

THE BRANDING PROCESS: MEDIATOR ROLES OF BRAND SATISFACTION AND BRAND LOYALTY¹



Kafkas University
Economics and Administrative
Sciences Faculty
KAUEAS
Vol. 12, Issue 23, 2021
ISSN: 1309 – 4289
E – ISSN: 2149-9136

Article Submission Date: 16.04.2021 Accepted Date: 21.06.2021

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ABSTRACT | The branding process is formed by various stages. This process starts from the point that the consumer experiences the brand first time and continues till brand evangelism which is the stage of brand advocacy. In this context, it was aimed to determine the effects of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on the process of brand evangelism development in this study. Moreover, mediator roles of brand satisfaction and brand loyalty were evaluated in terms of the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism. Data were obtained with the convenience sampling method from 400 participants. As a result of analyses, it was determined that brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty had a positive effect on brand evangelism. Besides, brand loyalty had a mediator role between brand experience and brand evangelism. Data were analyzed through SPSS 18 and AMOS 20 programs.

Keywords: Branding process, brand evangelism, brand experience

Jel Codes: M1, M3, M10

Scope: Business Administration

Type: Research

DOI: 10.36543/kauibfd.2021.015

Cite this paper: Beyaz, R. & Güngör, A.Y. (2021). The branding process: mediator roles of brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. *KAÜİBFD*, 12(23), 322-346.

¹ The compliance of the relevant study with ethical rules has been declared.

MARKALAMA SÜRECİ: MARKA MEMNUNİYETİ VE MARKA SADAKATİNİN ARACI ROLÜ



Kafkas Üniversitesi
İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler
Fakültesi
KAÜİBFD
Cilt, 12, Sayı 23, 2021
ISSN: 1309 – 4289
E – ISSN: 2149-9136

Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 16.04.2021 Yayına Kabul Tarihi: 21.06.2021

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ÖZ | Markalama süreci çeşitli aşamalardan meydana gelmektedir. Tüketicinin markayı ilk deneyimlediği andan itibaren başlayan bu süreç, markanın sadık müşterisi olarak marka savunuculuğu yapma aşaması olan marka evangelizmine kadar devam etmektedir. Bu kapsamda çalışmada, marka evangelizminin oluşumun sürecinde marka deneyimi, marka memnuniyeti ve marka sadakati kavramlarının etkisi tespit edilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Ayrıca, marka deneyiminden marka evangelizmine giden yolda marka memnuniyeti ve marka sadakati kavramlarının aracı rolü değerlendirilecektir. Kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile 400 kişiye anket uygulaması yapılarak veriler toplanmıştır. Analizler sonucunda; marka deneyimi, marka memnuniyeti ve marka sadakatinin marka evangelizmi üzerinde pozitif bir etkiye sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca marka sadakatinin marka deneyimi ile marka evangelizmi arasında aracılık rolünün olduğu görülmüştür. Veriler SPSS 18 ve AMOS 20 programları kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Markalama süreci, marka evangelizmi, marka deneyimi

JEL Kodu: M1, M3, M10

Alan: İşletme

Türü: Araştırma

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world where rapid changes and transformations occur, alternatives increase, differentiations decrease, and imitative products abound, a significant transformation has been had for propensity to consume inevitably. Consumers have started to look for specifications that provide emotional and psychological satisfaction rather than functional specifications during product purchases. Additionally, it has been observed that specifications that provide emotional and psychological satisfaction are considered more important than functional specifications due to the shortening of the product life cycle, rapid imitations of differentiations with technological developments. In this kind of environment, brands with symbolic values have come into prominence as a useful differentiation tool (Hacıoğlu Deniz, 2011, pp. 261-262).

Branding provides various benefits for both consumers and firms. Firms obtain several advantages with branding such as differentiation, resistance to competition, generating demand, extending the market, withdrawing brokerages, increasing profits, creating customer loyalty (Sağlam, 2017, p. 5; Keller, 2013, pp. 35-36; Kapferer, 2012, pp. 23-24). On the other hand, consumers try to protect themselves against a variety of risks as social, psychological, physical, temporal, and financial by orienting to brands (Keller, 2013, p. 35). Thus, consumers who behave more comfortably and self-assuredly by avoiding these risks during the purchase process realize automatic purchase by being satisfied in lots of ways and might be loyal customers in the long term.

In this regard, the satisfaction which is created within the scope of both functional specifications and emotional-psychological specifications contributes the customers to be voluntary brand advocates alongside making them loyal. It is stated in the literature that consumers who are satisfied with the brand they made a purchase and have high loyalty tendency exhibit evangelist behaviors (Yapraklı, Keser & Ünalın, 2020, p. 36). Evangelist consumers are evaluated as both loyal customers and voluntary. They are free of charge advocates, propagandists, and lawyers of the brand. These individuals try to make the brand adopted by people and institution from their immediate environment through word-of-mouth marketing way (Göktaş & Erdoğan Tarakçı, 2020, p. 127).

