The moderating role of psychological reactance in the impact of brand trust, credibility, and reputation on advocacy

Marka güveni, kredibilitesi ve itibarının marka savunuculuğu üzerindeki etkisinde psikolojik tepkiselliğin düzenleyici rolü

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This study investigates the impact of brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation on brand advocacy, focusing on Uber's partial ban in Türkiye. Specifically, it explores the moderating role of psychological reactance, a consumer response triggered by perceived threats to autonomy. Drawing on existing literature and empirical findings, the results demonstrate that higher levels of brand trust, credibility, and reputation positively influence brand advocacy. Consumers who view a brand as trustworthy and credible are more likely to advocate for it, even when confronted with regulatory restrictions. However, psychological reactance plays a role in this process. Consumers with elevated reactance often interpret brand communications as controlling or manipulative, producing resistance that weakens the positive impact of trust, credibility, and reputation. This underscores the importance of communication strategies that respect consumer autonomy, mitigating resistance. Moreover, the study stresses the value of understanding consumer psychology in advocacy behaviors during brand crises or government interventions. Future research could examine additional moderating factors—such as need for cognition, cultural influences, or personal brand involvement—to deepen insights into brand advocacy. Through these avenues, scholars and practitioners can develop effective engagement strategies that foster advocacy while lessening resistance.

Bu çalışma, marka güveni, marka kredibilitesi ve marka itibarının marka savunuculuğu üzerindeki etkisini, Türkiye'deki kısmi Uber yasağının uygulanması bağlamında incelemektedir. Özellikle, bireylerin özgürlüklerine yönelik tehdit algıladıklarında ortaya çıkan bir tüketici tepkisi olan psikolojik tepkiselliğin düzenleyici rolü ele alınmaktadır. Mevcut ampirik bulgular doğrultusunda, yüksek marka güveni, kredibilitesi ve itibarı seviyelerinin marka savunuculuğunu olumlu yönde etkilediği görülmektedir. Tüketiciler, bir markayı güvenilir ve dürüst olarak algıladıklarında, düzenleyici kısıtlamalar gibi zorlu piyasa koşullarında bile bu markayı savunmaya daha yatkın olmaktadır. Ancak, psikolojik tepkisellik de bu süreçte kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Yüksek düzeyde tepkiselliğe sahip tüketiciler, marka iletişimini denetleyici veya manipülatif olarak algılayarak savunuculuk eğilimlerini zayıflatabilir. Bu durum, tüketici özerkliğini koruyan iletişim stratejilerinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, marka krizleri veya devlet müdahaleleri karşısında tüketici psikolojisinin anlaşılmasının gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalar, bilişsel ihtiyaç, kültürel etkiler veya kişisel marka ilgisi gibi ek değişkenleri ele alarak marka savunuculuğu konusunda daha derinlemesine içgörüler sağlayabilir.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of ride-hailing services, exemplified most notably by Uber, has profoundly transformed urban transportation systems and reshaped consumer expectations regarding convenience, efficiency, and accessibility (Cramer & Krueger, 2016). By leveraging smartphone-enabled accessibility, dynamic pricing mechanisms, and user-friendly digital interfaces, these platforms have experienced a rapid surge in popularity, solidifying their position as an integral component of daily mobility for millions of users worldwide. In the third quarter of 2024, Uber reported that 161 million unique users engaged with the platform at least once, representing a 13% increase compared to the same period in 2023 (Statista, 2024). However, in numerous markets, including Türkiye, the innovative business models employed by such ride-hailing services have encountered significant resistance from entrenched regulatory frameworks and pre-existing transportation infrastructures, often resulting in legal disputes and operational constraints.

