

Marka Performansının Kafa Karışıklığı Belirsizlikten Kaçınma ve Marka Sadakati Üzerindeki Aracılık Etkisi

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Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı marka performansının kafa karışıklığı ile marka sadakati arasındaki ilişki üzerinde ve belirsizlikten kaçınma ile marka sadakati arasındaki ilişki üzerindeki aracılık etkisinin olup olmadığını test etmektir. Önerilen kavramsal model 437 katılımcıdan elde edilen verilerle test edilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda marka performansının kafa karışıklığı ile marka sadakati arasındaki ilişki üzerinde tam aracılık etkisinin olduğu ve belirsizlikten kaçınma ile marka sadakati arasındaki ilişki üzerinde ise kısmi aracılık etkisi olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca analizler neticesinde belirsizlikten kaçınmanın marka performansı üzerindeki değişkenliğin %28'ini, kafa karışıklığının marka performansı üzerindeki değişkenliğin %14'ünü ve marka performansının marka sadakatindeki değişkenliğin %81'ni açıkladığı tespit edilmiştir. Diğer taraftan kafa karışıklığının marka sadakatini direk olarak etkilemediği ve kafa karışıklığının marka sadakatini marka performansı üzerinden etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kafa Karışıklığı, Belirsizlikten Kaçınma, Marka Performansı, Marka Sadakati

Jel Kodu: M31, L83, Z32

The Mediating Role of Brand Performance on the Relationship between Confusion - Brand Loyalty and Uncertainty Avoidance – Brand Loyalty

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether brand performance has mediating effect on the relationship between confusion - brand loyalty and between uncertainty avoidance – brand loyalty or not. The proposed model was tested on 437 participants. As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that brand performance has a full mediating effect on the relationship between the confusion and brand loyalty, and a partial mediating effect on the relationship between the uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty. Also, as a result of the model testing, it was found that uncertainty avoidance explained 28% of the variability in brand performance, confusion explained 14% of the variability in brand performance and also brand performance explained 81% of the variability in brand loyalty. On the other hand, confusion does not directly affect brand loyalty but it affects brand loyalty through brand performance.

Keywords: Confusion, Uncertainty Avoidance, Brand Performance, Brand Loyalty, Decision-making Process.

Jel Codes: M31, L83, Z32

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are surrounded by the culture of the society to which they belong. No individual is independent of the society in which he/she is. Our collective consciousness leads unwittingly us to behave in a certain way. In this respect, developing the marketing mix in concordance with the cultural characteristics of the target market is extremely important for the success of the brand. Although, in this century when the cultures began to homogenize with globalization and technological possibilities, each society still has a number of ingrained cultural features. Brands have to attune to these ingrained qualities with marketing efforts.

However, one of these ingrained cultural features, which have a significant effect on consumers' making purchasing decision, is uncertainty avoidance as well. Uncertainty avoidance is a sub-dimension of Hofstede' culture scale. Uncertainty avoidance attitude of consumer has utmost important influence on the success of the brand in the market. This effect differentiates particularly in branded products and unbranded products. Indeed, there have been many studies investigating the effect of consumers' uncertainty avoidance attitude on success of the marketing efforts of businesses (Seo, Philipps, Jang & Kim, 2012; Hwang & Lee, 2012; Köseoğlu, Topaloğlu, Parnell & Lester, 2013). However, it is thought

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that this study considered as original because of the testing the mediating role of brand performance on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance - brand loyalty and on the relationship between confusion-brand loyalty.

The fact remains that as a result of the increasing communication opportunities, developments in the production conditions and the effect of globalization; the functions and diversity of products have been increasing day by day in the 21st century. In this respect, some academicians suggested that products have become more various as they have never been before in today's marketing world (Alarabi & Grönbländ, 2012; Walsh, Hennig-Thurau, & Mitchell, 2007). Also, the changes in consumer preferences trigger the diversity of branded products as well. In addition to these, with the rising life standards, increasing freedom of choice, consumer's decision-making process became much more complex. This increase in the variety of the branded products and ingrained cultural attitudes in society cause consumers experience more confusion in the process of making purchasing decision. Determining the stages when consumers have difficulty in making purchasing decisions is a crucially important problem for the success of marketing activities of brands.

With the globalization, tourism sector has become highly competitive. One of the strategies that businesses in tourism sector commonly use to overcome this competition is branding. Businesses struggle to win the trust of consumers by branding and want to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, however the reaction of each society to the branding strategies of the businesses is not the same. The reactions of the consumers can vary depending on the cultural characteristics of the society they are in. On the other hand, touristic products possess some qualities such as heterogeneity, perishability, inseparability and intangibility. In this respect, it is thought that purchasing processes for touristic products are much more complex. The most important

reason for this complex purchasing process is the active participation of the consumer in the production process in the tourism sector. In this respect, tourism marketers should pay more attention to consumers' role in all decisions for an efficient brand management and should integrate marketing mix elements of the brand with consumer behaviour. It is thought that this study is remarkable as it takes into account consumer behaviours for an efficient brand management and brand formation.

