



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i5/4140>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i5/4140

*Received: 21 Feb 2018, Revised: 15 Mar 2018, Accepted: 25 April 2018*

Published Online: 08 May 2018

**In-Text Citation:** (Durmaz, Cavusoglu, & Ozer, 2018)

**To Cite this Article:** Durmaz, Y., Cavusoglu, S., & Ozer, O. (2018). The Effect of Brand Image and Brand Benefit on Customer Loyalty: The Case of Turkey. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(5), 524–536.

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**Vol. 8, No. 5, May 2018, Pg. 524 - 536**

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## The Effect of Brand Image and Brand Benefit on Customer Loyalty: The Case of Turkey

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### Abstract

**Purpose** - This study aims to investigate the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty.

**Design/methodology/approach** - Primary data collection method was used in the study. The survey method was used as the primary data collection. The questionnaire was easily applied to 286 consumer groups living in Bingol through sampling to obtain the necessary data. The results were tested by correlation and regression analysis.

**Findings** - As a result of the tests, only the brand image seems to have an effect on customer loyalty (H1 hypothesis was supported). "Brand benefit, customer loyalty" and "brand image, brand benefit" did not affect (H2 and H3 hypotheses were not supported).

**Research limitations/implications** - It was thought that it would not be possible to reach the population because the research had limitations in terms of time, cost, accessibility and control difficulties. The study was conducted for the consumer group living in Bingol. This limitation can be removed by expanding the population.

**Originality/value** - The hypothesis of "H1: Brand image affects customer loyalty in a significant and positive way" hypothesis was supported ( $P = 0.004$ ) according to the results of correlation and regression analysis in this study which investigated the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty. The other hypotheses were not supported (H2:  $P = 0,338$ ; H3:  $P = 0.077$ ): "H2: Brand benefit affects customer loyalty in a significant and positive way" and "H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between brand image and brand benefit."

**Keywords:** Brand, Brand Image, Brand Benefit, Customer Loyalty.

## Introduction

Increasing competition among businesses, consumers' wishes and needs, as well as their purchasing habits, have made the concept of brand an important phenomenon. Consumers' perception of brands has been an important determinant for businesses in the long run. Thus, creating strong brand perceptions is now a top priority for businesses. In recent years, consumers have begun care more about brands than products. Businesses continue to accompany the developments in technology providing consumers with different options of product range. Consumers will choose the brand that provides the greatest benefit to them in order to meet their needs. In this context, businesses will offer the best alternatives to make consumers loyal.

According to Suer (2014, p. 212), a brand is a means to promote business and to distinguish and differentiate businesses from their competitors. The brand represents a specific product. Brands are important in the sense that they have a meaning rather than just a name. The brand image can be defined as the sum of what the consumers associate with the product or what they understand from the product.

Brand benefit is important in the sense that it also provides power for businesses in the market just like brand image. According to Keller (1993, pp. 8), consumers are responding differently to brands. That is to say, the consumer's reactions to a product with brand benefit and brand-free product are different from each other. Keller expressed this through brand awareness and brand image. Vazquez et al. (2002, p. 28) has divided the brand benefit into two parts: functional and symbolic benefit.

Customer loyalty is one of the key criterion that will help businesses to survive and develop. Griffin and Herres (2002, p. 3) stated that an enterprise continues to make profit for as long as it keeps a loyal customer. A company can increase its profits by 25-85 percent in this way. Increase in loyalty can provide a company with the following benefits (Griffin and Herres, 2002, p. 3):

- (1) Reduce marketing costs (customer acquisition costs more)
- (2) Provides low transactions costs in order taking and processing.
- (3) Reduces costumer acquisition costs.
- (4) Helps increasing the share of the costumer.
- (5) Provides businesses with more positive advertising.
- (6) Reducing failure costs, assuming loyal customers are satisfied. (reduction in reprocessing, warranty claims etc.).

Kurtoglu and Sonmez (2016, p.1127) concluded that brand image and brand benefit affected customer loyalty positively. Eren and Eker (2012, p. 451) stated that brand image and brand benefit had positive effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty.

## Conceptual Background

### Brand Image

According to Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), brand image is defined as the logical or emotional perceptions that consumers have towards specific brands. Brand image consists of functional and symbolic brand beliefs (Dolich, 1969). The brand image is a part of the product category and should be customized for the unique properties of certain brand categories (Park and Srinivasan, 1994). Saleem and Raja (2014) stated that brand image is how a customer remembers a brand. In simple terms, the brand image is basically the first thing that came to the minds of customers

when buying a product. Customers evaluate a brand considering the characteristics of that brand.