In the specific case of Türkiye, these regulatory frictions culminated in a partial ban introduced in 2020. This regulatory intervention explicitly prohibited Uber from operating its own fleet, compelling the platform to function exclusively as an intermediary for the country's conventional yellow taxi system. Consequently, the core value proposition that had previously differentiated Uber from traditional taxi services—namely, the provision of non-traditional vehicle options through a flexible, transparent, and digitalized service model—was significantly eroded. By restricting Uber to facilitating yellow taxi rides, the ban effectively eliminated its competitive advantage, reducing the distinctiveness of its service to a digital replication of what was already available through conventional street-hailing. This regulatory shift led to widespread speculation regarding whether consumers would continue to support a platform that no longer provided a substantively unique alternative to the existing market offerings. However, despite these concerns, Uber continued to receive substantial consumer advocacy, with millions of users actively defending the platform on social media, vocally expressing their support, and challenging the imposed regulatory constraints (Tuzcuoğlu & Yaprak, 2018).

Within the marketing literature, the constructs of brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation have consistently been identified as key antecedents of brand advocacy. Brand advocacy extends beyond simple customer loyalty and repeat patronage to include behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth promotion, social media endorsements, and the active defense of the brand against criticism (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 2004; Wilk, 2018). Empirical research has demonstrated that when consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy (reliable and dependable), credible (competent, knowledgeable, and honest), and positively regarded in the market (a strong and reputable presence), they are more likely to engage in advocacy behaviors in support of that brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Rather, 2021). However, it remains unclear whether these established brand-related drivers of advocacy maintain their influence in contexts where regulatory interventions have substantially altered the brand's core value proposition. Specifically, when a brand is no longer able to deliver its previously distinct offerings due to external constraints, the extent to which brand trust, credibility, and reputation continue to inspire consumer advocacy warrants further investigation.

In parallel, psychological reactance theory offers a valuable framework for understanding consumer responses to perceived threats to their autonomy and freedom of choice (Brehm, 1966; Rains, 2013). When individuals perceive that their available options have been arbitrarily restricted—such as being compelled to use traditional yellow taxis via Uber instead of having access to Uber's diverse fleet—they may experience psychological reactance, a motivational state characterized by resistance and defiance against the perceived source of restriction (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004). High levels of psychological reactance have been shown to undermine even well-intentioned marketing initiatives, potentially leading to increased skepticism toward brands and their offerings (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Shen, 2015). However, research also suggests that if consumers attribute the restriction to an external entity, such as a regulatory body imposing unjust constraints, their psychological reactance may manifest as heightened loyalty and proactive defense of the affected brand (Romani et al., 2013). Consequently, psychological reactance may serve as a critical moderating variable that either amplifies or attenuates the influence of brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation on advocacy behaviors. Understanding the role of psychological reactance in this context is essential for evaluating how consumers navigate brand relationships when faced with externally imposed limitations.

Given this theoretical backdrop, the present study aims to elucidate the extent to which Turkish consumers' perceptions of brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation influence their propensity to engage in brand advocacy for Uber within the constrained regulatory environment. Furthermore, this research seeks to determine whether psychological reactance functions as a moderating variable that intensifies or weakens the relationships between these brand-related constructs and consumer advocacy behaviors. To achieve these objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation influence brand advocacy for Uber in Türkiye under the conditions of the partial ban?
- **RQ2:** How does psychological reactance moderate the relationships between brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation and brand advocacy in the context of Uber's partial ban in Türkiye?

By addressing these research questions, this study contributes to the broader understanding of consumer-brand dynamics in regulated markets, offering insights into how consumers navigate restrictions imposed on brands they support and how psychological reactance influences brand advocacy behaviors in contexts of diminished consumer choice.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Reactance Theory and Consumer Psychological Reactance

Psychological reactance, originally introduced by Brehm (1966), is conceptualized as a motivational state elicited when individuals perceive a threat or restriction to their freedom of choice. According to reactance theory, individuals respond with resistance—manifested through negative emotions, attitudes, or behaviors—once they sense that their autonomy is being encroached upon (Rains, 2013; Reynolds-Tylus, 2019). This reaction is grounded in the innate drive to maintain the freedom to make independent decisions; consequently, when consumers feel their choices are unduly influenced, they often strive to restore this perceived

autonomy (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2018). Within the domain of consumer behavior, psychological reactance holds considerable significance for marketing communications (Lim and Jiang, 2024). For instance, when a brand emphatically declares itself as "the best product on the market," some consumers may interpret this statement as an intrusion on their freedom to evaluate and compare alternatives (Su et al., 2024). Such perceived intrusions can precipitate negative attitudes toward the brand and bolster resistance in the decision-making process (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004).

