process is mandatory to succeed against the competition for

Turkish apparel enterprises. Although Turkish apparel enterprises try to attach importance to branding, it is suggested that they cannot always work toward branded products. Brand, identity, and positioning issues have been brought to the fore in the textile and especially the apparel sector (Atalayer and Bahar, 2016: 16).

There are many studies conducted on conspicuous consumption. A survey revealed that conspicuous consumption and the desire to see respectability are closely related (Husic and Cicic, 2009: 231). Güllülü et al. (2010), on the other hand, found that the level of showing oneself and being influenced by the environment is behind conspicuous consumption. Consumers think the higher the price, the closer they can get to social advancement. Other studies also point to different aspects of conspicuous consumption. For example, Aydın and Karamehmet (2015) found that emotional attachment is vital, based on conspicuous consumption in men belonging to Generation Y. In another study, they concluded that social status, attracting attention, and trying to belong to the higher tiers of society are influential in conspicuous consumption (Lewis and Moital, 2016). Koçak (2017) states that conspicuous consumption is seen as an indicator of status. As a result of research conducted into conspicuous consumption, factors such as perception of quality, brand awareness, an expectation of status, desire to provide prestige, and consumer's self-reward all contribute to conspicuous consumption (Tor Kadioğlu and Yağcı, 2021).

This study focused on the effect of conspicuous consumption on brand preference through brand sense and awareness in the field of apparel brands in Turkey. The determined hypotheses are tested with field research, carried out within the framework of the research model.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The Purpose of the Research

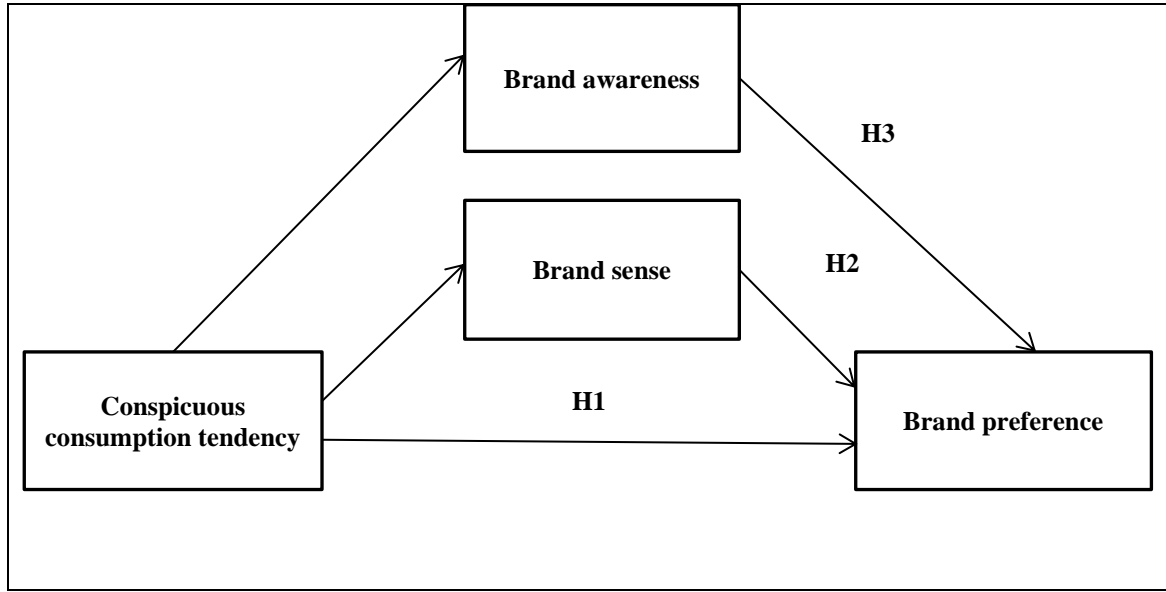
This research aimed to investigate how the trend towards conspicuous consumption in the apparel industry affects consumer brand sense, awareness, and, ultimately, brand preference. In particular, the mediating role of brand sense and brand awareness in the relationship between the tendency toward conspicuous consumption and brand preference has been analysed.

H1: The tendency of conspicuous consumption positively and significantly affects brand preference.

H2: Brand sense mediates relationship between the tendency to conspicuous consumption and brand preference.

H3: Brand awareness mediates the relationship between the tendency to conspicuous consumption and brand preference.