The development of evangelist consumers which includes important opportunities for firms is not an easy issue. Because, it is difficult to create loyalty in today's world where rapid changes and transformations occur, alternatives increase, differentiations decrease, and imitative products abound. Therefore, it is crucial to have effective interaction and provide satisfaction during the process from the point of consumer meet with the brand to disposal of the product after

consumption. In other words, customers ought to have various experiences related to benefits obtained from the brand and actions to be taken after consumption to provide development of various emotions, interest to brand, willingness to try and buy the product. In addition, it is required customers identify themselves with the brand and feel as a part of the family by being satisfied with each experience.

In this study; brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty concepts have been discussed which are thought as affecting factors of brand evangelism. Besides, it has been evaluated whether brand satisfaction and brand loyalty have mediator roles for the effect of brand experience on brand evangelism. The gap in the field between brand experience and brand evangelism has been filled with this study.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Brand Evangelism

“Evangelist” lexicalized from “Evangelos” in Greek means messenger of good things and messenger who brings good news. At the same time, the concept which was used as encouraging an idea came into fashion started to be called as evangelism with the spread of the Internet by the end of 1990 (Choudhury, Misra & Mohanty, 2019, p. 3). The concept of evangelism marketing has a rising trend in the field. Evangelism marketing is a system that customers try to convince other consumers with the way of word-of-mouth marketing to buy and use a good or service which the customers use before and were satisfied with. Loyal customers have an important role in the operation of the system. Within this framework, it is indicated loyal customers have a high potential to make brand advocacy. Hence, positive energy and goodwill are constituted in the market can be spread to a larger mass. This spread becomes faster and more qualified with the development of social media and the Internet (Göktaş & Erdoğan Tarakçı, 2020, p. 128; Rusticus, 2006, p. 57; Gopika & Rajani, 2016, p. 134).

The evangelist approach offers various values to both consumers and firms. These values are as the following (Gopika & Rajani, 2016, p. 134):

- Presents objective and unsuspecting information to potential buyers without any monetary interest through a neutral feedback system. Thus, potential customers can be transformed into current customers.
- Provides free information to brand customers through loyal customers.
- Constitutes long-term marketing strategy. All marketing strategies which are utilized by the firm have a due date. However, this system processes as long as evangelists affect other customers.

- Evangelists praise the brand consistently, so the goodwill and brand image of the firm continue to increase.
- Provides optimization for the management of expenditure. Evangelists contribute a decrease in marketing costs through their free promotion. Moreover, this approach rises investment revenues because it doesn't need any investment cost.

Satisfied customers provide continuous information to related individuals about the brand and ease brand salience and sales through word-of-mouth marketing activities. This circumstance is an indicator of the contribution of brand satisfaction to brand evangelism. At the same time, satisfied and evangelist customers behave against the mistakes of the brand more tolerantly. These kinds of customers can ignore mistakes or forgive the brand easily (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018, p. 114).

Brand evangelists are stated with various names. Brand follower, brand ambassador, brand fan, brand advocate, brand friend, brand voice, brand missionary are examples of these names (Göktaş & Erdoğan Tarakçı, 2020, p. 128). Within this scope, definitions are gathered around in a specific point. Doss (2014) defines brand evangelists as individuals who transmit information, ideas, and emotions related to a specific brand to others freely and passionately to affect their consumption behaviors. Matzler, Pichler, and Hemetsberger (2007) explains the brand evangelism as the active and decisive way of spreading positive ideas and convincing others to develop interaction with the same brand because consumers becoming evangelist feel needs of sharing their passions and emotions about the brand with others. On the other hand, Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) evaluates brand evangelism as active behavioral and voiced support of a particular brand which includes activities such as convincing others about the brand by purchasing it, making positive brand suggestions, and humiliating competitor brands. Briefly, brand evangelists are defined as free and voluntary advocates of the brand.

It is not easy for consumers as brand evangelists to suggest the brand to their families, relatives, and friends. Therefore, the expectations of consumers from the first contact with the firm to post-purchase should be met ideally. Arkensou et al. (2014, p. 6) express brand evangelism as the journey starting with the first experience of consumers. Providing significant and precious experiences to consumers in this journey contributes them to exhibit evangelist behaviors.

2.2. Brand Experience

Today's changing consumption and market understanding provide to arise different approaches for the process of purchase. Henceforward it's not possible

to retain customers for similar goods and services with traditional marketing activities in the fierce competition environment. Therefore, firms consider focusing on physical and affective specifications inadequate and start to focus on the experience economy. The transition to the experience economy, a process runs from meta to goods, from goods to services, from services to experiences. The essential thing in the experimental approach is the interaction between consumer and product. Facing with surprises consistently, enjoyment, and excitement of customer during the interaction process is very important (Kara & Kimzan, 2016, p. 74). Within the framework of this view, brand experience which takes attention recently conceptualizes as feelings, affects, cognitive and behavioral responses which are comprised of all stimulus-related with the brand as a part of the brand's design, identity, package, communication, environment (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009, p. 52).

Brand experience which starts to be formed at the first moment customers meet with the product continues during the consumption process. In other words, each information obtained related to the brand is evaluated as brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). In this context; participating in any activity of the brand, coinciding emblem or logo of the brand, hearing the brand, exposing to its advertisement, listening to consumer comments, and using the brand personally end up with the experiences of the consumers.