Likewise, e-commerce platforms that continually spotlight certain products or obscure access to alternative offerings can invoke similar effects; high-reactance consumers may feel uncomfortable with persistent recommendations and consequently reject both the platform's suggestions and the products being promoted (Kwon & Chung, 2010). Psychological reactance also carries implications for long-term consumer–brand relationships. When individuals perceive threats to their freedom, they may not only refrain from purchasing but also curtail supportive behaviors such as word-of-mouth advocacy or brand defense (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004). Persistently aggressive promotional tactics or exaggerated claims intended to heighten brand visibility can, paradoxically, exacerbate consumer skepticism and trigger heightened reactance responses (Shen, 2015). This heightened reactance is especially pronounced among high-reactance consumers, who consequently become less inclined to develop favorable attitudes toward a brand or to recommend it to others (Quick & Stephenson, 2008). In view of these dynamics, it is essential for marketers to consider psychological reactance when crafting communication strategies. Avoiding overly controlling or manipulative messaging that constrains perceived consumer choice is likely to preserve autonomy perceptions and foster more positive brand evaluations. Conversely, disregarding psychological reactance can undermine brand equity, diminish customer loyalty, and reduce brand advocacy. In sum, acknowledging and mitigating the factors that trigger psychological reactance—by employing transparent, autonomy-supportive marketing communications—constitute pivotal steps toward nurturing sustainable consumer–brand relationships.

2.2. Brand Advocacy

Brand advocacy refers to consumers' deliberate and voluntary engagement in promoting, recommending, and defending a brand to others, predominantly through word-of-mouth communication and social sharing (Aljarah et al., 2024). Advocates move beyond merely purchasing a product or service; they demonstrate active support by responding to negative feedback, countering criticisms, and frequently encouraging others to explore the brand's offerings (Malik & Pradhan, 2025). This behavior thus represents a strategic outcome that transcends traditional loyalty, as it is propelled by emotional attachment, trust, perceived credibility, and the overall reputation of the brand (Wilk, 2018). From a managerial perspective, cultivating brand advocacy is highly advantageous because it effectively positions consumers as proactive promoters who contribute to a brand's positive image and resilience in the face of external critiques. Advocates not only disseminate favorable word-of-mouth but also serve as de facto guardians of the brand by addressing unfavorable commentary. Hence, elements such as brand reputation, brand trust, and brand credibility become instrumental in reinforcing the bond between consumers and the brand, thereby fostering deeper, more enduring relationships.

However, the extent to which organizations can foster and sustain brand advocacy is significantly moderated by consumers' psychological reactance levels (Clee & Wicklund, 1980; Dillard & Shen, 2005; Romani et al., 2013). High-reactance consumers, who perceive marketing communications as intrusive or as threats to their autonomy, may respond with skepticism or resistance rather than support. In such cases, even a well-intentioned promotional message can be perceived as excessive persuasion, thus diminishing the likelihood of advocacy behaviors and potentially engendering negative attitudes. Consequently, marketing strategies aimed at enhancing brand advocacy must be carefully designed to respect consumer autonomy, ensuring that communication remains transparent, balanced, and supportive rather than coercive. By acknowledging and adapting to the potential for psychological reactance, firms can more effectively cultivate authentic advocacy, safeguarding both brand reputation and consumer trust in the long run.

2.3. The Relationship Between Brand Trust and Brand Advocacy

Brand trust is conceptualized as consumers' confidence in a brand's competence, reliability, and commitment to fulfilling its promises (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). This trust is cultivated through repeated positive experiences and ethical business practices, fostering relational bonds that transcend transactional interactions (Bowden, 2009). When consumers trust a brand, they perceive security and reciprocity, which not only strengthens loyalty but also motivates them to advocate for the brand by countering negative feedback and endorsing it within their social networks (Reichheld, 2003; Dwivedi et al., 2021). For example, Ismail and Spinelli (2022) demonstrated that trust-based relationships significantly predict advocacy behaviors, particularly when brands prioritize transparency and ethical engagement. Empirical research further corroborates that trusted brands benefit from higher consumer openness to new products and resilience against reputational crises (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Brand trust influences brand advocacy.