Figure 1. Research Model



3.2. Study Design

The scales used to collect data and the sources of the scales are shown below:

The conspicuous consumption tendency scale was developed by Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, and Ghosal (2011), and its Turkish adaptation was made by Gürbüz and Çetinkaya Bozkurt (2022). There are 11 expressions on the one-dimensional scale. The original scale's internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) was calculated as 0.82.

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Tokgöz (2020: 591) developed the consumer's brand sense scale. It is a 3-item scale and has been translated into Turkish.

Nelson and McLeod (2005) developed the brand awareness scale, and it was adapted to Turkish by Öztaş and Bozyiğit (2019).

Chang and Liu (2009) created the brand preference scale, which was adapted to Turkish by Ülker Demirel and Yıldız (2015). The scale consists of four expressions. The expressions on the scales are arranged as 5-point Likert type: "(1) I Strongly Disagree" to "(5) I Strongly Agree".

3.3. The Universe and Sample of the Research

The universe of the research included all consumers of apparel products. The research sample was collected online by easy sampling, and 922 participants were included. Ethics consent was given by Kocaeli University, Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, decision dated 22.03.2023 and numbered E-10017888-100-388858. SPSS, AMOS, and Process Macro Model 4 programs were used for analyses of the data.

3.4. Research Findings

Table 1 contains information about the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Table 1. Demographic Variables

Gender	n	%	Marital Status	n	%
Female	523	56.7	Married	268	29.1
Male	399	43.3	Single	654	70.9
Age Groups	n	%	Education	n	%
18-24	531	57.6	Primary	74	8.0
25-34	184	20.0	High School	281	30.5
35-44	112	12.1	Vocational School	269	29.2
45-54	73	7.9	BA	266	28.9
55 and above	22	2.4	MA and higher	32	3.5
Income	n	%	Profession	n	%
3000-5000 TL	326	35.4	Student	380	41.2
5001-7500 TL	79	8.6	Housewife	78	8.5
7501-10000TL	172	18.7	Public Servant	77	8.4
10001-12500TL	100	10.8	Worker	270	29.3
12501-15000TL	90	9.8	Self-employed	95	10.3
15001-17500TL	57	6.2	Retired	22	2.4
17501 and above	98	10.6			
			Total	922	100.0

While the majority of the individuals participating in the study were between the ages of 18-24, their education level was generally in the form of high school, associate degree, and undergraduate. In addition, it is notable that most individuals participating in the research have an income of less than TL 10,000. However, as over two fifths of the study population were students, this income bracket may not be surprising.

Reusing the conspicuous consumption tendency, brand sense, brand awareness, and brand preference scales in a different sample requires confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model. Thus, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). To test the CFA results and model fit in the studies, the fit statistics frequently used are as follows (Sümer, 2000; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001, Keline, 2005, Şimşek, 2007, Meydan and Şeşen, 2011, Evcı and Aylar, 2017).

Table 2. Statistical Values Related to the Fit of the Model

Measurement (Compliance Statistics)	Excellent Compliance	Acceptable Compliance
X2/sd	$X2/sd \leq 3$	$X2/sd \leq 5$
RMSEA	$0 < RMSEA < 0.05$	$0.06 \leq RMSEA < 0.08$
SRMR	$0 \leq SRMR \leq 0.05$	$0.06 \leq SRMR \leq 0.08$
CFI	$0.97 \leq CFI \leq 1$	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 0.96$
NFI	$0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1$	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 0.94$
GFI	$0.90 \leq GFI \leq 1$	$0.89 \leq GFI \leq 0.85$
IFI	$0.95 \leq IFI \leq 1$	$0.90 \leq IFI \leq 0.94$

After the analysis, the factor loads related to the expressions were examined and no item has been excluded from the analysis as no indicator is loaded to anything other than the factor it represents. CFA was performed simultaneously on the whole measurement model, as each scale is considered a whole. During the analysis, two items were taken from the conspicuous consumption tendency scale, three from the brand awareness scale, and one from the brand preference scale to reach valid compliance favourability values. The standardized factor loads of the indicators included in the analysis are higher than 0.50 and range between 0.57-0.81.

Table 3. Compliance Values Related to the Measurement Model

Scale	X2/sd	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	NFI	GFI	IFI
Measurement Model	4.34	0.060	0.0532	0.938	0.921	0.900	0.938

As seen in Table 3, the model's compatibility is within the acceptable value range. Thus, the measurement model used in the study has shown compatibility with the sample, and the scales have been confirmed.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis Findings Related to the Scales

Scale	Cronbach Alpha	No of Items
Conspicuous consumption tendency scale	.90	11
Consumer's brand sense scale	.94	3
Brand awareness scale	.85	6
Brand preference scale	.84	4
The Whole Measurement Model	.94	24

As seen in the table, the scales provide the necessary conditions because the results obtained in the reliability analysis of the scales are in the interval of $0.80 \leq \alpha < 1.00$.

