

The Impact of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty: An Applied Study in Istanbul

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Abstract

The worldwide scale of markets has witnessed a lot of challenges in the production and marketing of consumer goods. As a result of the openness to the international markets, most companies are bound to take decisions, not just in terms of distribution network and place of production, and pricing policies, but likewise in terms of brand image. This study is geared at explaining the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, and the impact of brand image on customer loyalty. Within the context of this study, brand image is used as the independent variable, while customer loyalty is used as the independent variable. Out of 200 questionnaires administered to people, this study is based on the answers from 150 respondents of a valid questionnaire that is employed as a data collection instrument. Correlation analysis was used to analyze the relationship existing between the variables, while regression analysis is also performed to examine the impact of brand image on customer loyalty. The result show that brand image significantly affects customer loyalty, and there are correlated. Therefore, it is recommended that companies should take into consideration on improving and/or building of brand image so that they can be more competent and increase their market share thereby successfully achieving customer loyalty, likewise satisfaction.

Keywords: customer loyalty, brand image, customer satisfaction

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1. Introduction

Brand image is considered to be a reflection that is held in the mind of a customer and it is basically the thing that comes to mind when a brand is presented in front of the customers (Saleem & Raja, 2014). According to Forozia, Zadeh & Gilani (2013), Brands play a vital role in helping customers perceive the value that is associated with an offer. If a brand image is created, it will definitely meet the expectation of the brand thus leading to satisfaction. Customer loyalty is a key factor or ownership of a company considered to be the major result of brand image and the services level provided to the customers. For a company to compete with its competitors, they should make sure they provide quality products and services so as to make the customer become loyal to their products and services. The satisfaction of customers comes as a result of how products and services are delivered to them (that is, the quality of products, price range, and relationship between the customers and the company). When the customers are satisfied with the services and products of the company, it then builds the image of the brand thus making the customers to be loyal to the products.

A brand according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from that competition” (Keller, 2003, p.3). Brand image is the perception of consumers, and when a company has a strong brand, it gains the best prices. Adding to the advantage of a strong brand from a company is that; the company will turn to have demanded products, it will enhance the flow of information between the company and customers, customers will feel satisfied, and there is also a tendency for new business or products to be created. Brand image is not only essential in creating long-term competitive advantages for a company, but it is equally an important factor that influences customer loyalty and satisfaction especially when customers are framing their emotions about service quality. The expectations of customers are mainly driven by the brand image of a company. In this light, if the company has a reputable brand image, it is obvious that customers expect the best service quality from them which then leads to customer loyalty as well as customer

satisfaction. According to Lee (2013), one of the possible ways of achieving sustainable business operations is by generating loyal customers, likewise satisfied customers in the course of high levels of service quality.

Customer loyalty focuses more on attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty trend in selecting a brand over others due to either service performance, satisfaction with the service, or the experience with the brand (Roundhill, 2012). Customer loyalty shows how consistent and how long customers engage in buying a company's brand. It equally portrays the number of customers that the company lost and those customers who turned out to be loyal. In line with this idea, Cronin, Brandy & Hult (2000), explain that customer loyalty indicates the continuous actions of customers buying a company's services and products. It also makes barriers to changing brands. Therefore, companies should do their best in strengthening their brand image by improving customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

The objective of this paper is to examine the impact of brand image on customer loyalty in order to determine the importance that brand image has on customer loyalty. The reason here is because loyal customers always rise and attach to a company sale. The study has two variables (brand image and customer loyalty) and it will examine the effect that one has over the other.

1.1 Purpose of Study

This paper is designed to check the Impact of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty. Hence the research has the following objectives;

- Check the different factors that affect the loyalty of the customer
- Consider the effectiveness of Brand Image in the loyalty of the customer
- Analyze the act of Brand Image in the satisfaction and loyalty of the customer.