2.4. The Relationship Between Brand Credibility and Brand Advocacy

Brand credibility refers to consumers' perceptions of a brand's expertise, transparency, and consistency in delivering on its commitments (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Sweeney & Swait, 2008). Credible brands are perceived as knowledgeable and dependable, which reduces perceived risk and enhances willingness to engage in advocacy behaviors (Molinillo et al., 2021). For instance, Molinillo et al. (2021) found that credibility directly increases word-of-mouth advocacy by fostering trust and reducing skepticism. Research also highlights that credible brands benefit from stronger customer loyalty and proactive defense against negative publicity (Algharabat et al., 2020). By consistently meeting performance expectations and maintaining transparent communication, brands reinforce credibility, thereby encouraging consumers to share positive experiences and advocate within their social circles (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Brand credibility influences brand advocacy.

2.5. The Relationship Between Brand Reputation and Brand Advocacy

Brand reputation is defined as a brand's perceived standing in the marketplace, shaped by its recognition, credibility, reliability, and capacity to deliver on its value propositions (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009; Walsh et al., 2007). A robust brand reputation not only assures consumers of consistent product or service quality but also cultivates emotional attachment, which serves as a psychological bridge between reputation and advocacy behaviors (Loureiro et al., 2012; Rather et al., 2022). Empirical studies demonstrate that consumers who perceive a brand as reputable are more likely to trust its offerings, align with its values, and actively recommend it to others (Japutra et al., 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2014). For instance, Rather et al. (2022) empirically validated that emotional attachment mediates the relationship between brand reputation and advocacy, emphasizing that strong reputations evoke positive emotions that drive consumers to defend and promote the brand. Furthermore, brands with superior reputations inspire not only repeat purchases but also proactive defense against criticism and enthusiastic word-of-mouth (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Over time, such advocacy behaviors solidify a brand's market position and sustain its competitive advantage (Algharabat et al., 2020). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> **H3:** Brand reputation influences brand advocacy.

2.6. Psychological Reactance as a Moderator

While brand credibility, trust, and reputation generally enhance advocacy, these relationships are attenuated among consumers with high levels of psychological reactance—a motivational state triggered by perceived threats to autonomy (Miller et al., 2020). Reactant individuals often interpret persuasive brand messages as manipulative, even when such messages are informative or well-intentioned (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004). For example, Choi (2023) demonstrated that high-reactance consumers dismiss credibility-driven communications as inauthentic, weakening the credibility-advocacy link. Similarly, repetitive trust-building campaigns may backfire among reactant audiences, as they perceive such efforts as coercive (Miller et al., 2020). Building on these considerations, the following hypotheses are proposed:

> **H4:** Psychological reactance moderates the relationship between brand trust and brand advocacy.

> **H5:** Psychological reactance moderates the relationship between brand credibility and brand advocacy.

> **H6:** Psychological reactance moderates the relationship between brand reputation and brand advocacy.