Human is lately inhabiting in a globe with a diversity of options to select from. They forced to make selection cities to live, destinations to travel, hotels to accommodate etc. There is more opportunity to make selection in tourism industry than retailing. To illustrate, online travel agency, such as Booking.com, Hotels.com, Expedia com, propose much more than 100 varied package tour, hotels and destinations for users. In this regard, necessity of making selection between a great deal of touristic product leads confusion in tourists' decision process (Park & Jang, 2013). Additionally, some researches in marketing have proposed that people have restricted capacity to handle knowledge and then, too many choices and overload information would influence negatively individuals' decision making process (Lu, Gürsoy & Lu, 2016). In this regards, if tourists have hard time in apprehending all information related to their journey, their decision-making process would damage (Gürsoy & McClerary, 2004a). Further, due to the touristic products' features, such as heterogeneity, perishability, inseparability and intangibility; tourists are in tendency to correlate higher sensual and financial risk in their purchase decision process (Gürsoy & McClerary, 2004b). For this reason, confusion by over choice and overload information in touristic consumption might be remarkable for researches. Especially tourists might experience confusion, while they make selection between hotels for their holiday. In this regard, this topic has not previously attracted in tourism literature. So, there is

urgent need to search to determine the effect of confusion in terms of hotel selection. Thereby, one of the aims of this study is to investigate this topic from tourists' perspective. In other words, one of the aim of this article is to comprehend tourists' confusion attitude related to hotel selection and exploring the effect of tourists' confusion attitude on tourists' brand loyalty attitude. In this regard, the main motivation of this study is (1) to determine the effect of uncertainty avoidance (called risk tolerance), confusion and brand performance on brand loyalty attitude of consumers and specially (2) to test the mediation effect of brand performance on the relationship between confusion - brand loyalty and (3) to test the mediation effect of brand performance on the on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance - brand loyalty.

1.1 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is one of the dimensions of Hofstede's (1983) culture scale that has five sub-dimensions. Uncertainty avoidance is an attitude that shows the mental orientation of the group members in the face of the unstructured situation or it can be defined as an attitude that demonstrate the group members' the ability to cope with risky situations. Uncertainty avoidance, also considered risk tolerance, can be at high, moderate and low degree. For instance, group members with uncertainty avoidance attitude at high level want standards, procedures, structured circumstances and try to abstain from risky situations. Individuals with an attitude of uncertainty avoidance at high level are often anxious, nervous, stressful and aggressive in the face of risky situations (Tıǧlı & Sıǧrı, 2006). In societies which uncertainty avoidance attitude is at high level, individuals want clear and explicit rules. On the contrary, in societies which the uncertainty avoidance attitude is at low level, the risks are perceived as very natural, and individuals are encouraged to take risks. In addition to this, Birsel, İslamoǧlu & B6r6 (2009) have asserted that in societies which the uncertainty avoidance attitude is at

low level, entrepreneurs are enthusiastic about new product development, entering the new markets and using new technologies. So, it is thought that these individuals are enthusiastic about seeking novelty and taking risks as well. On the other hand, in societies which uncertainty avoidance attitude is at high level, individuals resist change, avoid taking risks and try to reduce the risk by using the standardized behaviour patterns. On the contrary, in societies which uncertainty avoidance attitude is at low level, individuals want to experience everything that they find it worth trying and wonder about the different things (Steenkamp, 2015: 59).

Yavas (1990) has stated that cultural tendencies and psychographic qualities are effective in the risk perceptions of travelling tourists. Verhage, Yavas & Green (1990) have put forward that the risk perception steer consumer into the branded products in intercultural studies. While Verhage et. al (1990) have investigated the subject of risk tolerance at intercultural level; Money & Crotts (2003) have researched uncertainty avoidance attitude on travelling tourists at individual level and as a result, found that tourists with a high level of uncertainty avoidance attitude prefer package tours and short journeys, and visit fewer destinations. At the same time, it was also determined that tourists with uncertainty avoidance attitude at high level preferred the destinations where they can keep their traditions. Verhage, Yavas & Green (1990); Dawar, Parker & Price (1996); and Litvin, Crotts & Hefner (2004) have found that uncertainty avoidance attitude significantly effect on tourists' attitude of seeking information. Money, Gilly and Graham (1998) have expressed that uncertainty avoidance is higher in Japanese enterprises than in American ones and so, Japanese enterprises prefer doing business with consumers or enterprises that have long term relationships and because they evaluate this consumer or enterprises more reliable and riskless. Lastly, Dawar et. al. (1990) have exerted that the level of uncertainty avoidance attitude is determined

by the values of the society that the individual is a member of. Verhage, Yavas and Green (1990) have put forward that the risk perception steer consumer into the branded products in intercultural studies.

1.2 Confusion

One of the most important issues engaging marketing personnel is what are the factors that affect the consumer's purchasing decision during purchase. One of these factors is confusion (Sproles & Kendal's, 1986; Correia, Kozak & Ferradeira. 2011). Confusion is just one of the eight sub-dimensions of Sproles & Kendal's (1986) scale of consumers' decision-making styles. Wesley, Leheuw & Woodside (2006) stated that consumer experience confusion when they are exposed to excessive information about the products through marketing communication tools in the decision-making process of the consumers. On the other hand, too many options related to product that is planned to purchase also causes consumer experience confusion. To conclude, substitution availability related to product that is planned to purchase and exposing the excessive information about the products through marketing communication tools cause confusion in decision-making process. This situation affects the decision-making process of the consumers in a negative way.