1.2 Scope of the study

This study is focused on individuals who are customers of specific brands. The research provides helpful information about the preferences of brands to customers.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

The study is centered on different aspects of the loyalty of customers to the Brand Image. The study is conducted for all brands, not for a specific brand. Just Istanbul-Turkey is included in the study.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. What influence does consumer's perception have on brand image?
2. What are the key factors of brand image success?
3. How does the Image of a brand affects customer loyalty?

1.5 Hypothesis

H₁: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

H₂: Brand image has a highly positive significance effect on customer loyalty

2. Literature review

The whole idea of brands began in the mid of 19th century following the creation of products like automobiles, phonographs, radios, electric light bulbs, and numerous factories. These items enabled the spin-up of mass work, which is also regarded as mass standardization. Brand images are so important today considering that some industries find it almost impossible to make distinctions among uniform products, produced by mass, or by their rivals. A good example can be detergent, ketchup, or even peanut butter which are very uniform and hardly

distinguishable. The only thing that is used to see the distinction in these products is the brand image. The role of advertising by 1923, was to give a soul, not just to products, but also to the companies which produce them. Later on, that is by 1940, companies quickly realized that consumers purchase items, not just the product they are out for, but also the brand as well, which causes them a commercial awareness. Brands took more value by 1980, allowing them to acquire a capital value with the same title as any asset. According to Michon (2002), the brand capital lies in expansion and loyalty. Things turn round in 1993, at the end of the recession when Wall Street reported the death of the brand or almost. Many experts of brands had the conviction that brands will continue to face some dark moments. However, it is surprising that brands are doing great today and still form a crucial lever of marketing. According to Kapferer & Thoenig (1989), brand status changes depending on the country it is located, and also according to the type of consumers. A good example is that, in Japan, Germany, the USA and Turkey, brand image is very strong, unlike in France where the brand image has less importance. The reason is that most French people perceive brands to be extra cost with some imaginal added values. According to Addis & Hoolbrook (2002), the evolution of consumption habits forces marketing managers to reconsider their market-product relation in order to ensure the relation between a brand and a consumer, which result in generating the development of relationship marketing. This shows that in cases where there is involvement, trust and devotion become good sources of connection between the consumers and producers. Michon (2002) also believes that brand image is no longer an aspect of seducing or trapping customers but rather, to well conserve them by building a dialogue between customers and the brand so as to make them loyal to the brand. It is however seen that loyalty to the brand is the goal of all marketing actions. This is because, according to Rundle-Thiele & Mackay (2001), it allows:

- I. *An increase in profit*: it is much cheaper to sell products to a loyal customer than seek a new one. In addition to this, focusing on loyal customers ensures more sales;
- II. *A less sensitivity to price*: Consumers are often careless about how much they spend to get a given product, so long as it is the brand they are loyal to;
- III. *A brand extension*: this shows that there is less risk levied to achieve a brand extension. This is because consumers are already aware of what they want;
- IV. *An increase in the market share*: this shows an equitable market share, which means, guaranteed sales.

According to Ehrenberg, Goodhart & Barwise (1990), brands that have a sort of elevated market share in them seem to have a high rate of repeat purchases of users. In addition to this, Delgado B. & Munuera A. (2001), explain that loyalty to the brand generates the following:

- A. Some barriers at the input for competitors;
- B. A big ability to reply to competitor's weaknesses;
- C. An increase in sales and revenues;
- D. A decrease in consumers' sensibility towards the marketing efforts of competitors.

In a nutshell, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), argues that most companies are striving to retain their customers, considering that the success of a brand in a long term is not just based on the number of customers who buy the brand once or a few times, but rather the number of consumers which become loyal customers of the brand. It is a result of this that companies turn to put accent on brand image, because it will lead to a bigger involvement, and also a bigger trust in the brand. This however increases the possibilities that the consumers become loyal to the brand. Brands are promises which companies commit to making to consumers. It is very important to maintain promises so as to satisfy consumers, and also increase their involvement and trust in the brand. Our main interest in this study is to emphasize the brands in Turkey.

