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A Conceptual Study on Brand Fidelity in terms of Consumer Brand Relationships*

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ABSTRACT

Understanding and measuring consumer brand relations is very important for both academics and industry practitioners for sustainable and strong brand management. Over the years, many studies have been conducted to analysis consumer brand relations and strategies have been developed. This study aimed to evaluate the current situation in consumer brand relations, to help identify gaps in the relevant literature, to provide an understanding of future trends and brand fidelity, which is a new concept. For this purpose, the historical development of consumer brand relations, the emergence of the concept of brand fidelity and scale development studies are discussed in the focus of brand fidelity. In addition, this study aims to be a pioneering study by making a theoretical contribution to the marketing literature by examining the relationships between perceived corporate social responsibility, brand love and +wom, which are predicted to be related to brand fidelity.

Keywords: Brand Fidelity, Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Love, +WOM.

JEL Classification Codes: M30, M31

Tüketici Marka İlişkileri Bakımından Marka Vefası Üzerine Kavramsal Bir Çalışma


ÖZ


Sürdürülebilir ve güçlü marka yönetimi için tüketici marka ilişkilerini anlamak ve ölçebilmek hem akademisyenler hem sektör uygulayıcıları için oldukça önemlidir. Yıllar içerisinde tüketici marka ilişkilerini çözümlenmeye yönelik pek çok çalışma yapılmış ve strateji geliştirilmiştir. Bu çalışma, tüketici marka ilişkilerindeki mevcut durumu kısaca değerlendirerek, ilgili yazındaki boşlukların tespit edilmesine yardımcı olmayı, gelecekteki eğilimleri ve yeni bir kavram olan marka vefasının anlaşılmasını sağlamayı amaçlamıştır. Buna yönelik marka vefası odağında tüketici marka ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimi, marka vefası kavramının ortaya çıkışı ve yapılan ölçek geliştirme çalışmaları ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca bu çalışma marka vefasının ilişki halinde olduğu öngörülen algılanan kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, marka aşkı ve pozitif ağızdan ağıza iletişim kavramları ile olan ilişkileri de inceleyip pazarlama literatürüne teorik bir katkı sağlayarak öncü bir çalışma olmayı hedeflemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka Vefası, Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Marka Aşkı, Pozitif Ağızdan Ağıza İletişim.

JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları: M30, M31

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Amaç ve Kapsam:

Tüketici marka ilişkileri pazarlama literatüründe hala çok fazla ilgi gören ve araştırma yapılan bir konudur. Yıllar içerisinde tüketicilerin değişen beklentilerini anlamak ve ölçmek için pek çok ölçek geliştirilmiştir. Bu makale pazarlama literatüründe yeni bir kavram olarak tartışılmaya başlanan marka vefası kavramını teorik olarak incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada marka vefası kavramı tüketici marka ilişkileri açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Öncelikle, marka vefası kavramı ortaya çıkana kadar tüketici marka ilişkilerinde kullanılan bazı önemli kavramlara değinilmiş, sonrasında marka vefasının bu kavramlarla ilişkisinden bahsedilmiştir. Bu makalede, marka vefası kavramının tarihsel gelişimi, dayandığı teori ve modeller, yapılan ölçek geliştirme ve doğrulama çalışmaları anlatılarak, daha sonra yapılacak çalışmalara öncü bir çalışma olması amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca marka vefasına yönelik yapılan çalışmalara dayanarak, algılanan kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, marka aşkı, pozitif ağızdan ağıza iletişim gibi kavramlarla olan ilişkiler de irdelenmiştir.

Yöntem:

Doktora tez çalışmasına dayanarak yazılan bu makale, nitel bir çalışma olup, literatürdeki ilgili kaynaklardan bilgi sağlamaktadır. Makalenin her bölümünde ilk olarak temel kavramlardan bahsedilmektedir. Sonrasında makaleye konu olan kavramlarla ilgili yapılan çalışmalara değinilerek pazarlama literatürüne teorik bir katkı sağlamaya çalışılmıştır.