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, marketing managers should develop communication strategies that account for the moderating role of psychological reactance. By adopting a respectful approach to consumer autonomy—avoiding overt persuasion and ensuring transparent, balanced messaging—firms can preserve the beneficial effects of trust, credibility, and reputation on brand advocacy. Future research may extend these insights by examining additional moderating factors, such as need for cognition, cultural differences, or the degree of personal involvement with the brand, further enriching the literature on consumer advocacy. Figure 1 exhibits proposed research model.
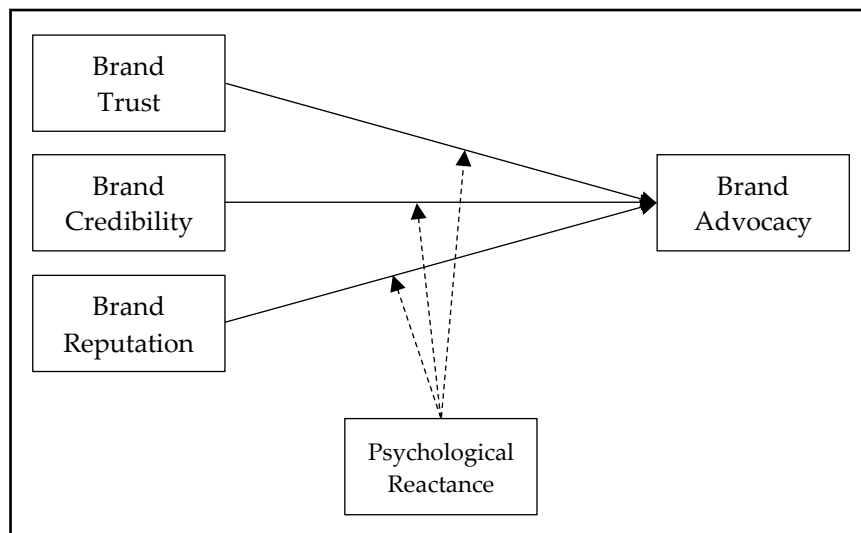
Figure 1. Research model

3.1. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing users' advocacy behavior towards Uber in the context of its ban in Türkiye. The research framework incorporates key constructs such as brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation, which are hypothesized to influence users' willingness to advocate for UBER. Psychological reactance, a key moderating variable, is also included to assess whether users' perceptions of being restricted (due to the ban) strengthen or weaken their advocacy. The data for this study were collected through an online survey distributed across various digital platforms. A total of 437 valid responses were obtained. A convenience sampling method was employed for its practicality and ease of access to participants, who are primarily individuals aware of UBER's services and its legal challenges in Türkiye. While this method has limitations in terms of generalizability, it is appropriate for an exploratory study aiming to identify key factors influencing advocacy behavior in this specific case. The survey was designed to measure brand trust, brand credibility, brand reputation, brand advocacy, and psychological reactance. All constructs were assessed using validated scales adapted from prior research. The questionnaire items were tailored and culturally adapted to fit the context of UBER's operations and legal issues in Türkiye. Prior to full-scale data collection, the survey was pilot tested with a small group to ensure clarity and relevance. This approach provides a robust means of examining how users' perceptions of UBER's brand characteristics and their psychological reactance influence their willingness to advocate for the service despite its legal ban. The insights derived from this research are expected to contribute to the literature on brand advocacy in contexts of regulatory restrictions and offer practical guidance for brands facing similar challenges in restrictive environments.

3.2. Measurement Tools

The study employs a survey to measure key constructs using established scales adapted for the UBER context. Brand trust was measured using the scale developed by Becerra and

Badrinarayanan (2013), which was originally based on the research of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2002) and Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003). Brand credibility was assessed with the scale from Baek et al. (2010). The brand reputation scale was adapted from Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), and brand advocacy was evaluated using the scale by Kim et al. (2001) and later adapted by Kemp et al. (2012). Psychological reactance was measured using the scale based on Dillard and Shen (2005) and Gupta and Mukherjee (2022). All items were translated into Turkish and reviewed for contextual accuracy. A 5-point Likert scale was used, with responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Table 1 presents the survey items used to measure each construct.

Table 1. Measurement Items for Key Constructs

Construct	Items	Source
Brand Trust	*BT1.* I trust UBER.	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2002); Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003; Becerra & Badrinarayanan (2013)
	BT2. I rely on UBER.	
	BT3. UBER is reliable.	
	BT4. UBER provides a safe service.	
	BT5. UBER is an honest brand.	
Brand Credibility	*BC1.* UBER delivers (or would deliver) what it promises.	Baek et al. (2010)
	BC2. Service claims from UBER are believable.	
	BC3. Over time, my experiences with UBER have led me to expect it to keep its promises.	
	BC4. UBER is committed to delivering on its claims.	
	BC5. UBER is a brand I can trust.	
	BC6. UBER has the ability to deliver what it promises.	
Brand Reputation	*BR1.* UBER is trustworthy.	Veloutsou & Moutinho (2009)
	BR2. UBER has a good reputation.	
	BR3. UBER makes honest claims about its services.	
Psychological Reactance	*PR1.* I feel frustrated because I cannot freely choose to use UBER.	Dillard & Shen (2005); Gupta & Mukherjee (2022)
	PR2. The ban on UBER triggers a sense of resistance in me.	
	PR3. I feel uncomfortable due to the restriction on using UBER, as my freedom of choice is limited.	
	PR4. When someone restricts me from using a service, I tend to do the opposite of what they want.	
	PR5. The ban on UBER feels like an intrusion into my personal freedom.	
Brand Advocacy	*BA1.* I recommend UBER to other people.	Kim et al. (2001); Kemp et al. (2012)
	BA2. I directly talk to other people about my experience with UBER.	
	BA3. I suggest to others that they should use UBER.	