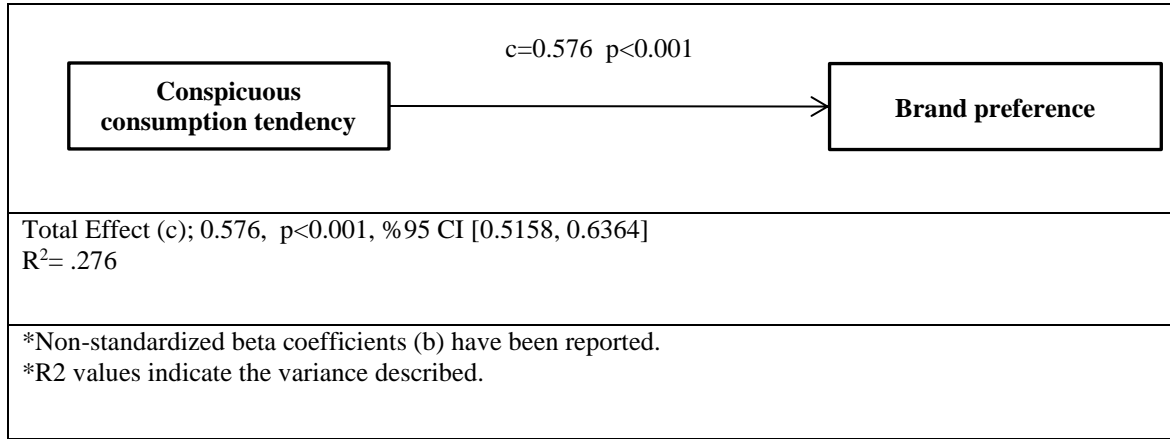
Table 5. Correlation Analysis Table for the Research Variables

Variables	Conspicuous Consumption	Brand Sense	Brand Awareness	Brand Preference
Conspicuous Consumption	1	-.541**	.669**	.526**
Brand Sense		1	-.643**	.492**
Brand Awareness			1	.661**
Brand Preference.				1

**There is a significant relationship at the 0.01 level.

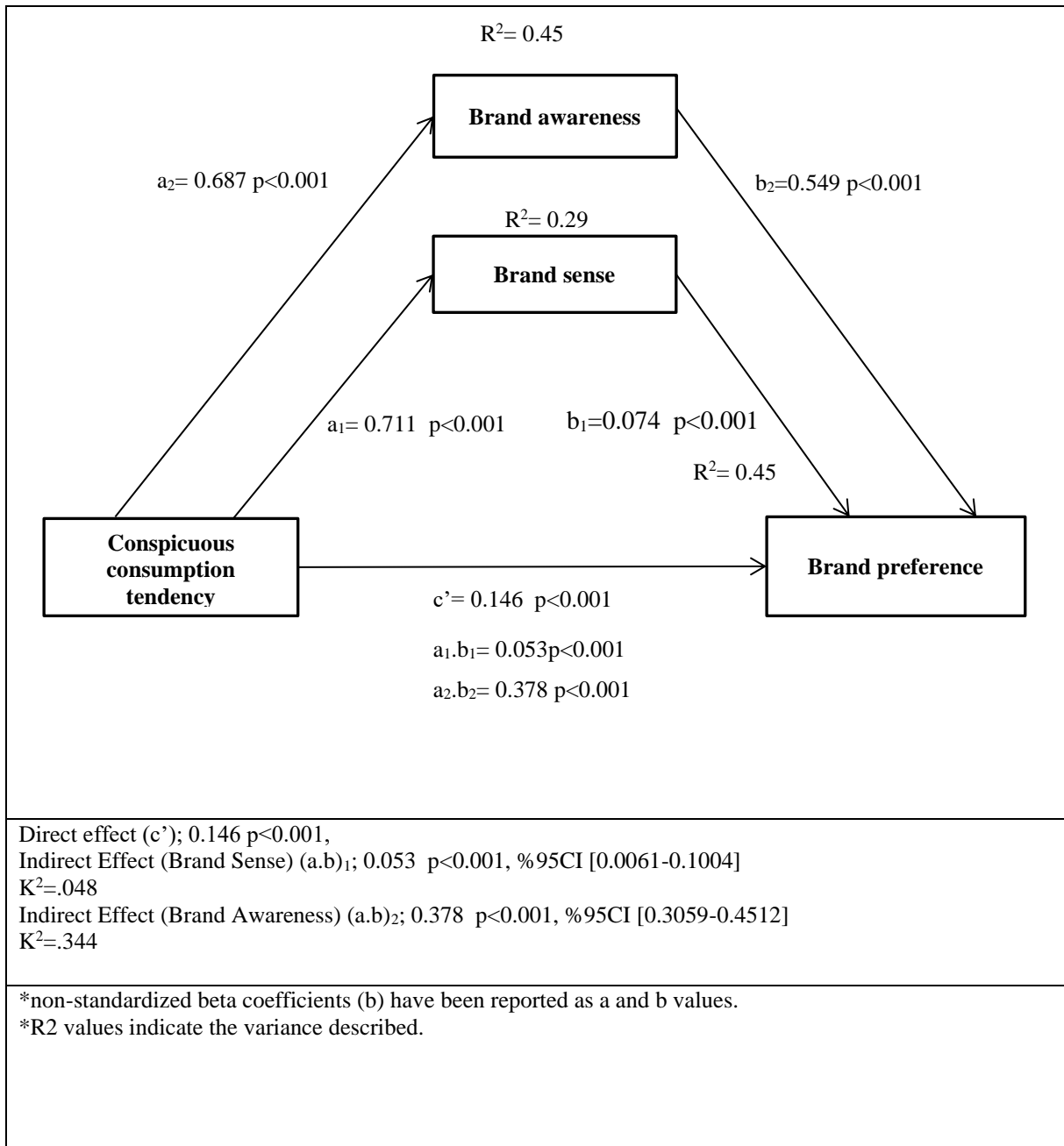
Correlation analysis showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the tendency to conspicuous consumption and brand preference. Furthermore, it was found that there were positive and significant relationships between brand preference and brand sense, and brand awareness.