Kavas & Yeşilada (2007) proposed that too many options and being exposed to too much information about product confuses and overwhelms the consumers. Furthermore, Agbonifoh & Elimimian (1999), also Wang & Zhen (2004) stated that consumers impulsively tend to purchase towards imported branded products to demonstrate their attitude related to quality, fashion and brands. Thus, they experience less confusion and make less price comparisons. On the other hand, Iyengar & Lepper (2000); Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz (2006); Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, & Todd (2009) put forward that the opportunity of choice which increases above a specific level paradoxically causes the consumers to feel less satisfied regarding the choice they made or not

to be able to decide in any way at all. Moreover, when the root of the confusion problem is considered, the quality of the product, which is planned to be purchased, is an important question. Because Reisinger, Kandampully, Mok & Sparks (2001) proposed that the touristic product that is regarded as the service differentiates from the ordinary retail products in terms of consumers' confusion. In other words, the quality of the product is also an important criteria in the confusion problem. In addition to this, the novelty seeking of the tourists (Jang & Feng, 2007) and the pressure of time (Park & Jang, 2013) also cause tourists to have difficulty in their decision-making process. Park and Jang (2013) detected that too many options cause tourists not to be able to decide. To conclude, too many options and being exposed too much information or overload information about the product effect negatively consumer' decision making process. This situation can be described confusion. Moving forward from this point, one of the most significant motivation of this study is to determine whether tourists have confusion or not, while making a choice among branded hotels.

1.3 Brand Performance

Performance is evaluated as an independent variable in marketing literature. Brand performance is a concept used to evaluate the brand' strategic success in the market. Akman, Özkan & Erciş (2008) have considered that the concept of performance is as a qualitative or quantitative evaluation tool of the all planned efforts to achieve the goals and evaluated it as the ability to produce results towards specific aims and priorities in a specific period of time. Performance is a means of evaluation and provides a number of conveniences to the decision makers in measuring to what extent the aimed targets are achieved and to take several reformative precautions if necessary. Schürle (2009) has considered that brand performance as an assessment and evaluation instrument that provides measurable contributions to a business as a whole.

There are many models and approaches in evaluating brand performance. Brand reputation and brand loyalty are among the suggested behavioral approaches for measuring brand performance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Baldauf, Cravens & Binder (2003) have asserted that many researchers evaluate brand performance as the market performance and profitability performances of the brand. The financial income, undistributed profit and profit margin of the brand are taken into consideration in the profitability performance of the brand; while criteria such as market demand, sales volume and market share are taken into consideration in the market performance of the brand (Baldauf et. al., 2003).

Aaker (1996) has postulated that brand performance provide a number of criteria related to the evaluation of the brand's achievement in the market. These criteria include market share, prices, distribution network and so on. Furthermore, market share is usually used in the measurement of brand performance. Because market share is considered as a reaction that consumer react to product. Keller & Lehman (2003) have stated that the most important criteria regarding brand performance is price flexibility, market share, cost structure and profitability. Wong & Merrillees (2007) have appraised brand performance as an indicator of brand's success in the market. Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001), and Reid (2002) have attempted to measure brand performance in terms of awareness, satisfaction and loyalty. Quan (2006) has appraised that brand performance as an element of brand equity and put forward that brand awareness and brand loyalty contributes to the market performance of the brand. Assaf, Josiassen, Woo, Agbola, & Tsionas (2017) have emphasized that taxes and price shocks are the biggest obstacle against hotel performance by taking into consideration the studies on the performance of hotels in the tourism sector. Silva, Gerwe and Becerra (2017) have conducted a study on the effects of institutional branded hotels on their performance and came

to the conclusion that institutional brands have a powerful effect on hotels' brand performance. In accordance with the result of their study, O'Neill, Mattila & Xiao (2015) have indicated that the more consumer satisfaction increases, the more brand performance rises as well and they have handled the brand performance as a strategy which provides financial income for the enterprise.

This financial income could be measured as qualitatively and quantitatively, and it is addressed with different perspectives of the enterprise and consumers. Brand performance is the current value of all the financial income resulting from the use of a brand. Measuring the brand performance in order to manage the brand strategically provides several conveniences to the decision-makers about the brand. Furthermore, it is extremely effective way in assisting sales and marketing, and in reinforcing the brand image. The dimension of brand performance used in this study is only one dimension of the five-dimensional brand equity scale developed by Lassar, Mittal & Sharma (1995). Diokoa & Sob (2012) adapted Lassar's (1995) scale to hotel businesses. In this study, it is used the brand performance scale which is adapted by Diokoa and Sob (2012) to hotel businesses. This scale is a behavioral approach in used evaluating brand performance.

1.4 Brand Loyalty

The loyalty concept, firstly evaluated by Copeland (1923), was later researched by many researchers. While there is not one single accepted definition of loyalty, the main focus of the evaluations made before emphasize that loyalty is the most effective consumer behavior measurement method (Leslie, 2011). Building customer' loyalty regularly has been the most important purpose of marketing communities (Kwamboka, 2013). Brand loyalty is discussed by psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists as well as marketing researchers. While psychologists put emphasis on the satisfactory and emotional side of brand loyalty; sociologists focus on the cognitive

importance of brand loyalty (Fournier & Yao, 1997). Marketing researchers handled brand loyalty as consumer behavior and regarded it as a precondition of maintaining the continuity of enterprise income. Marketing experts aim to obtain loyal consumers, in this way, they aim to provide that consumer purchase brand again and again (İslamoğlu & Fırat, 2011). Loyalty can be measured in two different ways: attitudinal and behavioral approaches (Jacoby, Chestnut & Fisher, 1978). While elements such as the frequency of purchasing, the amount of consuming, market share and the density of purchasing are taken into consideration in the behavioral approach; the factors such as the effect of consumer' mental orientation is taken into account in attitudinal loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty requires consumer consciously tend towards a certain brand and purchase of that brand. This purchasing action should be consciously and intentional (Kwamboka, 2013). In this study, attitudinal loyalty scale has been used.