There are several studies related to brand experience in the literature. Brakus et al. (2009) working within this scope evaluated brand experience with five dimensions as sensory, affective, behavioral, intellectual, and social. Affective brand experience among these dimensions states the occurrence of intangible emotions such as happiness, joy, excitement, and love; while sensory brand experience includes senses such as hearing, taste, smell, sight, and touch. For instance; image, pleasure, distinctiveness, and belongingness generated by a smartphone provide an affective experience, while the size, color, and sound of the smartphone provide a sensory one. In the same vein, intellectual brand experience is evaluated as a phenomenon that encourages consumers to think about the brand in a positive way with various activities, while behavioral brand experience is evaluated as the phenomenon which enacts consumer behaviorally, gains new lifestyles and recruitment activities to them. Finally, social brand experience is formed as all other dimensions' consequence is an approach which contributes constitutions of social class, social impact, social identity, and roles (Kara & Kimzan, 2016, pp. 76-77). It is thought that these experiences developed by positive impressions of consumers contribute to brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, and brand evangelism.

2.3. Brand Satisfaction

Satisfaction as a concept is the difference between expectations pre-purchase and post-purchase is defined as responses of consumers to a particular good or service which is waited and obtained, a determinant factor of long-term behaviors, and a predictor of consumer behaviors. As understood from these descriptions, there is not any common definition of the concept (Akin, 2017, p. 99). Likewise, the concept of brand satisfaction is evaluated as the overlap between expected and actual performance related to a specific brand. However, it is not found sufficient to explain brand satisfaction with only actual performance. Not only quality and performance but also relationships with consumers, attitudes, and behaviors have an impact on the brand (Erciş, Yapraklı & Can 2009, p. 161).

The concept of satisfaction is handled differently as emotional, reasonable, and behavioral in evaluations towards satisfaction (Sividas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000, p. 75). Observable behaviors toward the brand constitute behavioral factor; obtained information about the brand from reasonable factors; emotional responses toward the brand compose emotional factor. (Taylor & Hunter, 2003, p. 23).

Consumer expectations are accepted as basic determinants in the development of brand satisfaction. If consumers are satisfied with the brand they experienced before diversely, their expectations would be higher for the next purchase. On the other hand, if they experience dissatisfaction, their expectations would diminish. Nonetheless, it is known that consumer satisfaction differentiates from person to person and from time to time. Within this framework, different people might infer different results from values presented by the brand, as a particular consumer might renounce the brand he/she used to use it approvingly before. For this reason, it is crucial that brand managers ought to determine expectations and make plans within the scope of these expectations (Chuch & Kao, 2004, p. 70; Erciş et al., 2009, p. 162).

Brands can acquire an important competitive advantage in the target market by providing customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers both have warmer communication with the brand and affect unsatisfied and incognizant customers through giving positive messages to them (Eren & Erge, 2012, p. 4458). Consequently, customer satisfaction is a tool that contributes to customer loyalty and engagement by increasing the interaction between the brand and customer (Akin, 2017, p. 99).

2.4. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is an essential point that today's firms want to reach is the base of brand value and criterion of customer engagement. Because the number

of consumers had by firms provides a crucial competitive advantage to them in the market. Thus, firms have a chance to reduce costs, acquire new customers, take advantage against intermediaries, and respond to competitors' actions (Göksu, 2010, p. 44).

There are various definitions regarding brand loyalty in the literature. In this context, Dick and Basu (1994) defined brand loyalty as the strength of the relationship between a positive attitude against a brand and advocacy behavior (Dick & Basu, 1994, p. 106). Oliver (1999) also made the definition of brand loyalty as the constant purchase of consumers regarding particular goods or services and holding to their purchase decision in spite of any external reason (Oliver, 1999, p. 34). According to Keller (1993) brand loyalty is showing up of repurchase behavior as a result of positive attitude and belief directed to the brand (Keller, 1993, p. 8). When these definitions are evaluated, it is seen that brand loyalty focuses on the points as repurchase behavior of the consumer, dependency on the brand, and brand recommendation. These points are stated as key factors of contemporary and long-term achievement (Eren & Erge, 2012, p. 4457).

Initially, the brand which is an idea or opinion of consumers might generate purchase habits along with completion of the purchase process and expected satisfaction. It is thought that the constitution of this habit contributes to brand loyalty and composed brand loyalty contributes the development of brand evangelism. Because the brand alongside with constituted brand loyalty becomes a part of the belief system of consumers (Yılmaz & Aykaç, 2018).

2.5. Literature Review

There are a few studies especially in local literature searching for the factors affecting brand evangelism or mediating its relationship with other variables. Some of these studies are reviewed as in the following. Matzler et al. (2007) found that likelihood of being a brand evangelist was more for external passionate consumers. Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) indicated brand-consumer interaction had a high tendency to develop brand evangelism. Doss (2014) stated that opinion leadership, brand satisfaction, brand identification, and brand salience contributed to the development of brand evangelism and brand satisfaction had a mediator effect on the relationship between brand evangelism and brand satisfaction. Balıkçioğlu and Oflazoğlu (2015) determined a significant and positive relationship between brand evangelism, brand loyalty, and self-brand congruity. Additionally, they found that brand loyalty had a partial mediator role. Marticotte, Arcand, and Baudry (2016) expressed that customers' tendency to spread negative messages about competitive brands and damage them increased when their evangelist dispositions rose.