2.1 Brand Image

In order to have a good understanding of brand image, it is important to break down the term and analyze them accordingly. To begin, the word "image" originated from a semantic approach, meaning the study of language based on the meaning given to the words. Francoise Dolto, a French pediatrician, described "image" by breaking the word down: "I" = identity, "ma" = maman (mother) and "ge" = je (I), homonymy of the first-person singular pronoun "I". According to Dolto, this definition explains that people first interpret image by paying attention to the "I", because it has a link to the proper perception of each human being (identity), and it is equally influenced by the environment we live in (mother). Also, Kotler (1991), described the word "brand" as a "name, term, an emblem, a draw, or all combination of these items which serve to identify the goods and services and to differentiate from rivals". It should be noted that the concept of the brand is distinguished from the concept of brand image. The reason here is that the dynamics of brand's evolution are so much put into consideration.

Aside from the brief definition of brand image, it is important to understand that the brand image represents a vital aspect of marketing activities and branding fields. According to Herzog (1963) & Keller (1993a, b), brand image represents the customer's perceptions of a brand just as reflected by the brand associations which are held in consumer's memory. These associations could come from customers' direct experience or likely from information obtained on a market offering. It could also be due to the impact of pre-existing associations an organization had on a consumer (s). Dobni & Zinkhan (1990), Aperia & Back (2004), argues that brand image is the perception or mental picture of a brand or service, or branded product which includes symbolic meanings that consumers associate with the specific attributes of a product or service. The image of a brand is a composite of consumers' perception and faith in the brand.

According to Low & Lamb (2000, p. 352), the brand image represents "the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands". That is, it represents a set of beliefs held by consumers about a particular brand. This happens based upon some intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of a market offering that results in customer satisfaction, likewise perceived quality. Perceived quality in this case refers to the customer's perception of the overall quality or better still superiority of a service or product with respect to its intended purpose which is relative to alternatives.

In addition to this, Mishra & Datta (2011), argues that the image of a brand is the set of perceptions for specific brands. This set of perceptions plays an important aspect in the consumers' decision process of purchase, especially when the consumer has other alternatives. When a customer is satisfied with the services and products of a brand, the image of the brand becomes stronger. According to Johanudin, Nur, & Shelle (2016), this shows that the customer satisfaction image of the brand has a positive impact. Brand image cannot be seen in the technical characteristics of products. Rather, it is something that can be achieved through advertisement and promotions. Sharing of positive aspects of a brand by consumers to others helps disseminate the information about the brand thus building a strong brand image of that product. Brand image in this regard is all about the product features, packaging, design, and the characteristics of that brand or product that makes them unique or different from others.

Another important aspect of brand image is how consumers respond to the benefits of the different features provided by the brand to its consumers. There are different processes where a brand can be built: firstly, the strategy of the brand should be made and combined with the business goals. Secondly, all tools should be used to inform the consumers about the brand or product, or service. The third step is to make changes in the brand constantly with new features and technology so as to benefit the consumers. The image of the brand equally varies based on the perception of the customers. For example, there are consumers who love low prices of products, some like high quality products, while others like the best and unique quality irrespective of the cost. The image of a brand is more geared toward the quality of the organization and products, not the colors, logo, and name of the brand. The brand image becomes even stronger when the brand satisfies the needs and demands of the consumers, and also when they update its brand activities faster than rivals.

2.2 Customer Loyalty

We live in a world of loyalty, which comes in different categories such as; employee loyalty, customer loyalty, management loyalty, likewise loyalty to ideas, principles, beliefs and so on. Some studies have proven that satisfaction is not the only key to ultimate success and profitability. In fact, the marketing concepts which lay more emphasis on satisfaction are beginning to get unimportant issues. Looking at the world today, it is seen that only customers with a sense of belonging to an organization are considered as a long term profitable investments for that organization. That is the reason why some believe that a satisfied customer is a good source for advertising. However, Gee et al (2008), argues that there are numerous benefits to loyalty put forth by marketing experts. These benefits include; reduction of customer sensitivity to price changes, reducing the cost of attracting new customers, positive performance by increasing the projections, the benefits of customer lifetime value, and lastly, increasing barriers to entry to new competitors.