Figure 2. A Simple Effect Model Showing the Effect of Conspicuous Consumption Trend on Brand Preference



A simple effect model was created which showed that the tendency to conspicuous consumption had a significant positive effect on brand preference (Figure 2). The tendency to conspicuous consumption accounted for 27% of the change in brand preference (R²= .276). This indicated that the H1 hypothesis of the research was supported.

Figure 3. The Intermediary Effect Model Showing the Mediator Role of Brand Sense and Brand Awareness in the Relationship between Conspicuous Consumption Tendency and Brand Preference



The intermediary effect model, organized to test the intermediary effect of brand sense and brand awareness in the relationship of conspicuous consumption and brand preference, is shown in the figure. Table 6 contains the regression analysis results to determine the intermediary effect.

Table 6. The Results of the Regression Analysis Related to the Mediation Test

Outcome Variables									
		M ₁ (BS)			M ₂ (BA)			Y (BP)	
Estimation Variables		<i>b</i>	S.H.		<i>b</i>	S.H.	<i>b</i>	S.H.	
X (TCC)	a₁	.711**	.036	a₂	.687**	.025	c'	.146**	.036
M ₁ (BS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	b₁	.074**	.024
M ₂ (BA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	b₂	.549**	.038
Constant	\hat{I}_{M1}	1.2736**	.105	\hat{I}_{M2}	1.0764**	.072	\hat{I}_Y	0.8299**	.087
			R ² =.292				R ² =.448	R ² =.453	
			F(1; 920)=380.9325; p<.001				F(1; 920)=747.0982; p<.001	F(2; 918)=254.0012; p<.001	

*There is a significant relationship at the level of 0.05. **There is a significant relationship at the 0.01 level.

TCC: The Tendency to Conspicuous Consumption. BS: Brand Sense. BA: Brand Awareness. BP: Brand Preference.

Looking at the findings in Figure 3, brand sense has a significant and positive effect on both the conspicuous consumption tendency and brand awareness. About 29% of the change in the participants' conspicuous consumption trends on the brand sense ($R^2 = .292$) and similarly about 45% of the change in brand awareness ($R^2 = .448$).

When the effects of intermediary variables on brand preference were examined, brand sense ($b=.074, 95\%$ OF THE $[-.0212, .1275]$, $p < .001$) and brand awareness ($b = .549, 95\%$ OF THE $[-.4721, .6262]$, $p < .001$) affected brand preference in a significant and positive way. When controlling for intermediary variables, when looking at the CI value of the dependent variable, which expresses the direct effect on the independent variable, the direct effect of the conspicuous consumption tendency on brand preference was both significant and positive. Looking at the explained variance, approximately 46% of the change in brand preference of conspicuous consumption tendency and brand sense and brand awareness, which are intermediary variables ($R^2 = .453$), was explained.