Bulgular:

Bu çalışmada öncelikli olarak marka vefası kavramı literatüre dayanarak, teorik açıdan ele alınmıştır. Marka vefasına yönelik yapılan ölçek geliştirme ve iyileştirme çalışmalarından bahsedilmiştir. Bu çalışmaların sonucuna göre, farklı sektör ve örneklerde doğrulanan davranışsal ve bilişsel boyutlardan oluşan dört alt boyutlu bir ölçek olan marka vefası ölçeği anlatılmıştır. Tüketicilerin markalara karşı bağlılık ve aşk gibi duygu ve bilişlerinin ötesinde olan ilişkilerinin marka vefası kavramı ile ölçülebileceği sonucuna varılmıştır. Marka vefası kavramının, marka sadakati, marka bağlılığı, marka aşkı, pozitif ağızdan ağıza iletişim, kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, iş etiği, marka tutumu, marka kişiliği, marka kutsallığı, algılanan hizmet kalitesi, müşteri vatandaşlığı davranışı, marka güveni, marka deneyimi, marka imajı, benlik uyumu gibi kavramlarla ilişkisine literatürde yapılan çalışmalara dayanarak değinilmiştir. Genel olarak bu kavramlarla marka vefasının olumlu ilişkiler içerisinde olabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Sonuç ve Tartışma:

Tüketici marka ilişkilerini anlamak ve ölçmek için marka sadakati, marka bağlılığı, marka aşkı gibi kavramlar pazarlama literatüründe sıklıkla kullanılmaktadır. Fakat marka vefası kavramının tüketici marka ilişkilerini derinleştirme ve sürdürme konusunda daha etkili olabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır. Gelecekteki çalışmalarda marka vefası kavramının sektördeki uygulayıcılar ve akademisyenler tarafından daha çok kullanılacağı öngörülmektedir. Farklı sektör, marka, örneklem ve değişkenlerle yapılacak olan çalışmalar literature katkı sağlayacaktır.

1. INTRODUCTION

For years, academics and business area have been working on how to develop strategies to make sense of and measure consumers' reactions in consumer brand relations and to strengthen consumer brand relations. From past to the present, studies have been carried out to understand consumer brand relations with many concepts such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand commitment, brand love (Grace et al., 2018, p. 577).

According to Grace et al. (2018, p. 586; 2020, p. 2), the next phase in consumer brand relations can be conceptualized as brand fidelity, after satisfaction, loyalty, commitment and brand love. In the related literature, it has been argued that although consumer responses such as satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and love are still used in brand relations, they do not have a deep enough perspective on ensuring, explaining and measuring consumer brand relations to be strong and sustainable. Based on this, the concept of brand fidelity has emerged to demonstrate consumers' intentions towards brands such as gratitude, fidelity, support and continuing the relationship of loyalty.

Starting from the historical development and definition of the concept of brand fidelity, the scale developed and the studies in the related literature will be mentioned, and its role in consumer brand relations will be explained in the following sections.

2. METHOD

Based on the doctoral dissertation study, this article aims to approach the concept of brand fidelity, which started to be discussed in the literature in 2018, in a theoretical framework and to examine its place in consumer brand relations and marketing literature. Based on this purpose, the concept was evaluated from the perspective of consumer brand relations in the historical development process, and its relationship with corporate social responsibility, brand love and positive word of mouth (+wom) are examined based on the studies in the related literature and discussed in terms of the developed scale.

3. THE CONCEPT OF BRAND FIDELITY AND ITS HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

There have been changes in the marketing world with the increasing competition between brands due to many factors such as changing expectations, globalization and technological developments as consumers become more researching and more conscious individuals. Now, brands aim to establish sustainable, long-term and solid relationships with consumers. The aim of relational marketing, which is put forward on the basis of all these, is to create long-term consumer loyalty and to provide relationships between consumers and brands that contain emotions such as commitment, love (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2011, p. 32).

In consumer brand relations, the next stage of concepts such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand commitment, brand love is mentioned as brand fidelity. The concept of brand fidelity is a new concept that focuses on consumer actions and thoughts about making consumer brand relationships stronger and more sustainable with active participation, rather than how and why they are formed, and understanding the cognitive and behavioural reactions of consumers towards brands (Grace et al., 2018, p. 577). The historical development process of consumer brand relations focused on the concept of brand fidelity is mentioned below.