According to Allama Syed M. & Nifty Aymanh (2010), customer loyalty means committing to doing business with specific companies or organizations and continuously purchase of certain products and services. Another good definition of customer loyalty is that; loyalty is a strong commitment to repurchase goods or services of a company or organization within the future so long as the product or good is despite the potential impact of marketing efforts of other competitors. According to Abdullah (2008), it is probably certain that in today's market that is increasingly competitive, to achieve loyal customers, the fundamental possessions are to get a

greater market share. In a nutshell, customer loyalty can be defined as the constant or repeated buying behavior of a special trademark. Loyalty can produce a positive mentality in the minds of customers. In addition to this, Reichards & Jones (2008), argue that the maintenance of current customers is much more logical than attracting new customers. A 25 percent increase in profit to 95 percent is attainable, compare to only a mere 5 percent increase in customer maintenance cost. Moreover, Beerli A., Martin J. D., & Quintana A. (2004), point out that loyalty is a strong commitment to repurchase a good or service of a company in the future considering that the product despite the potential impact of marketing efforts of the competitors.

In addition to the aforementioned, Richard Oliver (1999), regards the concept of loyalty, as Loyalty is a deep commitment to repurchase preferred goods or services in a future run while despising the situational influences and marketing efforts customers repeat when purchasing the same brand. According to Taylor S. A., Celuch K., & Goodwin S. (2004), for an organization or company to gain customer loyalty, it is important to go deeper into their expectations; if not, customers will turn to other suppliers. Adding to this, Ali Kazemi (1996), in his book “loyalty effect” expressed the following loyalty benefits:

- a. *Continues profits*: Customer loyalty has long-term and cumulative advantages. The longer a customer stays loyal, the more profit that is made by a business from the customer.
- b. *Reduces marketing cost*: in order to attract new customers, businesses have to invest money through aspects like advertising, quality products etc. for loyal customers, these investments or costs are minimized or eliminated.
- c. *Increase per-customer revenue growth*: There is an increase of customer spending in a long run. For example, a customer who frequently stays and visits the same hotel however becomes more familiar with the hotel’s full product line like; banquet rooms, gift shops and so on. In most cases, that customers prefer that hotel to others or are likely to sample other product lines of the hotel, thus helping the company or hotel to achieve a larger share of customers or gain more customers.
- d. *Decrease operating cost*: For loyal customers, it is easier for the front desk clerk to enter their data into the system by just seeing the previous information and not spending a lot of time entering their data into the computer from scratch. The clerk simply retrieves the loyal customer’s existent data. The familiarity of loyal customers with a company’s product and services makes them less dependent on its employees for constant information and services, thus decreasing servicing costs.
- e. *Increase referrals*: loyal and satisfied customers often recommend the business to friends and those in demand. Having referrals is an important source for new customers, likewise, customers who receive personal recommendations from friends or others tend to stay loyal and longer to the company.
- f. *Increase price premiums*: Loyal customers of a brand do spend more money on a brand if they perceive some unique value in the brand which no other brands or alternatives can provide. Loyal customers are also less likely to be lured away by the discount of few amounts of money. This firm loyalty of customers can be seen when a customer will prefer to pay more money to stay in a hotel or purchase a good they know than to take chance on less expensive competitors.
- g. *Provide competitive advantage*: The more a customer or consumer becomes loyal to a brand, the more they become less sensitive to a price increase. In line with this, Tepeci M. (1999), denotes that a company can maintain a price differentiation over the competition considering the product’s ability to satisfy its needs.

According to Kapferer & Laurent (1989), there is a relationship that exists between customer loyalty and sensibility to the brand. For example, when there is a growth of sensibility, the behavior of repeat purchase is more likely to occur. The table below depicts the four types of loyalty in correlation with the level of sensibility to a brand.