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS. This approach was selected for its efficacy in exploring complex relationships and testing hypotheses. The analysis involved two steps: assessing the measurement model for reliability and validity and evaluating the structural model to test hypotheses. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was employed to ensure reliable path estimates and significance testing (Duman & Yaprak, 2022).

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Measurement Model

4.1.1. Reliability, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity

Table 2 presents the metrics for reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity across the constructs.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Metrics for Key Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Trust	0.913	0.918	0.935	0.742
Brand Credibility	0.932	0.934	0.946	0.746
Brand Reputation	0.879	0.891	0.925	0.805
Brand Advocacy	0.809	0.810	0.887	0.724
Psychological Reactance	0.920	0.932	0.940	0.757

According to widely accepted criteria in structural equation modeling literature, Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2021), while values above 0.80 are considered good. As shown in the Table 2, all constructs exhibit Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.80, indicating high internal consistency and reliability for the measurement scales used in this study. In terms of Composite Reliability (CR), Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that values above 0.70 are desirable for ensuring construct reliability. All constructs in the table display CR values well above the recommended threshold, confirming their reliability. Additionally, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 are considered sufficient to establish convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Pekpazar et al., 2021). In this study, all constructs have AVE values exceeding 0.70, demonstrating strong convergent validity. These results indicate that the measurement model exhibits overall robust reliability and validity, providing a solid foundation for testing the proposed hypotheses and examining the relationships between constructs.

4.1.2. Model Explanation and Model Fit

The R^2 value for the dependent construct indicates the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables in the model. A high R^2 value suggests substantial explanatory power. Additionally, model fit was assessed using key indices, with the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) serving as the primary indicator. For both the saturated and estimated models, the SRMR value is 0.040, which is well below the commonly accepted

threshold of 0.08. This confirms that the residuals, representing the differences between observed and predicted correlations, are minimal, indicating a well-fitting model. Other fit indices, such as Chi-square and the Normed Fit Index (NFI), further support the adequacy of the model. The Chi-square values for the saturated and estimated models are 565.991 and 565.118, respectively. While Chi-square is sensitive to sample size, its relatively low value, combined with other fit measures, reinforces the overall fit of the model. The NFI value of 0.912 exceeds the generally accepted benchmark of 0.90, indicating that the model performs significantly better than a null model with no relationships between variables. Moreover, the d_ULS and d_G values, which are 0.410 and 0.212, respectively, provide additional support for the robustness of the model. These measures, although less commonly reported, are useful in confirming model fit in variance-based structural equation modeling. In a nutshell, the combination of a low SRMR, high NFI, and appropriate Chi-square values indicates that the model demonstrates good fit and strong explanatory power. These results suggest that the model is well-specified, reliable, and suitable for further interpretation, supporting its application in both theoretical exploration and practical decision-making.

4.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The hypothesized relationships proposed in the structural model were evaluated through the computation of path coefficients, along with corresponding t-values and p-values, to determine the strength and significance of each relationship. A comprehensive summary of these results, including statistical significance and effect sizes, is provided in Table 3 for further interpretation and analysis.