While research on consumer brand relations in the 70s was primarily concerned with the concept of perceived product performance and consumer expectation-oriented customer satisfaction (Anderson, 1973, pp. 38-39; Day, 1977, p. 29); In the 80s and 90s, it is seen that consumer brand relations focused on long-term customer satisfaction and the results of these relations (Amine, 1998, p. 305). When it comes to the 2000s, it is observed that the research focus in consumer brand relations has shifted towards psychology-based relationships by addressing concepts such as brand loyalty, brand commitment, and brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p. 79; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014, p. 372).

The concept of customer satisfaction is one of the important marketing strategies in consumer brand relations from past to present (Roy et al., 2013, p. 329), but there are cases where it cannot fully explain the concept of brand loyalty. For this reason, it has been observed that there is a tendency to studies focusing on the different results of the concept of customer satisfaction in consumer research (Grace et al., 2018, p. 577).

The increasing interest in the concept of branding, the emergence of brand management, along with consumers recognizing various needs beyond the functional features of products, such as experiential needs coming into play, has revealed different approaches. This indicates that consumer-brand relationships are inherently open to development and ongoing discussion in the long term, and this has also led to a heightened interest in this subject (Grace et al., 2018, p. 578).

Brand loyalty can be defined as a function of behavioural responses and psychological evaluation processes towards brands such as non-random buying (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978, p. 80–81). However, this concept has been criticized because it is not considered sufficient to cover the stability of brand relationship quality such as love/passion and commitment (Fournier and Yao 1997, p. 454). Therefore, a more comprehensive model in consumer brand relations, the brand relationship quality model (BRQ), has been proposed. The BRQ model has been adapted and used many times, although it has been criticized that not every brand can establish the same relationship with consumers (Fournier, 1998, p.343).

The concept of brand commitment emphasizes the emotional aspects, which are important indicators of relational power in consumer brand relations. Therefore, it gives a deeper meaning to the concept of brand loyalty, and it is observed that consumers with brand commitment are more likely to repurchase (Moorman et al., 1992, p. 314).

With the emergence of emotional elements in consumer brand relations, the concept of brand love has been focused on, and many studies have been conducted on its dimensions and effectiveness (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006, p. 79; Sarkar et al., 2012, p. 324; Albert and Merunka, 2013, p. 258). When the relevant literature is examined, it can be said that the differences between the dimensions, antecedents and consequences of brand love cannot be very clearly, but there is also the opinion that it brings a different perspective to consumer brand relations (Grace et al., 2018, p. 580).

When the relevant literature is examined in terms of consumer brand relations, it can be concluded that strong brand emotions (commitment, love, etc.) can be easier to understand and examine from a relational perspective rather than an emotion-oriented perspective (Ahuvia et al. 2014, p. 258).

Consumer brand relations can be explained by the concepts of intensity and activity. While intensity is the emotional attachment that the consumer develops towards the brand, activity expresses the behavioural result of brand loyalty and emotional commitment (Keller, 2001, p.15-16). These are all pertinent factors that significantly contribute to a more effective comprehension and assessment of consumer-brand relationships. In this context, the concept of brand fidelity has been developed based on theoretical background.

The concept of brand fidelity, which emerges through various behaviours (forgiveness-performance and price) and cognitions (cognitive interdependence, derogation of alternatives) for consumers to establish and maintain a strong and sustainable relationship with the brand, is expected to be an important concept for measuring and developing future consumer brand relationships. The focus of the concept of brand fidelity, which is put forward as a multidimensional and more concrete approach, is based on the fact that actions will be more effective than words. The concept of brand fidelity aims to maintain consumer brand relations developed with brand love and brand commitment. It is also expected to facilitate the measurement of consumers' brand love and commitment levels and intensity. As a result, it is predicted that it will enable to measure relationship stability and brand performance more effectively (Grace et al., 2018, p. 584-585).

The concept of brand fidelity is similar to the concept of brand advocacy at some points. However, there are important differences between the two concepts. The most important difference is that although brand fidelity is a higher-level consumer brand relationship than the concepts of loyalty and commitment, including +wom (Grace et al., 2018, p. 586) but, it does not include fanatical support for the brand as in the concept of brand advocacy.