The cost of gaining new customers is always higher than to keep the already available customers for many industries. The customers who are satisfy with a specific brand increase the competitiveness of that brand on the market and, thus the marketing costs of the enterprise influentially reduce (Chow, Ling, Yen & Hwang, 2017). This situation points out the significance of brand loyalty. Lam (2007) has found that there is a meaningful relationship between brand loyalty and uncertainty avoidance. De Mooij & Hofstede (2002) have stated that consumers having uncertainty avoidance attitude at high level tend to more purchase branded product and perceive branded product safer and riskless. Howard and Sheth (1969) have put forward that the more sales volume of the brand go up, the more consumers' brand loyalty attitude increases (Chaudhuri, 1999). Dick & Basu (1994) have emphasized the importance of brand loyalty because of the fact that it induces the word of mouth type communication among consumers positively and thus businesses can obtain more loyal customers (Chaudhuri, 1999).

2. RESEARCH MODEL

There is casual relationship between brand performance and brand loyalty and, these variables have been widely investigated in previous research (Chaudhuri, 1999; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Chaudhuri& Holbrook, 2001; Reid, 2002; Quan, 2006; O'Neill, Mattila & Xiao, 2015, Chow, Ling, Yen & Hwang, 2017, Unurlu & Uca). Despite these researches that have been conducted widely on brand performance and brand loyalty, there is no research the effect of uncertainty avoidance and confusion on this causal relationship between brand performance and brand loyalty. In this regard, it is though that this study will shed light on this gap in the literature. On the other hand, this research will determine the important of the uncertainty avoidance and confusion in terms of brand performance and brand loyalty. From this point of view, the following models are proposed (the main purpose of this study is to test the mediating effect of brand performance on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance - brand loyalty and confusion and brand loyalty):

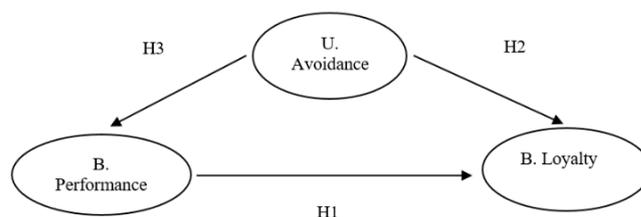


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

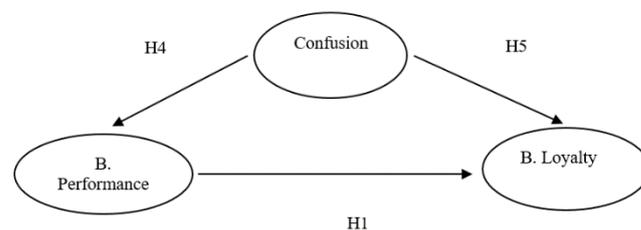


Figure 2: Conceptual Model

Chaudhuri (1999), Howard & Sheth (1969), Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Reid (2002), Unurlu & Uca (2017) have determined that there is a meaningful relationship between brand performance and brand loyalty. Quan (2006) has explained that brand performance

contributes to the loyalty and awareness attitudes of the consumers. O'Neill et. al. (2015) and Chow et. al (2017) have indicated that satisfied customers are contributing to the brand performance of the business. These explanations support the related hypothesis.

H1: Brand performance has a positive influence on brand loyalty

Verhage, Yavas and Green (1990) have found that consumer' risk perception has influential on decision-making process of the consumers. Lam (2007), and, De Mooji & Hofstede (2002) have asserted that there is a meaningful relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty. Individuals with high uncertainty avoidance attitude put up resistance to ambiguous and new situation than those with low uncertainty avoidance attitude. Individuals with high uncertainty avoidance attitude don't like extraordinary and astonishing condition. Hereby, one would anticipate that individuals with high uncertainty avoidance attitude tend to branded goods more than those with low uncertainty avoidance (Giarratana and Torres, 2007). Likewise, it is thought that consumer' loyalty attitude is derived from anxiety of uncertainness of the new product' performance. By uncertainty avoidance' definition, it is suggested that customers scored high in uncertainty avoidance are more likely tend to loyal to familiar brands than those who scored less in uncertainty avoidance. Accordingly, customers with uncertainty avoidance attitude at low level are more likely prefer new offering and different brand than those with uncertainty avoidance attitude at high level (Ndubisi, Malhotra & Ulas, 2012). De Mooij and Hofstede (2002) have asserted that consumers with uncertainty avoidance attitude at high tend to more buy branded product and perceive branded product more confident and risk free. These explanations support the related hypothesis.

H2: Uncertainty avoidance has a positive influence on brand loyalty.