Shaari and Ahmad (2016) established that brand commitment and brand

congruity had a positive impact on brand evangelism. Igwe and Nwamou (2017) determined a positive and strong relationship between brand evangelism and brand loyalty. Yılmaz and Aykaç (2018) stated a significant relationship between brand image and brand evangelism. Moreover, they found that customer trust and loyalty had mediator roles for this relationship. Yapraklı et al. (2020) determined that brand identification and brand trust had an impact on brand evangelism. Göktaş and Erdoğan Tarakçı (2020) found out that brand evangelism enhanced recommendation, intention to purchase, and addiction to purchase. When these studies are assessed, it can be inferred that many factors affect the development of brand evangelism in the process from the first experience to brand loyalty.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.1. Ethical permissions for the research

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions stated under the title "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were taken.

3.2. Aim of the Study

There is a rapid increase in smartphone usage in both Turkey and the world. It has become an important issue for all consumers, most notably for young ones. Smartphones have become a significant tool in today's world where people express themselves with the goods and services they use. It is easy to observe that users tend to purchase smartphones with particular specifications or brands by pushing their economic resources considerably. In this study, consumer perception towards smartphone brands that have been being used in Turkey has been evaluated. In this evaluation, branding factors from the first experience to brand evangelism have been examined.

In this context, the essential purpose of the study is to determine the effects of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on brand evangelism. Additionally, the study also aims to inquire whether brand satisfaction and/or brand loyalty have mediator roles for the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism. Furthermore, it is investigated that whether there is a difference among attitudes of customers in terms of brand experience, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, and brand evangelism or not.

3.3. Research Model and Hypotheses

As it is seen in Figure 1 below, there are four main variables in the study as brand experience, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty, and brand evangelism. Five hypotheses have been developed to be tested within the scope of the research model and variables. The developed hypotheses are as in the following.

- H₁: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand satisfaction.
 H₂: Brand satisfaction has a positive effect on brand evangelism.
 H₃: Brand loyalty has a positive effect on brand evangelism.
 H₄: Brand satisfaction has a mediator role in the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism.
 H₅: Brand loyalty has a mediator role in the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism.

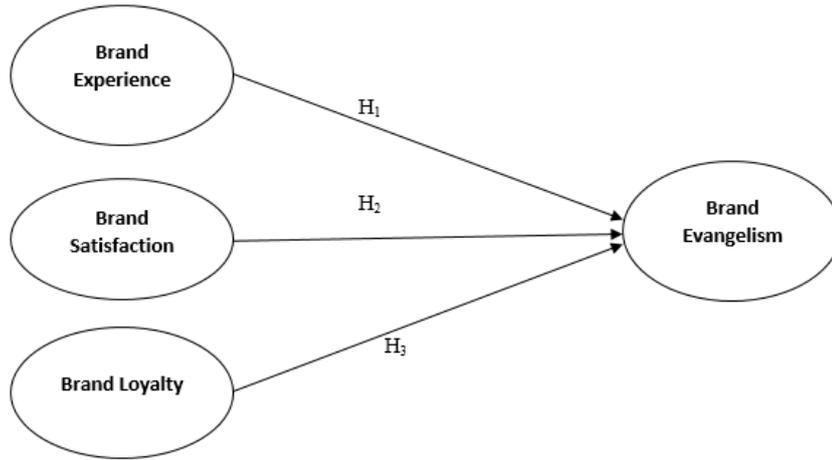


Figure 1: Research Model

3.4. Research Variables

As it is seen on the research model; “brand experience”, “brand satisfaction”, “brand loyalty”, and “brand evangelism” are the variables of the study. 6 items from the scale of brand experience which was developed by Brakus et al. (2009) and 3 items from the scale of brand satisfaction which was developed by Lau and Lee (1999) have been used in this study. Besides, the scale of brand loyalty with 6 items was obtained from the study of Şimşek and Noyan (2009) and it was developed by utilizing the studies of Narayandas (1996), Hellier, Geursen, Carr, and Rickard (2003), and Aydın and Özer (2005). The scale of brand evangelism with 5 items was obtained from the study of Matzler et al. (2007). The authors’ permission was received to use the scales.

3.5. Scope of the Research, Data Collection, and Procedure

Smartphone users who have been living in Erzurum province (Turkey) constitute the scope of the research. The reason to choose the smartphone sector is that consumers develop a significant brand attitude towards this sector. In this context, 400 available questionnaires have been obtained by utilizing the

convenience sampling method.

Questionnaires have been utilized as the data collection tool in this study. Questionnaires involve two parts. The first part includes demographic features and 12 independent close-ended questions. The second part includes 20 questions in total as 6 questions for brand experience, 3 questions for brand satisfaction, 6 questions for brand loyalty, 5 questions for brand evangelism. 5 point Likert type (from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree) items have been utilized for the questions from the second part.

3.6. Research Limitations

Time and cost are evaluated as the most important limitations of the study. In addition, the selection of a particular product group might be another limitation of the study. Lastly, the online survey method to collect data might be assessed as another limitation of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings related to demographic frequency analysis, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation model (SEM) will be evaluated in this section.