Mohajerani and Miremadi (2012) described the brand image as the general impression that consumers have about the product. Fung So et al. (2013) stated that a strong brand image increases corporate reputation, financial performance, occupancy rate, average price, revenue and profitability. Suhartanto and Kandampully (2003, p. 9) stated that the brand image is an important element in the value equation and that the brand or company image can affect the way customers feel about that brand, thus affecting the customer loyalty. Maroofi et al. (2012) stated that brand image can be adapted to the customers' personality characteristics and qualifications so that they can benefit from the brand in the most efficient way.

Suhartanto and Kandampully (2003) considered brand image as an important element for businesses because of its ability to influence perceptions of customers regarding goods and services. This significantly affected the purchasing decision and behavior of customers. When the customer decides to buy the product from a business, he actively cooperates with that business ignoring the competitors and helping the business to maintain the profits in the long run (Minsung et. al., 2011). Schulz and Omweri (2012) stated that strong brand image would add value to the business and provide customer loyalty. However, Robinot and Giannelloni (2010) pointed out that brand image is not enough to support customer loyalty, consumers should be satisfied with other services such as value, comfort or quality as well.

According to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), brand image can affect marketing activities positively or negatively. The image is thought to be a factor affecting consumers' purchasing intentions in product sales. Thus, the image has an important influence on consumer purchasing and creates a positive sense of advertising for customers.

### **Brand Benefit**

Dolarслан (2012, p. 4) defines brand benefit as the personal values that consumers place on product characteristics. Deniz (2012, p. 256) brand benefit is the result of functional and symbolic benefit components that create a positive attitude towards the product and brand.

Brand benefit is classified according to two basic dimensions: functional benefit and symbolic benefit. According to Deniz (2012, p. 246), functional benefit is the brand-related functional qualities, while symbolic benefit is the dimension that helps consumers to have positive brand-related emotions. Mittal et al. (1990) stated that symbolic benefit is about the need to manage a person's physical environment in a positive way and that it satisfies utilitarian motivations. Park et al. (1986, p.136) stated that the most important factor influencing the choice of a brand concept is consumer needs. Within this scope, brand benefit is classified under three main headings as functional, experiential and symbolic benefit.

Aaker et al. (2001, p. 493) have named brand as "consumption symbols" or "cultural symbols" and have stated that brands have an importance beyond the physical and utilitarian characteristics and commercial value of the products. Aaker et al. (2001) noted that brands have functional and symbolic benefits. They also explained that utilities could show differences between cultures. Aaker et al. (2001) pointed out that it is unexpected that the differences among cultures in the perception of functional benefit characteristics (E.g. Levi's produces durable jeans) are excessive. But they have explained that the symbolic benefit characteristics (for example, Levi's represents independence, power and masculinity) tend to change at a greater rate because the needs and opinions of consumers differ.

## Customer Loyalty

Oliver (1999, p. 34) defined loyalty as a deep commitment to the continuous purchase or re-purchase of a preferred product / service in the long run. Kim et al. (2004, p. 148) stated that customer loyalty is closely related to the survival and the stronger growth of the company. Thus, the higher the level of loyalty the higher the stability of profit rate. According to Kim et al., it is important to try to protect existing customers. In addition, the size of the overall market can be increased by encouraging potential customers.

Oliver (1997, p. 392) defines customer loyalty as the continuation of purchasing products/services from the same brand or the same set of brands. Kumar and Shah (2004, p. 318) have defined customer loyalty as a behavioral condition. This includes multiple aspects, such as the purchase rate and frequency, likelihood of product re-purchase and post-consumer behavior. Engel and Blackwell (1982) described brand loyalty as a preferential, frugal, and behavioral response to one or more brands in a product category that a consumer expressed over a period of time. Jacoby (1971) argued that loyalty is a behavioral buying process. Assael (1992, p. 87) defines customer loyalty as a favorable attitude towards the brand, and the purchase of the brand consistently over time.