Tıgılı & Sıgırı (2006), Sawyerr, Mcgee & Peterson

(2003), Khatri & D'netto (1997); Giarratana & Torres (2007) have asserted that there is a meaningful relationship between uncertainty avoidance and performance. Money & Crotts (2003), Verhage, Yavas and Green (1990), Dawar et. al. (1996), Litvin, Crotts & Hefner (2004) have explained that uncertainty avoidance affects the tourists' decision-making process. Money et. al. (1998) have stated that Japanese enterprises have a higher level of uncertainty avoidance attitude than American enterprises and this situation effects on attitude of Japanese enterprises. In addition to this, national cultural is becoming important day by day in marketing field in order to evaluate some phenomenon such as brand performance (Money et. al., 1998). Likewise, Swamidass & Newel (1987) and Haka & Krishan (2005) have stated that uncertainty avoidance has significant effect on firm' performance. In other respect, Swamidass & Newel (1987) and Khatri & D'netto (1997) have put forwarded that high level of uncertainty avoidance influence on performance of firms. Roth, (1995) has alleged that when uncertainty avoidance is high, consumers more likely tend to diminish the stress, prefer stability - predictability experiences and they show no tolerance for uncertainty. When uncertainty avoidance is low, consumers seek variety, consumers' risk tolerance of increase and they more open to novelty. Thus, formally, it can be thought that when uncertainty avoidance is low, brand performance will be lesser; when uncertainty avoidance is high, brand performance will be greater (Roth, 1995). These explanations support the related hypothesis.

H3: Uncertainty avoidance has a positive influence on brand performance.

Park & Jang (2013), Kavas & Yeşilada (2007), Iyengar & Lepper (2000), Iyengar, Wells & Schwartz (2006), Scheibehenne, Greifeneder & Todd (2009) stated that consumers have difficulty in deciding or dissatisfied with their decisions when there are lots of alternatives. Today's human being nowadays has difficulty

in making choice with wide range of wide range of goods and services. In fact, individuals are progressively forced to make a choice, between occupations, location to live, destination to travel, hotel to accommodate and a large number of consumer goods (Horovitz, 2004, Park & Jang, 2013). In contrast with retail product, touristic product supply a greater variety of goods and services. To illustrate, online travel agent, Booking.com, Expedia.com, supply much more than 100 varied pre-specified tour package from Istanbul to different destination. Because of this situation, consumer experiences confusion and cannot make decision (Park & Jang, 2013). In this respect, tourist' data processing and making decision will be problematic and this process will lead tourist' experience confusion. On such an occasion, it is expected that, tourists will incline to experience further emotional and financial risk (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). Under these circumstances, it is thought that confusion has side effect on brand performance. On the other hand, Walsh & Mitchell (2010) and Chen & Chang (2013) have alleged that confusion has some negative effect such as decrease of brand loyalty and accordingly brand performance, too. These explanations support the related hypothesis.

H4: Confusion has a negative influence on brand performance

Reisinger & Kandampully (2001) mentioned that tourists experience confusion when they are exposed to excessive information about the products through marketing communication tools in the decision-making process of the consumers. Mitchell & Papavassiliou (1999), and, Alarabi & Grönbländ (2012) found that confusion affects brand loyalty negatively. Walsh et. al. (2007) have suggested that confusion due to similarity and uncertainty has negative effect on consumer's loyalty attitude. These explanations support the related hypothesis.

H5: Confusion has a negative influence on brand loyalty

3. METHOD

Related literature was scanned before being created the proposed model and it was seen that there were some gaps in the literature and a research pattern was formed accordingly. In this respect, it is thought that the model was original. In other words, there is no other research that focuses on the mediating role of brand performance on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance - brand loyalty and confusion – brand loyalty. From this aspect, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature and guide the decision-makers.

This research is conducted in İstanbul in that İstanbul was listed in the 6th place among 10 cities in the Global Destination Cities Index that was published in 2016 by Forbes Magazine (The World Ten Most Visited Cities, 2018). Besides, İstanbul was selected 11th most visitor-attracting city with 9.24 million international visitors in 2017 World Economic Forum (These are the World's Most Visited Cities, 2018).

The data was collected from tourists who preferred İstanbul as a destination and hotels in Istanbul for accommodation (tourist in Istanbul). Face-to-face questionnaire method was used in data collection and convenience sampling method was used as the sampling method. 505 questionnaires were distributed for this study that carried out in 2017 and 437 usable questionnaire form were obtained. The surveys were obtained from tourists who have experience of accommodation at any five star hotels in Istanbul. The response rate of questionnaire is 86%. Six point likert scale was used, "1 represents strongly disagree, 6 represents strongly agree" and 437 questionnaires were analyzed in total. In this study, Kim & Kim's (2005) brand loyalty scale, uncertainty avoidance dimension of the Hofstede's culture scale (1983), brand performance dimension of the Diokoa & Sob's (2012) brand equity scale and confusion dimension of Sproles & Kendal's (1986) decision-making styles scale were used. Table 1 which is below includes information such as

participants' gender, participants' age, participants' the aim of travel, source of information about hotel and participants' country.