4. THE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF BRAND FIDELITY WITH THEORIES AND MODELS

The conceptual development of brand fidelity has been tried to be explained with the “investment model”, which is one of the leading social psychological theories on relationship commitment, and the

“brand as relationship partner”, which is important in the marketing literature (Grace et al., 2018, p. 582).

The investment model is one of the early social psychological theories developed by Rusbult in the 1980s to explain the concept of attachment in interpersonal close relationships. According to the model, the most important factors affecting attachment in relationships are; relationship satisfaction is the evaluation of the characteristics of alternatives and the investments made in the relationship (Terzi & Işık, 2017, p. 184).

The most important element of understanding commitment in a relationship is understanding the reasons for staying in the relationship. In terms of marketing, according to this model, it can be concluded that consumers try to maintain their commitment in order to get the return of their investment in their relations with brands and to prevent possible losses (Rusbult, 1980, p. 172)

Rusbult's investment model; focusing on consumer brand relations such as B2B marketing, mobile marketing and brand loyalty; It has been used as a sub-theoretical structure in many studies (White and Yanamandram, 2007, p. 298; Giovanis, 2016, p. 568; Li and Petrick, 2008, p. 25). However, it can be said that these studies mostly investigate the antecedents of the concept of commitment and are not sufficient to investigate the behaviour of maintaining the relationship. Based on the investment model; It can be said that satisfaction in the relationship, evaluation of the quality of alternatives and investments made in the relationship, which are the factors affecting loyalty in consumer brand relations, contribute to the strengthening and sustainability of consumer brand relations, and in this sense, it can be said that the concept of brand fidelity forms a theoretical infrastructure (Grace et al., 2018, p. 582).

The concept of "Brand as Relationship Partner" is a comprehensive brand model developed with the prevalence of the relationship metaphor in marketing. The basis of the model is how consumers try to add meaning to their lives through their interaction with brands. On the basis of this model, it is emphasized that deepening the meaning of the relationship bilaterally for the consumer and the brand is an important factor that determines the quality of the relationship by increasing the commitment of the consumer to the brand. Based on this concept, besides the brands offering products to consumers; It is aimed to establish a meaningful and deep relationship with them. With the relationship they establish with brands, consumers experience how brands add value to their lives, and the mutual meaning sharing built in this way is strengthened by the increase in the quality of consumer brand relationships (Fournier, 1997, p. 451-452). In this context, it is possible to characterize brand fidelity based on these theories and models.

Building sustainable relationships, which is the main point of brand fidelity, is compatible with the concept of brand as relationship partner. Because in both concepts, relationship stability and quality are important. The investment model with the 'brand as a relationship partner' is compatible with each other as they are based on maintaining the relationship (Fournier, 1997; Rusbult, 1980).

5. BRAND FIDELITY SCALE

In the marketing literature, the concept of fidelity was first associated with behavioural loyalty and purchase intention (Jones and Taylor 2007, p. 36; Ryan et al., 1999, p. 19). Later, although it continued to be associated with different concepts, it was seen that the concept of fidelity needed a detailed definition.

Concepts such as stability and durability in consumer brand relations form the basis of strong and sustainable relations. And based on these approaches, the brand fidelity scale was developed. When the concept of brand fidelity was first introduced in the marketing literature, behavioural and cognitive two dimensions were mentioned. Behavioural dimension: It consists of subdimensions defined as supporting and/or forgiving the brand in performance and price differences (forgiveness/accommodation performance and forgiveness/ accommodation price), and willingness to sacrifices for the brand. The cognitive dimension is; it consists of the sub-dimensions of cognitive interdependence, derogation of alternatives and positive illusions (Grace et al., 2018, p. 584-585). Then, in the scale validation and improvement study, the willingness to sacrifices and positive illusions sub-dimensions did not differ much from the other sub-dimensions and were removed from the scale; the brand fidelity scale was validated as a four-dimensional scale. The Accommodation/Forgiveness dimension determines how