Table 1. The four types of loyalty in correlation with the level of brand sensitivity

Relative Attitude	High	Loyalty	Latent Loyalty
	Low	Spurious Loyalty	No Loyalty
		HIGH	LOW
Repeat Patronage			

The table above shows the four types of loyalty in correlation with the level of brand sensibility. It presents the relationship between loyalty to brand and sensibility to brand. For example, when sensibility grows, the behavior of all repeated purchase has a high probability to happen.

3. Methodology

A descriptive research design was used in the study considering the scope of the study. More emphasis was given to studying The Impact of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty within Turkey. In order to draw out the information needed for the study, primary data was gotten by taking responses on different aspects with respect to the topic (The impact of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty) with the help of a structured questionnaire from 150 questions. Secondary data was evoked from different journals, past thesis, newspapers, and other online sources for the study. The data collection was analyzed by using IBM SPSS software to test the reliability and to identify the relationship or correlations and regression between the variables.

Table 2. Measurement Instruments

Variables	Construct
Brand Image	17 Items (questions)
Customer Loyalty	4 Items (questions)
Brand Usage	2 Items (questions)

Table 2 above shows the measurement instruments of how data was used. There were 23 main questions among which Brand image had seventeen questions; customer loyalty had four questions and Brand usage had 2 questions.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Reliability test

Cronbach alpha reliability test was applied to check the reliability of all the items into the questionnaire. Universally, it is perceived that the reliability value more than 0.7. is considered reliable. The reliability of all the construct values were found to be above the standard value for this current study.

Table 3. Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	150	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	150	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Table 4. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.914	21

Here, the Cronbach's Alpha = 0.914 (out of the 21 questions in the survey having the same scale, that is; Brand image and Customer loyalty). Cronbach's Alpha above 0.7 is considered reliable. Therefore, here the pilot testing showed an excellent reliable result. Table 5 and 6 below gives details of each question and its reliability.

Table 5. Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brands are easily accessible	3.36	.978	150
My best brand have all products that I want	3.15	1.116	150
My favorite brand gives me on-time service	3.63	.902	150
The favorite brands provide good service quality with affordable price	3.43	1.120	150
I can count on the products of my favorite brands. It's always satisfactory to me	3.59	.991	150
My chosen brands services are really dependable	3.53	.910	150
Most companies provides adequate support at all time	3.11	1.033	150
My favorite brand image is outstanding and gives me a good impression	3.67	.798	150
I like my brand because it is the leading brand in the market	3.20	1.003	150
My favorite brand helps me to better fit in to my social group	3.41	1.004	150
My brands prevents me from looking cheap	3.21	1.059	150

Overall I am satisfied with the services of my favorite brands	3.68	.944	150
The brands I use perfectly fits my expectation	3.65	.928	150
My brand's company staffs are knowledgeable to introduce and explain all services that I want	3.50	.954	150
I get a positive contribution to my business/myself from my brands	3.43	.915	150
My favorite brands always provide effective solutions to its customers	3.59	.796	150
As a brand, they try to find effective and uncomplicated solutions [...] considering that they are simple, and their customers can notice and appreciate them.	3.48	.925	150
I often tell positive things about my favorite brands to other people	3.74	.951	150
I am pleased to repurchase the brands I use	3.83	.841	150
I consider the brands I use as the best choices	3.65	.859	150
I shall continue to use my favorite brands in the future even with no advertisement	3.77	.862	150

Table 6. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Brands are easily accessible	70.25	135.596	.432	.913
My best brand have all products that I want	70.45	134.343	.418	.914
My favorite brand gives me on-time service	69.98	133.241	.593	.909
The favorite brands provide good service quality with affordable price	70.17	133.017	.469	.912
I can count on the products of my favorite brands. It's always satisfactory to me	70.02	132.275	.576	.909
My chosen brands services are really dependable	70.07	133.370	.580	.909
Most companies provides adequate support at all time	70.49	133.231	.507	.911
My favorite brand image is outstanding and gives me a good impression	69.93	133.043	.690	.907