Table 3. Hypotheses Testing Results

Paths	β	t-values	p-values	Decision
H1: Brand Trust → Brand Advocacy	0.398	9.944	0.000	Supported
H2: Brand Credibility → Brand Advocacy	0.335	9.920	0.000	Supported
H3: Brand Reputation → Brand Advocacy	0.283	7.543	0.000	Supported
H4: Psychological Reactance × Brand Trust → Brand Advocacy	0.081	1.352	0.177	Not supported
H5: Psychological Reactance × Brand Credibility → Brand Advocacy	0.099	2.144	0.032	Supported
H6: Psychological Reactance × Brand Reputation → Brand Advocacy	0.105	2.252	0.024	Supported

The hypothesis testing results offer valuable insights into the dynamics between key brand-related constructs and brand advocacy. The analysis was performed using path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values to determine the significance and direction of the proposed relationships. Based on established criteria in structural equation modeling literature, a hypothesis is considered significant when the p-value is below 0.05, and the corresponding t-value exceeds 1.96 at the 5% significance level (Hair et al., 2014). The path coefficients provide an indication of the strength and direction of the effects, where positive values signify a direct positive relationship, and negative values imply an inverse relationship.

The findings reveal that brand trust has a significant and positive impact on brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.398$, t = 9.944, p = 0.000). This demonstrates that users who trust the brand are more likely to advocate for it, reinforcing the pivotal role of trust in building strong customer-brand relationships. Similarly, brand credibility also shows a significant positive effect on brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.335$, t = 9.920, p = 0.000), indicating that when users perceive the brand as dependable and capable of keeping its promises, they are more inclined to promote and defend it. Another significant relationship is observed between brand reputation and brand advocacy ($\beta = 0.283$, t = 7.543, p = 0.000), suggesting that a positive overall perception of the brand enhances users' willingness to recommend and support it.

The interaction effects involving psychological reactance provide additional layers of insight. The interaction between psychological reactance and brand reputation is significant ($\beta = 0.105$, t = 2.252, p = 0.024), implying that when users feel their freedom is restricted (as in the case of UBER's ban in Türkiye), the perceived reputation of the brand becomes more critical in driving advocacy behavior. A similar pattern is evident in the interaction between psychological reactance and brand credibility ($\beta = 0.099$, t = 2.144, p = 0.032), highlighting that under perceived restrictions, the credibility of the brand takes on greater importance in influencing users' willingness to advocate for it.

However, not all interaction effects were significant. The interaction between psychological reactance and brand trust did not yield significant results ($\beta = 0.081$, t = 1.352, p = 0.177), indicating that while trust generally plays a crucial role in advocacy, it may not be sufficient on its own to drive advocacy behaviors in situations where users experience psychological reactance. This suggests that trust may have a more complex, context-dependent influence when users feel that their autonomy is being constrained.

Overall, the results provide strong support for the direct effects of brand trust, brand credibility, and brand reputation on brand advocacy. Furthermore, the significant interaction effects involving psychological reactance underscore the importance of context when evaluating user advocacy, particularly in environments where external restrictions are imposed on the brand. These findings contribute to the growing literature on brand advocacy by highlighting the interplay between user perceptions of trust, credibility, and reputation and their psychological response to perceived constraints. Consequently, the study offers valuable practical implications for brands navigating restrictive regulatory environments, suggesting that maintaining a credible and reputable image is essential in sustaining user advocacy even under challenging circumstances.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the complex interplay between brand reputation, brand trust, brand credibility, and psychological reactance in shaping brand advocacy behavior. Drawing upon established theoretical foundations (Brehm, 1966; Rains, 2013) and extending prior empirical insights (e.g., Erdem & Swait, 2004; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), the findings corroborate the longstanding proposition that trust, credibility, and reputation are essential drivers of consumer advocacy. Notably, these determinants remain salient even in contexts where external restrictions—such as a legal ban—may jeopardize the brand's market presence and user engagement.