forgiving and supportive the consumer is towards the brand when observing price and performance differences. There are also studies supporting that this dimension may be the result of brand love (Albert and Merunka, 2013, p. 258; Sarkar et al., 2012, p. 324) The cognitive interdependence dimension determines the consumer's level of personal ownership of the brand, the degree of brand adoption and bonding with the brand partner. The dimension of derogation of alternatives, on the other hand, focuses on the strengths of the consumer's brand and the weaknesses of that brand's competitors; It can be defined as being more tolerant towards the existing brand with which it is in contact. There are studies supporting that this dimension is a behavioural result of brand commitment (Mattila, 2006, p.174; Ciftci and Erdogan, 2016, p. 321). Some sub-dimensions of brand fidelity are attitudinal and behavioural loyalty; although brand citizenship behaviour is similar to scales such as brand advocacy, the value of this scale is manifested by the synergy created by its sub-dimensions in consumer brand relationship maintenance behaviour and being a holistic multidimensional approach (Grace et al., 2020, p. 4-6).

6. BRAND FIDELITY STUDIES

In the marketing literature, there are many studies on consumer brand relations. However, resources are limited in the Turkish and international literature on brand fidelity, which is a new concept that focuses on the strength and stability of consumer brand relations. Therefore, considering consumer brand relations in terms of brand fidelity will contribute to the literature. In Table 1 below, some important Turkish and international article about brand fidelity is given.

One of the first studies dealing with the perception of corporate social responsibility, business ethics, brand love and brand fidelity; It has been seen that the perception of corporate social responsibility and business ethics positively affect other variables. In cases where brand attitude and brand love are mediated, an indirect effect on brand fidelity has been observed (Quezado et al., 2022, p.5-6).

The validity of the brand fidelity scale has been tested in different sectors and countries. One of them is the study conducted by asking Saudi consumers about their favourite brands. In this research, it was concluded that the scale of brand fidelity is valid, that consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of loyalty towards their favourite brands (Faridi and Naushad, 2021, p. 16-21).

In another study conducted on consumers who prefer halal cosmetic brands, it was found that brand trust, brand image and self-congruence positively affect brand love; brand love has also been found to have a positive effect on brand sacredness, brand fidelity and WOM. In addition, it was concluded that brand sacredness has a positive effect on brand fidelity and brand fidelity has a positive effect on +WOM (Joshi and Garg, 2020, p.812-816).

The first study on brand fidelity in the Turkish literature was conducted on consumers using the top three popular sports shoe brands in the Turkish market. According to the findings of the research, the sub-dimensions of humanism, excitement, professionalism and vitality of the brand personality scale; It was concluded that brand loyalty has a positive effect on all sub-dimensions (Yıldız, 2020, p.317). The same author then conducted research on consumers who receive service from the fuel sector. According to this research, it was concluded that the perceived service quality positively affects the customer citizenship behaviour, mostly affects the tolerance dimension, and customer citizenship behaviour positively affects the brand fidelity and affects the cognitive interdependence dimension the most (Yıldız, 2021).

Brand fidelity began to be discussed in the marketing literature in 2018. It was first proposed as a six-dimensional scale (Grace et al., 2018, p.577). Later, with the scale improvement study, it became a four-dimensional scale (Grace et al., 2020, p.1).

When the studies are examined, the concept of brand fidelity is brand love, some antecedents and results of brand love, brand sacredness, brand trust, brand attitude, brand experience, brand personality, brand image, self-congruence, +WOM, corporate social responsibility, business ethics, perceived service quality, customer citizenship behaviour It has been seen that it is associated with issues such as.

Quantitative research and survey methods were generally preferred as research methods, and research models were generally analysed by structural equation model analysis using SPSS, AMOS and mostly SmartPLS program. When the studies were examined in terms of their results, the hypotheses were generally supported and positive relationships were found between the variables. Since the concept of

brand fidelity is new in the literature and the researches are limited, it can be said that studies on the subject will contribute to the literature.