4.1. Frequency Analysis Regarding Demographics and Brands

Demographic information of 400 participants in terms of gender, age, marital status, educational status, occupation, and income level is presented below. Additionally, information about brands that have been being used by participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Analysis Findings

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Female	208	52,0	Married	131	32,8
Male	189	47,3	Single	264	66,0
Missing	3	,8	Missing	5	1,3
Total	400	100	Total	400	100
Age	Frequency	Percent	Educational status	Frequency	Percent
18-25	213	53,3	Primary school	4	1,0
26-35	136	34,0	Secondary school	13	3,3
36-45	33	8,3	High school	78	19,5
46-55	13	3,3	Associate degree	94	23,5

56-65	3	,8	Bachelor's degree	182	45,5
Missing	2	,5	Postgraduate	27	6,8
Total	400	100	Missing	2	,5
			Total	398	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Income (Turkish liras)	Frequency	Percent
Academician	20	5,0	Less than 1000 TL	121	30,3
Craft	10	2,5	1000-2000 TL	40	10,0
Housewife	22	5,5	2001-3000 TL	87	21,8
Officer	59	14,8	3001-4000 TL	32	8,0
Private sector	26	6,5	4001-5000 TL	36	9,0
Student	133	33,3	5001-6000 TL	30	7,5
Unemployed	43	10,8	More than 6000 TL	38	9,5
Worker	62	15,5	Missing	16	4,0
Others	20	5,0	Total	400	100
Missing	5	1,3			
Total	400	100			
Current brand	Frequency	Percent	Duration of usage	Frequency	Percent
Huawei	82	20,5	Less than 1 year	68	17,0
Apple	100	25,0	1 year	55	13,8
Samsung	116	29,0	2 years	105	26,3
Xiaomi	51	12,8	3 years	77	19,3
Others	49	12,3	4 years	39	9,8
Missing	2	,5	5 years and more	51	12,8
Total	400	100	Missing	5	1,3
			Total	400	100
Idea of brand changing	Frequency	Percent	Desired brand	Frequency	Percent
Yes	81	20,3	Huawei	19	10,2
No	209	52,3	Apple	54	29,0
Maybe	105	26,3	Samsung	23	12,4
Missing	5	1,3	Xiaomi	27	14,5
Total	400	100	Others	4	2,2
			Missing	59	31,7
			Total	186	100

Table 1 shows that participants are mostly between 18-35 years old, single, bachelor, and students constitute a large part of the participants. Hence, the majority of income level is less than 1000 Turkish liras (TL). Table 1 also includes information about the current smartphone brand of participants, duration of brand usage, idea of changing current brand, and desired brand. Most of the participants have been using Samsung (116) and Apple (100) currently. 81 participants have the idea of changing their current brand, while 209 participants do not have this idea. On the other hand, 105 participants are indecisive about it. Finally, Apple is the most desired brand with 54 participants.

4.2. Factor and Reliability Analysis Findings

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to test the validity of the scales. The reliability of the scales was tested with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to determine the reliability of the dimensions which constituted after factor analysis outcome. Analysis results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Factor and Reliability Analysis Results

Scales and Items	Loading	Reliability
Brand experience Explained variance: 66,058; KMO value: 0.773 and Barlett's test: 619,516 (p<0.000)		,827
This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	,884	
I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	,843	
This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	,772	
This brand is not action-oriented.	,744	
Brand satisfaction Explained variance: 72,205; KMO value: 0.709 and Barlett's test: 393,002 (p<0.000)		,807
I am not happy that I bought this brand.	,866	
I am satisfied with my decision to buy this brand.	,-856	
I feel bad about my decision to buy this brand.	,827	
Brand loyalty Explained variance: 73,734; KMO value: 0.905 and Barlett's test: 1814,858 (p<0.000)		,928
If I purchase a new smartphone, I will prefer this brand again.	,879	
I recommend this brand to my acquaintances.	,873	
This brand is my first choice.	,870	
Even if other brands were cheaper, I would prefer this brand again.	,858	
I think that I am a loyal customer of this brand.	,836	
I intend to continue this brand	,835	

Brand evangelism Explained variance: 75,067; KMO value: 0.883 and Barlett's test: 1421,498 (p<0.000)		,917
I try to convince as many as possible of this brand.	,912	
I feel the need to tell the world that this brand is the most appealing smartphone in the world.	,902	
If someone tries to decry this brand, I will tell him/her off unmistakably.	,858	
I have proselytized several of my friends to this brand.	,850	
I would make a perfect salesperson of this brand.	,805	

As an outcome of exploratory factor analysis regarding brand experience, one item was removed due to overlapping and another one was removed due to constituting a dimension by itself. The scales consisted of brand experience (4 items), brand satisfaction (3 items), brand loyalty (6 items), and brand evangelism (5 items) as a result of this procedure. Explained variance values were %66,058 for brand experience, %72,205 for brand satisfaction, %73,734 for brand loyalty, %75,057 for brand evangelism. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were calculated as brand experience (0.773), brand satisfaction (0.709), brand loyalty (0.905), and brand evangelism (0.883). All scales were fit with the sample according to these results and reliable (brand experience = 0,827; brand satisfaction = 0,807; brand loyalty = 0,928; brand evangelism =0,917).

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to the scales' dimensions obtained from exploratory factor analysis. Analysis results are shown in Figure 2.