Regression analysis results in which the mediation effect was examined revealed that the indirect effect of conspicuous consumption tendency on brand preference was significant in terms of brand sense and brand awareness. Therefore, both brand sense ($b = .053, 95\%$ BCA CI $[-.0061, .1004]$) and brand awareness ($b = .378, 95\%$ BCA CI $[-.3059, .4512]$) mediate the relationship between the tendency to conspicuous consumption and brand preference.

The fully standardized effect sizes (K^2) of mediation effects were examined. At 048, it is close to the low value of this value if the brand awareness tool is the effect size of the variable. it is 344, and it can be stated that there is an effect size close to the average value. These results show that the research hypotheses support hypotheses H2 and H3.

Based on these analyses and findings, it was shown that the tendency to conspicuous consumption positively and significantly affects brand preference and that brand sense and brand awareness mediate the relationship between conspicuous consumption and brand preference. It was also found that the

effect size of these intermediaries were small on the brand sense variable and medium on the brand awareness variable.

4. DISCUSSION

While competition in the global apparel market was previously based on quality, today, the competition is pursued mainly through marketing strategies. Businesses that achieve successful branding can reach consumers faster, the brand is recognized, and ultimately the brand is preferred. The Turkish apparel sector has become increasingly successful and global in recent years by achieving a greater degree of branding. The apparel sector is of strategic importance for the country's economy. However, there is scope for greater improvement in branding in the Turkish apparel industry. It is known that consumers whose brand preferences are shaped by brand awareness may have various motives for conspicuous consumption. In the process of conspicuous consumption, it is thought that the consumer preferences reflect individuals' personalities and social status. Social and psychological expectations lie behind conspicuous consumption, which is seen as an indicator of wealth and high social status. In conspicuous consumption, different factors such as personal characteristics, age, gender, and ethnic origin are reflected. Consumers are turning to conspicuous consumption to reach reference groups.

This study has shown that conspicuous consumption positively affects preference with mediating effects of brand sense and brand awareness. Thus, all hypotheses of the research were accepted, and the findings are also compatible with the literature (Güllülü et al., 2010; Koçak, 2017; Öztaş and Bozyiğit, 2019; Tokgöz, 2020; Uzunkaya and Yükselen, 2020; Yeşil and Ünsalan, 2021; Eksi et al., 2022). The tendency to conspicuous consumption leads to brand preference by triggering brand sense and awareness. As there is only partial discussion of this topic in the literature, this study attempts to contribute further to the literature. It was shown that consumers in the Turkish apparel sector will prefer brands that create brand sense and brand awareness. Therefore, becoming a globally recognized brand in the apparel sector will strengthen brand sense and awareness, establishing consumer brand preferences more easily. International brands tend to be selected for conspicuous consumption. Thus, different strategies related to media visibility, celebrity usage, recall, and association should be developed to strengthen brand awareness.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are some limitations of this study. Due to time and cost constraints, the research was conducted through a survey conducted in the Marmara region of Turkey and over the Internet. Thus, the research findings cannot be generalized to the whole of Turkey. Research with participants from different regions and cities will be more inclusive and generalizable. In this study, only quantitative data collection and analysis methods were used. In the future, qualitative studies should be carried out by collecting data through interviews, observations, or focus group studies, which may provide more in-

depth findings. The research may be conducted in different sectors and with participants of various demographic characteristics, which may provide a better understanding of the subject area. Businesses use different marketing communication strategies by understanding conspicuous consumption to create brand sense and awareness, and thus, future studies that include the suggested extensions to the present study will be important for Turkish industries to compete in the new global markets.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study sheds light on the issue of how conspicuous consumption affects brand sense and brand awareness. While the study's findings are compatible with previous studies, further recommendations may be made for the theoretical and practical implications. This study may be developed by including different consumer behavior variables as there will be new insights into conspicuous consumption-related marketing strategies. The study may be expanded by using qualitative and quantitative research methods together. The participants could be expanded with different groups included in the study. Furthermore, brands may benefit from the research by adopting new strategies to use different marketing approaches and tools. Brand sense and awareness may be useful tools to attract new customers for conspicuous consumption.

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Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Finansal Destek: Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

Teşekkür: -

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

Acknowledgement: -