Table 1. Studies on Brand Fidelity

Year	Author (s)	Researched Topic (s)
2022	Quezado et al.	The effect of corporate social responsibility perception and business ethics on brand fidelity; meditation effect of brand love and brand attitude
2021	Faridi & Naushad,	Validity of the brand fidelity scale on Saudi market
2020	Joshi & Garg,	Relationships between brand love, brand sacredness, brand fidelity and wom
2020	Yıldız	Validity of brand fidelity scale Turkiye market and effect of brand personality on brand fidelity
2021	Yıldız	The effect of perceived service quality on consumer citizenship behaviour; the effect of consumer citizenship behaviour on brand fidelity
2020	Grace et al.	Brand fidelity scale validation and improvement
2018	Grace et al.	Brand fidelity scale development

Source: Created by author.

7. ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF BRAND FIDELITY

When current literature is observed, the concept of brand fidelity is related to the concepts of perceived corporate social responsibility, brand love and +wom, and these can affect to each other. The following sections examine the relationships between these concepts.

7.1. Brand Fidelity, Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Love Relationship

Nowadays, consumers care about and want to see moral values in their relations with brands. This situation has led brands to focus on activities that benefit society in order to develop positive and long-term relationships with consumers and to maintain their own existence. These activities have now become a part of marketing strategies and have started to be used in the literature as "corporate social responsibility" (Yönet, 2005, p.252).

Corporate social responsibility, brands' social, environmental, etc. It can be defined as making practices that prioritize sustainability, moral values and social benefit by being sensitive to their problems (Jones and Green, 2021, p. 79). Accordingly, brands aim to benefit society by carrying out activities in sustainability, education, health, social justice and similar areas (Johnson & Brown, 2019a, p. 103).

Studies in the related literature reveal that corporate social responsibility activities affect consumers' behavioural and cognitive responses to brands (Smith et al., 2020, p. 161). Corporate social responsibility activities also have a positive effect on consumers' perceptions of trust, loyalty and brand image towards brands. Based on all these, the benefits that brands provide to society gain the appreciation of consumers, and this situation enables the perception of corporate social responsibility to become a concept that contributes positively to consumer brand relations (Johnson et al., 2019b, p. 785).

There are many studies emphasizing the importance of corporate social responsibility activities for businesses, as consumers stand by socially responsible brands and see these efforts as an action. In addition, there are studies indicating that brands that are socially responsible and attach importance to moral values tend to create more loyalty and fidelity among their consumers (Pringle & Thompson, 1999; Quezado et al., 2022, p. 1). These studies support that corporate social responsibility practices have a positive effect on consumers and can increase brand commitment (Peloza & Shang, 2011, p. 117). Based on these studies, there are also studies examining the effect of corporate social responsibility perception on brand fidelity, which is a new concept in marketing. There are also studies in the literature that deal with the concepts of corporate social responsibility perception, brand love and brand fidelity (Quezado et al., 2022, p. 1; Tsiotsou, 2010, p. 482) And there are mostly positive relationships between these concepts.

In many studies dealing with the relationship between corporate social responsibility and brand love in different sectors, it has been observed that there are generally positive relationships between the concepts, and the perception of corporate social responsibility has a positive effect on brand love (Baena, 2018, p. 61; Rodrigues et al. 2020, p. 134; Gilal et al., 2020, p.4). In addition, in these studies, it was concluded that different variables such as brand commitment, brand trust, brand passion were included, and the perception of corporate social responsibility had a positive effect on these variables. In some studies, it has been observed that brand love has a positive mediating effect. (Tsiotsou, 2010, p. 482; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2012, p. 218; Baena, 2018, p. 61; Rodrigues et al. 2020, p.134; Gilal et al., 2020, p. 4-7; Quezado et al., 2022, p. 1).

With the introduction of brand fidelity into the marketing literature, studies evaluating its relationship with brand love have begun to be conducted. In these studies, it was concluded that some antecedents of brand love, brand sacredness and concepts such as +wom were included in the studies and that brand love in general had a positive effect on brand fidelity (Joshi & Garg, 2020, p. 807; Faridi & Naushad, 2021, p. 13).

In one of the studies examining the effects of corporate social responsibility and business ethics on brand fidelity, it was concluded that all hypotheses were supported, corporate social responsibility perception and business ethics positively affected brand fidelity, and brand attitude and brand love had a mediating effect (Quezado et al., 2022, p.1). In this study, the concept of brand love, brand fidelity and corporate social responsibility were examined together.