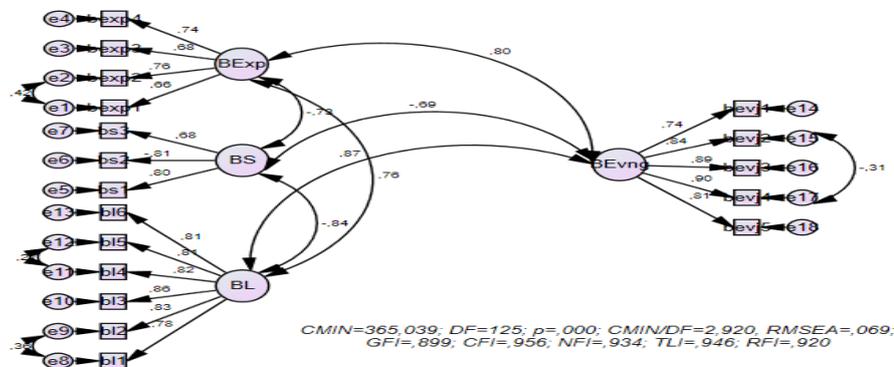


Figure 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Measurement models regarding scales were assessed in the first step. After

this assessment, it was observed that some of goodness of fit indices were not at adequate level (CMIN/DF=3,814; RMSEA=0,084; GFI=0,863; CFI=0,933; NFI=0,912; TLI=0,921; RFI=0,895). Therefore, modification indices were viewed to resolve model fit problem and coveriances were implemented between item 1 – item 2 for brand experience, item 2 – item 4 for brand evangelism, item 1 – item 2 and item 4 – item 5 for brand loyalty. Thus, the model was become fit (CMIN/DF=2,920; RMSEA=0,069; GFI=0,899; CFI=0,956; NFI=0,934; TLI=0,946; RFI=0,920) as it can be seen in Figure 2 above.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics Findings

After the validity and reliability of the scales were tested, means were calculated regarding each scale. Within this scope, obtained values are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand experience	400	3,4987	,87099
Brand satisfaction (after reverse items were fixed)	400	2,7092 3,9300	,85641 ,85641
Brand loyalty	400	3,5210	1,00015
Brand evangelism	400	3,2389	1,06108

Mean values of all scales are above average. Brand satisfaction mean was 2,7092 with reverse items. When they were fixed, the mean was 3,9300 as in Table 3. Table 3 shows that participants are having a positive experience with their current smartphone brand, they are satisfied and loyal customers. Besides, brand evangelism tendency is close to average value. Although the brand satisfaction level of participants is pretty high, this ratio decreases rapidly when it proceeds to brand loyalty and brand evangelism. In this case, it is thought that brand satisfaction may be insufficient to engender brand loyalty and brand evangelism.

4.4. Research Model Findings

IBM AMOS 20 program was used to test the research model. First, structural equation model (SEM) path analysis was implemented to determine the effect of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on brand evangelism. Findings obtained from the analysis were shown in Table 4 and

Figure 2.

Table 4: Structural Equation Model Measurement Model

Measurement model			$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	S.E.	C.R.	P
exp1	<---	BExp	0,658	1			
exp2	<---	BExp	0,764	1,173	0,072	16,244	***
exp3	<---	BExp	0,678	0,98	0,088	11,137	***
exp4	<---	BExp	0,739	1,136	0,096	11,854	***
bs1	<---	BS	0,798	1			
bs2	<---	BS	-0,806	-0,951	0,058	16,373	***
bs3	<---	BS	0,682	0,823	0,06	13,64	***
bl1	<---	BL	0,776	1			
bl2	<---	BL	0,83	1,179	0,052	22,651	***
bl3	<---	BL	0,86	1,112	0,059	18,954	***
bl4	<---	BL	0,82	1,244	0,07	17,79	***
bl5	<---	BL	0,813	1,225	0,07	17,612	***
bl6	<---	BL	0,812	1,183	0,067	17,63	***
bevj1	<---	BEvng	0,739	1			
bevj2	<---	BEvng	0,84	1,141	0,067	17,132	***
bevj3	<---	BEvng	0,892	1,308	0,07	18,55	***
bevj4	<---	BEvng	0,898	1,387	0,075	18,512	***
bevj5	<---	BEvng	0,805	1,182	0,071	16,544	***
Structural equation model							
Evangelism	<---	Experience	0,374	0,447	0,087	5,157	***
Evangelism	<---	Satisfaction	0,258	0,264	0,089	2,981	0,003
Evangelism	<---	Loyalty	0,803	0,829	0,1	8,269	***

After confirmatory factor analysis had been performed, analysis regarding the model was made. Within the scope of these analyses, the effect of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on brand evangelism was determined. Within this framework, obtained path coefficients were shown in Table 5 and Figure 3.