I like my brand because it is the leading brand in the market	70.41	134.082	.486	.911
My favorite brand helps me to better fit in to my social group	70.20	132.805	.543	.910
My brands prevents me from looking cheap	70.39	132.925	.505	.911
Overall I am satisfied with the services of my favorite brands	69.93	132.914	.578	.909
The brands I use perfectly fits my expectation	69.96	131.569	.656	.907
My brand's company staffs are knowledgeable to introduce and explain all services that I want	70.11	132.109	.610	.908
I get a positive contribution to my business/myself from my brands	70.18	132.927	.598	.909
My favorite brands always provide effective solutions to its customers	70.02	134.315	.620	.909
As a brand, they try to find effective and uncomplicated solutions [...] considering that they are simple, and their customers can notice and appreciate them.	70.13	132.460	.614	.908
I often tell positive things about my favorite brands to other people	69.87	132.425	.596	.909
I am pleased to repurchase the brands I use	69.78	133.837	.608	.909
I consider the brands I use as the best choices	69.95	132.864	.646	.908
I shall continue to use my favorite brands in the future even with no advertisement	69.84	137.021	.427	.912

Table 6 above shows the internal consistency analysis of the data used in this research. It reflects the extent to which items within an instrument measure various aspects of the same characteristics or construct. This study shows that it is reliable because the value of the Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.9.

Table 7. Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
73.61	146.388	12.099	21

4.2 Correlations

In this study analysis, the test used is the Pearson Correlation, shows the relationship between the variables. The table below shows that there is a strong and positive Correlation between brand image and customer loyalty.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brand Image	58.6200	10.05199	150
Customer Loyalty	14.9867	2.67473	150

Table 8. Correlations

		Brand Image	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image	Pearson Correlation	1	.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	150	150
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.710**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	150	150
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Based on the results of the findings above, the Pearson product correlation between the brand image and customer loyalty was found to be highly positive and statistically significant ($r=.710$, $p < .001$). Hence, H_2 was supported. This shows that an increase in the brand image would lead to a higher customer loyalty in customers.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article is geared toward demonstrating the impact of brand image on customer loyalty of some brand companies in Istanbul-Turkey. The literature review let us summarized the main researches, knowledge and theories in brand image and customer loyalty sectors. The impact of brand image on loyalty is moderated by the belief that a consumer has a brand. That belief or perception is likely to be influence by many factors like the brand knowledge and product, familiarity, experience, attitude toward the brand, likewise the information sources like reputation, advertisement, rumors, the log, the brand name, and the word of mouth communication. The literature shows that with our knowledge, there is no research that has verified the impact of brand image on

brand loyalty. The conceptual framework as well as hypothesis of this study are established from the new dimensions of brand image according to Korchia (2000) and the types of brand loyalty put on a continuum. The results analyzed was done according to the analyzed method of variance with repeat measures.

This study is guided positivism philosophy; cross sectional approach so that the necessary data was gotten at a single point of time rather than through frequent observation over the same sample. The primary data was collected by means of a structured closed ended questionnaires through the conduction of a survey. The collected data were analyzed using statistical and mathematical tools through SPSS 20. The correlation and regression analysis between brand image and customer loyalty were used to assess the relationships between variables.

The results from this study revealed that satisfaction is very important and it plays a great role in mediating the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty towards private label brands in Istanbul-Turkey. Company managers need to strive on having a good understanding and creating of brand image for private label brands which will in turn help in developing more loyalty among customers by giving due consideration to customer satisfaction towards Private Label Brands. Customer loyalty can be influence directly through customer satisfaction and indirectly through brand image. Sandoh S., L., ji. (2007) tested a model that proposed brand image benefits to have an effect on satisfaction. This in turn leads to customer's loyalty. This shows that the mode proposed by Sandoh S., L., jr. is possible to be considered.

Moreover, to create a successful brand, it is required for marketing managers to be more devoted on building brand image, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty as part of their branding technique or strategy. By putting more strength and maintaining a brand image and value, it will create a positive mindset of the consumers about the brand. However, there is a need to have an understanding of how vital the roles of the three branding strategies work (that is; brand image, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty or customer loyalty) so as to enhance their brand appeal.

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