7.2. The Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Love and Brand Fidelity on +Wom

A consumer with brand love wants that brand to be love and used by other consumers. In this way, it is ensured that the brand is spread by word of mouth and adopted by other consumers through methods such as experience sharing and advice (Albert & Merunka, 2001, p.300). There are many studies on the relationship and interaction between the concepts of brand love and +wom. Carroll and Ahuvia, (2006, p. 79-89); Albert et al., (2009, p. 300-307); Albert and Merunka, (2013, pp. 258-266); Wallace et al., (2014; p. 33-42), Anggraeni (2015, p. 442-447); Khandeparkar and Matiani, (2017, p. 661-667); Bıçakçioğlu et al., (2018, p. 863-867); Liu et al., (2018, p. 281-298); Coelho et al., (2019, p. 154-165) concluded in their research that brand love significantly affects +wom.

Corporate social responsibility activities provide various advantages to businesses in consumer brand relations. Consumers can talk about corporate social responsibility efforts of businesses in both online and offline environments. Some studies based on this also support that corporate social responsibility has a significant positive effect on +wom (Jalilvand et al., 2017, p. 1). In some studies examining corporate social responsibility with different variables, there are also studies supporting that the perception of corporate social responsibility has positive effects on both loyalty and +wom (Choi and La, 2013, p. 223; Hong and Rim, 2010, pp. 389-391).

There are also studies supporting that brand fidelity affects +wom. In the research conducted by Joshi and Garg (2020, p. 807), it was seen that the hypotheses suggesting that brand fidelity has a positive effect on +wom were supported.

The concept of brand fidelity has been mentioned in the marketing literature as the next stage of concepts such as satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and love in order for consumer brand relations to be strong and sustainable. It can be predicted that corporate social responsibility, brand love and +wom, which have been shown to have positive effects on consumers' brand responses in previous studies, will be related to brand fidelity.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In consumer brand relationships, there are many variables that affect consumers' responses to the brand. Over the years, many studies have been conducted to measure and understand consumer brand relationships. In this study, the conceptual development of brand fidelity is explained in the historical process. In addition, its relations with the concepts of corporate social responsibility, brand love and +wom, which are predicted to be related to brand fidelity, are also explained.

Concepts such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, brand love, brand commitment are still used in the marketing literature in order to understand and measure consumer brand relations. However, with the use of the concept of brand fidelity in the literature, it has been argued that other concepts may not be deep enough to understand the power and sustainability of consumer brand relations.

Brand fidelity is a new concept that has been introduced to explain sustainable and higher-level consumer brand relationships. At the same time, it is an improved and validated multidimensional scale to understand consumers' behavioural and cognitive brand responses, based on a stronger and more sustainable bond that consumers form with brand love and brand commitment (Grace et al., 2018, 2020). In future studies, it can be predicted that the concept of brand fidelity will be used more in measuring consumer brand relations by academicians and practitioners in the sector and will make an important contribution to the marketing literature. Since research on brand fidelity is limited, this study can make an original theoretical contribution to the literature. In future studies, the relationships between brand fidelity sub-dimensions and other variables can be examined. Also brand fidelity can be examined based on different theories. In particular, studies examining its relationship with corporate social responsibility can be increased by adding different variables.

Examining brand fidelity with different cultures, sectors, product groups, brands and samples, and different variables can contribute to the marketing literature. Studies with concepts such as consumer-based brand equity, purchase intention, brand citizenship behaviour, which are thought to be related, can contribute to the current literature. Since not every brand can establish the same relationship with consumers, studies can be conducted to make comparison between different brands and different sectors in the same sector. Since it is predicted that the brand fidelity scale can be effective in measuring the brand loyalty and brand performance of consumers, it can be said that it will also contribute to the business area. Studies have indicated that brand fidelity is effective in consumer brand relations. Therefore, brand fidelity in the marketing literature and the sector can be examined in terms of both consumer behaviour and brand management.

DECLARATION OF THE AUTHORS

Declaration of Contribution Rate: Emine ANIK, 70%; Mehmet TIĞLI, 30%

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