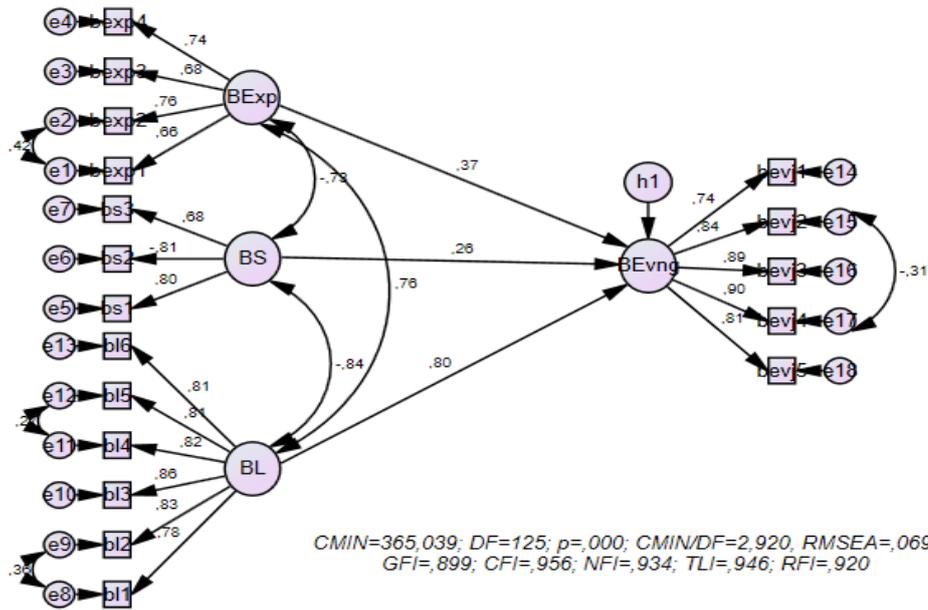


Figure 3: Structural Equation Model Path Diagram

Within the context of the model above, three hypotheses were tested. H₁: Brand experience has a positive impact on brand satisfaction. H₂: Brand loyalty has a positive impact on brand evangelism. H₃: Brand satisfaction has a positive impact on brand evangelism. Brand loyalty has a positive impact on brand evangelism. It was determined that the model was significant statistically and fit indices were well enough according to results obtained from the structural model. SEM path coefficient was also significant between brand experience and brand evangelism ($\beta=0,374$; $p < 0,001$). Hence, H₁ was supported. Path coefficient between brand satisfaction and brand evangelism was significant as well ($\beta=0,803$; $p < 0,001$). Therefore, H₂ was supported. Path coefficient between brand loyalty and brand evangelism was significant too. Thus, H₃ was supported.

One of the most important purposes of this study is to determine whether brand satisfaction and brand loyalty have mediator roles for the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism. As a result of the analysis, the model became totally discordant with the inclusion of brand satisfaction. Under the circumstances, H₄ was rejected which inquired the mediator role of brand satisfaction. Contrary, it was determined that brand loyalty had a mediator role. In this context, obtained findings were shown in Table 5 and Figure 4 below.

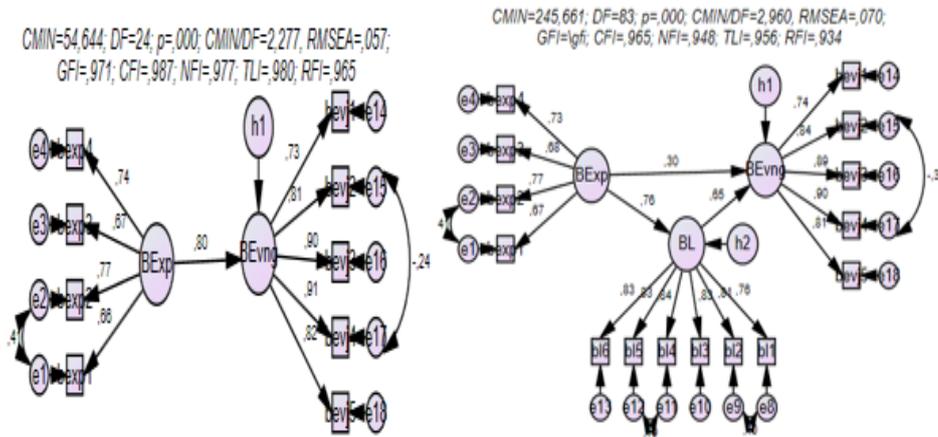


Figure 4: Structural Equation Model Moderation Effect Path Coefficients Diagram

It was seen from Table 5 and Figure 4 that the total effect of brand experience on brand evangelism was significant ($\beta=0,930$; $P<0,001$). Additionally, a positive path coefficient (beta coefficient) was obtained between brand experience and brand loyalty ($\beta=0,854$; $p < 0,001$). The bootstrap method was utilized to determine whether there was an indirect impact between brand experience and brand evangelism. Within this scope, Lower Bounds-Upper Bounds (0,425-0,795) values were examined within %95 confidence interval ($\beta=582$). The indirect effect was found as significant since the determined interval did not include 0 (zero) value. Therefore, H_5 was supported.

Table 5: Mediator Effect Path Coefficients

	Dependent variables			
	Brand loyalty		Brand evangelism	
	β	SH	β	SH
Brand experience (a path) R ²			0,930	0,089
Brand experience (b path) R ²	0,854	0,082		
		0,761		0,795
Brand experience (a2 path) R ²			0,355	0,075
Brand loyalty (c path) R ²			0,683	0,300
				0,072
Indirect effect			0,583	(0,424-0,795)

4.6. Discussion

The smartphone sector is one of the most important sectors where brand orientation is explicit. From this viewpoint, it can be observed that consumers have an orientation toward particular brands. They are loyal customers of specific brands and advocate them. As a result of analyses, it was determined that participants had a good experience with their current smartphones, were satisfied with their current brands considerably, and had a tendency to be loyal customers towards these brands. In addition, the brand evangelism values of participants were close to the average value. Besides, brand loyalty had a mediator role in the relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism.