The results reveal that brand trust, credibility, and reputation each exert a robust, positive influence on brand advocacy. Consistent with Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory, users are more inclined to endorse and defend a brand when they perceive it to be trustworthy and reliable. Similarly, in line with Erdem and Swait (2004), this study reaffirms that perceived credibility reduces risk perceptions, thereby fostering consumers' willingness to advocate. Moreover, a favorable reputation—reflecting honest claims and dependable performance—further galvanizes users' readiness to promote the brand in their social circles (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

A key contribution lies in elucidating the moderating role of psychological reactance, a motivational force that arises in response to perceived threats to autonomy (Brehm, 1966). The significant moderation effects for brand reputation and brand credibility underscore that under conditions of external restriction (i.e., a legal ban), users become more attuned to signals indicating the brand's standing and truthfulness. In such circumstances, a strong reputation and demonstrable credibility effectively counterbalance heightened skepticism and perceived intrusion, prompting advocacy even when consumers feel their freedom is curtailed (Romani et al., 2013).

Interestingly, the interaction between psychological reactance and brand trust was non-significant. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that trust, while fundamental for relationship-building, may operate more as a baseline requirement rather than an amplified determinant under restrictive conditions (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004; White et al., 2008). One possible explanation is that trust primarily reflects relational stability and dependability, which, while fostering advocacy in general, may not directly address the heightened sensitivity to autonomy threats induced by external restrictions. As Fitzsimons and Lehmann (2004) argue, trust tends to be less reactive to short-term environmental shifts, functioning more as a long-term attitudinal anchor rather than an immediate buffer against perceived control. Moreover, trust alone may lack the persuasive signaling power that reputation and credibility provide when users are seeking reassurance amidst external constraints. This nuance indicates that trust, though critical, may require additional supportive signals—such as reputation-building efforts and credible communications—to sustain advocacy among high-reactance individuals.

From an academic standpoint, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the boundaries of relationship marketing frameworks (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). By integrating psychological reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) into the brand advocacy literature, the study demonstrates how external restrictions or perceived threats can modulate the effectiveness of well-established antecedents (brand trust, credibility, and reputation). While much of the extant literature emphasizes how these brand attributes independently bolster advocacy (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 2004), the present findings accentuate the context-dependent nature of these relationships. In doing so, this work advances our understanding of why certain brand communications thrive under restrictive environments while others falter, inviting further scholarly inquiries into additional moderators (e.g., cultural norms, need for cognition) that may similarly shape advocacy behavior in constrained markets.

The study holds notable implications for marketing practitioners, particularly for brands operating in legally or socially restrictive contexts. First, maintaining transparent and consistent communication becomes paramount. Brands can mitigate psychological reactance by emphasizing user autonomy—framing messages as informative aids rather than prescriptive directives—and by showcasing awards or CSR initiatives in a manner that underscores collective benefits rather than self-promotional gains. Second, this research underscores the heightened relevance of credible and reputable signals under restrictive conditions; investments in customer education, community-building, and proactive reputation management are more likely to foster advocacy when consumers perceive limitations on their freedom of choice. Finally, it is critical that managers recognize trust alone may not suffice to assuage autonomy-related concerns. Coordinating trust-building initiatives with robust reputation and credibility campaigns may better address high-reactance consumers' reservations, especially when external threats to choice loom large.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. First, the reliance on convenience sampling and a single-country context (Türkiye) constrains the generalizability of the findings to broader populations and different cultural settings. Future research could replicate this study across diverse markets—especially in regions with distinct regulatory environments—to validate and extend the observed effects. Second, while psychological reactance emerged as a salient moderator, further studies may explore additional moderating constructs, such as consumer involvement or perceived brand authenticity, to capture a more holistic view of how external restrictions shape advocacy. Third, the cross-sectional design precludes definitive causal inferences. Longitudinal or experimental approaches would better elucidate the temporal dynamics of trust, credibility, and reputation under changing regulatory landscapes. Lastly, the study focuses primarily on a single platform-based service (UBER). Subsequent inquiries could compare different brand categories, including product-based and service-based industries, to ascertain whether the patterns hold uniformly or exhibit industry-specific nuances.

In summary, this research offers a nuanced understanding of brand advocacy by situating it within the interplay of brand trust, credibility, reputation, and psychological reactance. By attending to both theoretical contributions and practical applications, the findings serve as a steppingstone for scholars and practitioners alike, especially for those seeking to cultivate enduring consumer support in contexts marked by external constraints.

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