Table 1: Participants' Socio-Demographic Attributes

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	222	44
Male	283	56
Age	Frequency	%
Less than 30	123	24.4
Between 30-39	190	37.6
Between 40-49	114	22.6
Between 50-59	57	11.3
Between 60-69	21	4.2
The Aim of Travel	Frequency	%
Business	268	53.1
Culture	87	17.2
Health	44	8.7
Recreation	104	20.6
Other	2	0.4
Source of Information about Hotel	Frequency	%
Travel Agency	171	33.9
Family-Friends	75	14.9
Television/Radio	4	.8
Newspaper/Journal	10	2.0
Internet	162	32.1
Past experiences	82	16.2
Other	1	.2
Country	Frequency	%
Other	54	10.7
Turkey	451	89.3

The details of the reliability and validity of the variables are presented in Table 2. The alpha coefficient developed by Cronbach (1951) tests the internal consistency of an assessment instrument. This value that is evaluated between 0 and 1 shows the structure consistent and relevant in itself (Tavakol, 2011). Baykul (1979) mentioned that not only reliability but also construct validity raises, as coefficient come close to 1 (Yasar, 2011). Cronbach Alpha values of the variables in Table 2 are close to 1, therefore it is discovered that the measurement tool are reliable. Composite reliability evaluates the reliability of factors while the AVE value is taken as a basis for the convergent validity criteria (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hariri & Roberts 2015). Fornell & Larker (1981) have stated that the AVE value must be higher than 0.5 for convergent validity and the CR value must be higher than the AVE value. When the AVE values in Table 2 are examined, it can be seen that they are higher than 0.5 and the CR values are higher than the AVE values. This situation points out the validity of the variables.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variables	Std. Coefficient	CR	AVE	Cronbach Alpha
Uncertainty Avoidance				
1. It is important to have job requirements and instructions spelled out in detail so that employees always know what they are expected to do.	.895			
2. Managers expect workers to closely follow instructions and procedures.	.903	.978	.645	.915
3. Rules and regularities are important because they inform workers what the organization expects of them.	.862			
4. Standard operating procedures are helpful to employees on the job.	.716			
Brand Performance				
1. One can characterize visiting this hotel as trouble-free.	.513			
2. Visitors to this hotel can expect a superior quality of experience than other hotel.	.853	.838	.505	.838
3. You can expect an excellent experience when visiting this hotel.	.776			
4. As a tourism establishment, this hotel performs very well	.869			
Brand Loyalty				
1. I regularly visit this hotel.	.816			
2. I intend to visit this hotel again.	.905	.976	.910	.903
3. I usually use this hotel as my first choice compared to other hotels.	.823			
4. I am satisfied with the visit to this hotel.	.874			
Confusion				
1. There are so many hotel brands that I often feel confused.	.852			
2. The more I learn about hotels, the harder it seems to choose the best.	.913	.946	.696	.903
3. All the information I get on different hotel brand, confuses me.	.883			

When the standard coefficients of structures forming each factor evaluated, it can be seen that the loads of each structure are higher than 0.50. On the other hand, the cross loads between the variables are lower than <.7. This situation points out the discrimination validity of the scale (Hair et. al., 2010; Barbopoulos & Johansson, 2017).

After the reliability and validity of the structures in the model were calculated; in order to see simultaneous relationship between the variables, the model was tested with SEM. The test result is presented in Figure 3.

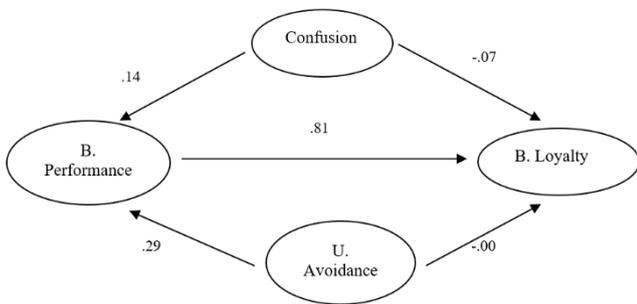


Figure 3: Model Testing

When the fit indices in Table 3 are examined, it can be seen that the criteria met the goodness of fit criteria. In other words, the model fits the data. The regression weights and significance values of the approaches in the model are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Fit Indices of Model

Chosen Criterion	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Values of Model
χ^2 (CMIN)	-	-	2.191
χ^2/df (CMIN/df)	≤ 3	$\leq 4-5$	2.191
GFI	≥ 0.90	0,89-0,85	.997
CFI	≥ 0.97	$\geq 0,95$.998
RMSEA	≤ 0.05	0,06-0,08	.052
NFI	≥ 0.95	0,94-0,90	.996
RMR	≤ 0.05	0,06-0,08	.024

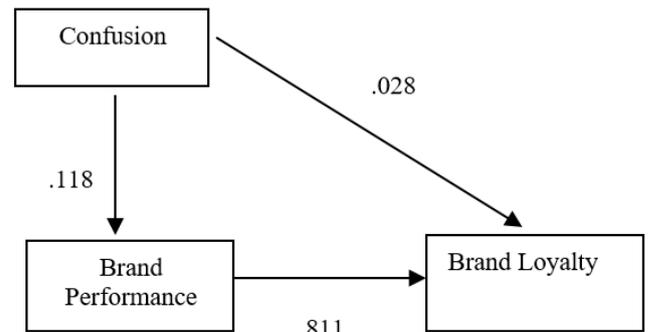
Table 4: Regression Weights

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
B. Performance	<--- Confusion	.139	.046	3.046	.002
B. Performance	<--- U. Avoidance	.287	.046	6.297	***
B. Loyalty	<--- B. Performance	.812	.030	27.230	***
B. Loyalty	<--- Confusion	-.068	.029	-2.382	.017
B. Loyalty	<--- U. Avoidance	-.001	.030	-.024	.981