Branding is a versatile and long-term phenomenon. For this reason, any brand ought to meet expectations and keep it in the long-term for all fields. In other words, expectations should be satisfied ideally and an effective relationship should be contacted in the process beginning from the first experience to disposal of the product. As a consequence of this process conducted efficiently, construction of the mass which is loyal to the brand, advocate and recommend it to their environment can be provided. The impact of each variable on brand evangelism and the mediator role of brand loyalty can be evaluated as proof of this situation.

Brand loyalty and brand experience were the most effective variables on brand evangelism. According to this result, providing the first impact and brand loyalty in the ongoing process is so important for long-term satisfaction during the branding process. Several studies support this situation. Yılmaz and Akçay (2018) established that brand loyalty had a mediator role between brand evangelism and brand image. Eren and Erge (2012) indicated that brand satisfaction affected behavioral and attitudinal brand loyalty. Şimşek and Noyan (2009) found out that brand satisfaction had a direct effect on loyalty in their study regarding mobile phone users. Çetin (2017) determined that brand experience had a significant impact on brand loyalty. Brakus et al. (2009) indicated that brand experience had a direct and indirect impact on brand personality and brand loyalty. Aşkın and İpek (2016) determined that brand love had a full mediator role between brand experience and brand loyalty. Research on mobile phone users by Balıkçioğlu and Oflazoğlu (2015), a positive-way relationship was explored. Additionally, a partial mediator role of brand loyalty was found on the relationship between self-brand image congruity and brand evangelism. Özyer Aksoy (2017) determined a direct relationship between brand

experience – brand distinctiveness and brand attractiveness – brand advocacy.

Similar to the findings of this study, Mamesah et al. (2020) found that brand experience and brand satisfaction had a positive relationship with brand evangelism. The study was implemented for smartphone users. According to the multiple regression analysis results, brand experience and brand satisfaction had a positive effect on brand evangelism. Anggraini (2018) also conducted a study for smartphone users and the results showed that brand satisfaction had a positive influence towards brand evangelism. Jamshidi and Roustia (2021) found out a strong relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. In addition to this finding, the study also showed a relationship between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. This relationship also supported by Das et al. (2019). On the other hand, Riivits-Arkonsuo et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative research and they revealed a relationship between brand experience and brand evangelism. Consequently, the findings of this study match up with the studies mentioned above.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The effect of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on brand evangelism was tried to determine in this study. Also, mediator roles of brand satisfaction and brand loyalty on the path from brand experience to brand evangelism were evaluated. In accordance with this purpose, data were obtained from 400 smartphone users via questionnaire technique. The majority of participants are 18-35 years old, single, bachelor, and student. Thus, the income level is low. The most preferred brands are Samsung and Apple and users do not tend to change their current brand.

The validity of scales was tested through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The structural fit was provided by the exclusion of two items from the scales in the exploratory factor analysis during this process. Model fit was provided by four covariances among items in the confirmatory factor analysis. All scales had a high level of reliability.

Descriptive statistics of valid and reliable scales were above average. In this context, it was observed that participants had positive experiences with their current smartphone brands, were satisfied to use them, and were loyal customers of them. On the other hand, brand evangelism tendency mean was close to the average value.

Structural equation model (SEM) was utilized to test the research model. Two different analyses were implemented during the test process of the model. In the first step, the effect of brand experience, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty on brand evangelism was evaluated. It was determined according to the analysis result that three variables had positive effects on brand evangelism. In the second step, mediator roles of brand satisfaction and brand loyalty were tested. Within this scope, the mediator role of brand loyalty was supported and the mediator role of brand satisfaction was rejected. As a result, consumers ought to be satisfied ideally from the first experience to disposal of the brand to provide them to be brand advocates.

Interested researchers can consider phenomena such as brand image, brand identification and orientation for their potential studies to contribute literature. In addition, these kinds of studies can be interesting in the industries such as automotive, white goods, e-commerce, clothing, food, and cosmetics. The sample of future studies can be selected from different countries and regions.

Brand evangelism is an issue followed by practitioners. Within this framework, they should present their products which are produced as differentiated based on target market characteristics to provide them a perfect experience. The first experience is vital especially. Because it is accepted as the best reference for the next experiences. Therefore, it is important to astonish consumers in this stage. Afterward, they should sustain the communication with consumers and try to raise their advocacy and persistence. This situation should be spread to the target market via various promotions. Both abstract and concrete concepts should be taken into consideration during making contact with consumers and symbolic values ought to be at the forefront. Selected symbols should be confidential, reliable, acceptable, and easily understandable.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

7. FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

8. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

R.B: Idea;

R.B: Design;

A.Y.G: Check;

R.B and A.Y.G: Collection and / or processing of resources;

R.B: Analysis and / or interpretation;

R.B: Literature review;

A.Y.G: Writer;

A.Y.G: Critical evaluation

9. ETHICS COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COPYRIGHTS

In this study, ethics committee principles were complied and necessary permissions were obtained in accordance with the principle of intellectual property and copyright.

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