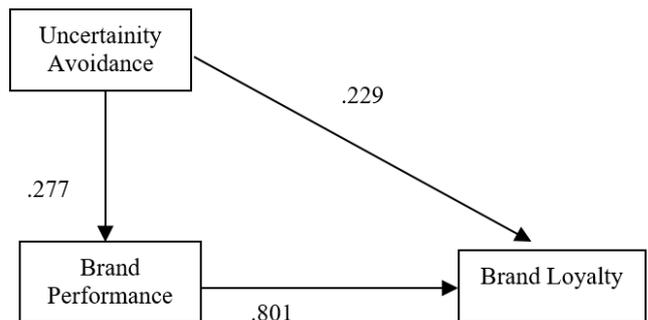
When Table 4 is examined, H1, H2, H3 and H4 were accepted but and H5 was found as statistically not significant. On the other hand, the mediating effect of brand performance on the relationship between confusion and brand loyalty, and, the mediating effect of brand performance on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty is summarized in Figure 4.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Uncertainty Avoidance	4.6087	1.81670	1			
2. Confusion	3.1175	2.00685	-.065	1		
3.Brand Performance	4.5223	1.63715	.268**	.145*	1	
4. Brand Loyalty	4.3417	1.67849	.174**	.064	.770**	1



Model I: *The mediating role of brand performance on the relationship between confusion and brand loyalty (full mediating).



Model II: *The mediating role of brand performance on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty (partial mediating).

Figure 4: Mediating Models

Baron & Kenny (1986) stated that, in order for a variable to have a mediating effect, (1) the independent variable needs to affect the mediating variable, and (2) the independent variable needs to affect the dependent variable. Furthermore, Howell (2013), McKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz (2010), Burmaoğlu, Polat &

Meydan (2013) expressed that (3) when the mediating variable is included in the regression analysis in the second step and if the insignificant relationship between the independent and dependent variable emerges,

a full mediation effect will be observed; if there is a decrease in the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, partial mediation effect will be observed (Koç et. al., 2014).

Table 6: The Effect of Confusion on Brand Loyalty through Brand performance

		β	t	Sig.	
Step 1: Confusion → B. Performance		.118	2.487	.013	
R ² / F		.014/ 6.186			
Step 2: Confusion → B. Loyalty		.028	.583	.560	
R ² / F		.001/ .340			
Step 3: Predictors: B. Performance, Confusion	Dependent Variable: B. Loyalty	Confusion	-.068	-2.382	.018
		B. Performance,	.811	28.362	.000
R ² / F /Tolerance-VIF		.650/402.695/986-1.014			

While the test results of Model I are presented in Table 6, confusion is used as the independent variable, brand performance is used as the mediating variable and brand loyalty is used as the dependent variable in this model. It is seen that there is a significant effect between confusion and brand performance ($\beta=.118$, $P=.013$) in step 1, while there is not a significant relationship between confusion and brand loyalty ($\beta=.028$, $P=.560$) in step 2. In step 3, the independent and dependent variables were included in the model together (Confusion: $\beta= -.068$, $P=.018$; B. Performance: $\beta=.811$, $P=.000$) and it was found that the model is meaningful ($F: 402.695$; $P= .000$). As a result, the relationship being not significant in step 2 demonstrates the full mediating effect of brand performance in step 3 (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Howell, 2013; McKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2010; Burmaoğlu, Polat & Meydan, 2013). In other words, confusion does not directly affect brand loyalty but it affects brand loyalty through brand performance.

While the test results of Model II are presented in Table 7, uncertainty avoidance is used as the independent variable; brand performance is used as the mediating variable and brand loyalty is used as the dependent variable. It is seen that there is a significant relationship

between uncertainty avoidance and brand performance ($\beta=.277$, $P=.000$) in step 1 and there is also a significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty ($\beta=.229$, $P=.000$) in step 2. In step 3, all three variables were included in the model together (uncertainty avoidance: $\beta= .007$, $P=.816$; brand performance: $\beta=.801$, $P=.000$), and it was found that the model is significant (F test: 384.776 ; $P=.000$). The significant relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty ($\beta=.229$, $P=.000$) in step 2 became meaningless in step 3 ($\beta= .007$, $P=.816$), in other words, its value effect decreased. This situation reflects that there is a partial mediating effect of brand performance on uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Howell, 2013; McKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2010; Burmaoğlu, Polat & Meydan, 2013). However, in order to mention this partial mediating effect, the significance in the β value of uncertainty avoidance should be tested. The result of the Sobel test carried out to determine the decrease in the β level was found to be $Z= 3.799$, $P=.000$. According to this result, the decrease on β level is significant. Thus, brand performance has a partial mediating effect on uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty.

Table 7. The Effect of Uncertainty Avoidance on Brand Loyalty through Brand Performance

			β	t	Sig.
Step 1: U. Avoidance → B. Performance			.277	6.011	.000
R ² / F			.077/ 36.127		
Step 2: U. Avoidance → B. Loyalty			.229	4.903	.000
R ² / F			.052/ 24.041		
Step 3: Predictors: B. Performance, U. Avoidance	Dependent Variable: B. Loyalty	U. Avoidance	.007	.233	.816
		B. Performance,	.801	26.935	.000
R ² / F / Tolerance -VIF			.645/394.776 /.923-1.083		

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, there are important differences regarding the model used and the sector that research was conducted. In this respect, it is considered that it will not only contribute to the literature but also provide crucial opportunities to the researchers and pragmatists in the sector. There have been some important changes in consumption preferences with the effects of both of communication age and globalization. The primary motivation of this study is to determine whether these changes also effect on the touristic consumption or not. From this point forward, as a result of this study, it was tried to evaluate to what extent uncertainty avoidance and confusion affects tourists' brand loyalty attitude and it was found that uncertainty avoidance directly affects brand loyalty while confusion does not have such a direct effect on brand loyalty. It is also found that brand performance has a full mediating effect on the relationship between confusion and brand loyalty, and a partial mediating effect on the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and brand loyalty. This situation points out the strong effect of brand performance, namely the actual function of the products, on consumers. To put it another way, tourists will re-prefer a hotel that they regard it as positive in terms brand performance. In

addition to this, the main results of model testing are these:

1. As a result of the model testing, it was determined that confusion explained 14% of the variability in brand performance. In other words, it was determined that the tourists who experience confusion prefer branded hotels and these tourists consider the performance of these hotels which they prefer. From this point of view, it was established that tourists who experience confusion due to the too many option and overload information decide in favor of branded hotels. Shortly, tourists who experienced confusion in their decision-making process tend to more branded hotel. Unfortunately, it is inevitable for tourists to experience confusion due to the too many choices. It is thought that hotels can overcome this confusion by means of branding. On the other hand, tourism marketers should use integrated marketing communication methods for tourists who experience confusion due to the overloading information. The increase of communication opportunities also raised information pollution. In this regard, hotels should use consistently marketing mix elements with each other in the long run.
2. It has been determined that confusion explained -.06% of the variability in brand loyalty. Although this effect is not very strong; it has been determined that the tourists' loyalty

attitudes towards the branded hotels decreased due to the too many options and overload information. In other words, confusion attitude caused by too many option and overload information has a negative effect on brand loyalty. In this regard, effortful information helps reduce consumers' confusion. Also, tourism marketers should improve different marketing communication strategy for these kinds of people than those of other counterpart do.

3. It was determined that uncertainty avoidance explained 28% of the variability in brand performance. That is, it is determined that tourists with high uncertainty avoidance attitude decide in favor of branded hotels with high performance. In this respect, it was determined that as tourists' uncertainty avoidance attitude increased, tourists' the willingness trying something new decreased and they do not want to decide in favor of hotel which they don't know. On the other hand, it was found that tourists with low uncertainty avoidance attitude are willing to experience new things.

4. It was found that brand performance explained 81% of the variability in brand loyalty. In other words, as the performance of the brand increases, the loyalty attitude of the tourists towards the hotel increases. In this respect, tourists tend to more loyal towards to hotels, which have high performance, superior quality, and trouble free service.

Tourists that have high level of uncertainty avoidance attitude will tend towards the branded hotels with high performance, become loyal to these hotels and suggest these hotels to others with priority. On the other hand, tourists who experience confusion will tend to re-prefer the hotels which they were satisfied with. As a result, these branded hotels will get competitive advantages and another important opportunity, if they know no bound in satisfying their customers, if they try to make continuous improvement in all of their departments, if they consistently improve their physical equipment, physical resources and

service. The most striking result obtained from the study is that the most basic element forming brand loyalty is the brand performance perceived by the consumers.

To put it another way, hotel brands with high performance and high services quality are more preferred by the tourists with a high level of uncertainty avoidance attitude and these tourists are more loyal to these hotels and, suggest these hotels to others with priority. For this reason, the most basic functions of hotels should be especially emphasized in marketing communication efforts and a consumer-based marketing mix should be created. In addition to these, tourism businesses in the sector should have quality standards such as ISO certificate, TSE (Turkish Standards Institution), HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point), TQM (total quality management) and should give messages indicating they have these certificates in marketing communications. In this way, they can reduce the negative effect of the attitude of consumer' uncertainty avoidance. While the results obtained from this study is consistent with studies conducted before (Chaudhuri,1999; Howard &Sheth, 1969; Chaudhuri& Holbrook, 2001; Reid, 2002; Quan, 2006; Kavas &Yeşilada, 2007; Verhage et. al., 1990; Dawar et. al., 1996, Litvin et. al., 2004; De Mooji & Hofstede, 2002); this researches also re-emphasized the significance of the main function that is brand performance in a different way.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Along with these findings, there are some limitations to this study. Below are the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research:

1. The most significant limitation of this study is that this study was conducted in Istanbul and for Turkish tourist. So, the results can be generalized just for hotels in Istanbul and Turkish tourists. In this regards, future studies may consider conducting this model for different destinations and different nationalities.

2. In order to ensure more comprehensive the understanding of the model, future studies may consider to use some demographic variables such as occupation, family size, gender and income in the model.

3. In this study, attitudinal loyalty scale is used in the model. Future studies may consider using the behavioral loyalty scale by using the same research pattern.

4. This research model was conducted on tourists; future research might bear in mind conducting on employees in tourism industry.

5. This research is planned momentary; future researchers consider this model implementing it as a periodic research.

6. The aim of this research is to verify the mediating role of brand performance between confusion - brand loyalty and between uncertainty avoidance - brand loyalty. Future research may consider the moderator role of uncertainty avoidance between brand performance - brand loyalty.

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