Lin and Wang (2006, p. 272) stated that identifying and measuring brand loyalty is extremely difficult, and researchers must use attitudinal and behavioral scales to identify and evaluate this variable. Gremler (1995) found that both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions should be included in every measure of loyalty. According to Hallowell (1996, p. 28), attitudinal loyalty allows an individual to be generally connected to a product, service or organization. These feelings define the degree of loyalty of an individual. Behavioral loyalty, on the other hand, can be defined as continuing to purchase services from the same supplier, and increasing the scale or scope of a commitment. Kement and Cavusoglu (2017, p.180) stated that the two basic approaches of loyalty are behavioral and attitudinal approaches. Behavioral loyalty is defined as multiple repetition of purchase. The attitude loyalty approach is recommending a certain product or a brand for others to try. Yang and Peterson (2004, p. 802) define attitudinal loyalty as a special desire to be in contact with a service provider. Rauyruen and Miller (2007, p. 22) have divided customer loyalty into three: attitudinal, behavioral, and combined loyalty.

## Hypotheses

### ***Explanation of Brand Image and Effect of Brand Usage on Customer Loyalty***

Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) found a significant relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) found that the degree of customer loyalty tends to be high in businesses where brand image is strong. Sondoh et al. (2007) implied that marketers should focus on the benefits of brand image in order to achieve customer loyalty. Wu (2011) found that the image of a hospital brand has direct and indirect effects on patient loyalty in a study he conducted in Taiwan's private hospitals. The study concluded that the image of a positive hospital brand not only directly increased the loyalty of the patients but also increased the perceived quality of service, patient satisfaction and patient intentions to visit again. Kurtoglu and Sonmez (2016) 's found a strong positive relationship between brand benefit, loyalty and word of mouth marketing. In the same study, it was concluded that there was a strong positive relationship between brand image and brand benefit. In his study of the effects of branded product preferences on buying behaviors, Deniz (2012) pointed out that brand image and brand benefit has a vital importance for brand loyalty.

Considering the studies and analysis of the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty, the following hypotheses have been developed.

*H<sub>1</sub>: The brand image affects customer loyalty in a meaningful and positive way.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The brand benefit affects customer loyalty in a meaningful and positive way.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive and a significant relationship between brand image and brand benefit.*

## Methodology

### Research Model

To determine the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty analyses were made.

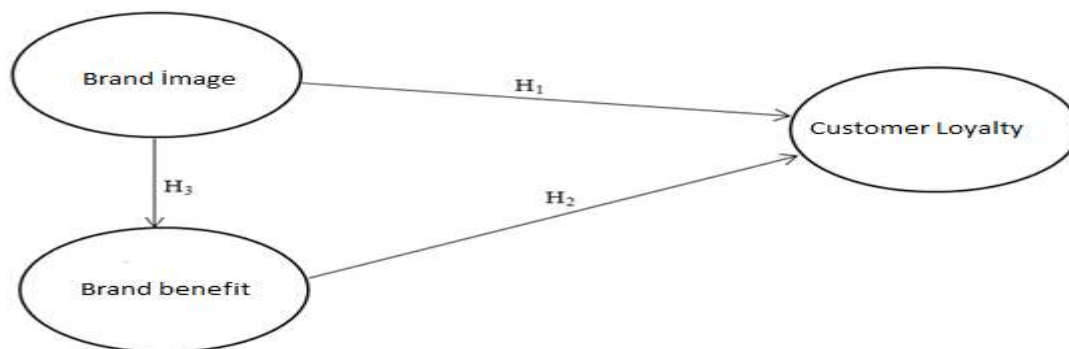


Figure 1: Research Model

According to the research Model, the existence of the effect of brand image and the brand benefit on customer loyalty were tested.

### Population and Sample

Questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The sample of the study consisted of 286 customers living in Bingol. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. In the first part included questions about demographic information of participants. In the second part, twelve questions were asked to measure benefit evaluations of consumers. In the third part, there are 5 questions about brand image and in the last part there were 4 questions to measure customer loyalty. Convenience sampling was employed in the study.

### Data Collection

In the second part, a scale, which was developed by Vazquez et al. (2002) and adapted to Turkish by Dolarslan (2012), was used to measure the customers' views on brand benefit. In the third section, a scale developed by Low and Lamb (2000) was used to measure brand image. In the last part, in order to measure the brand loyalty, Ozgul and Kocak's (2012) attitudinal brand loyalty and behavioral brand loyalty scales were combined and used. All scales were 5-point Likert scale ranged as 1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree. There are 19 statements in the questionnaire; 12 on the brand benefit, 5 on the brand image scale, and 4 on the brand loyalty. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficients of the subscales of brand benefit were as follows; functional benefit 0.87, symbolic benefit 0.89. The overall reliability level of the brand benefit was 0.92. The reliability factor of the brand image was 0.93 and the overall reliability factor of the customer loyalty was 0.90. Hair et al. (2006) reported that if the reliability is of 0.70 or above it could be described as "good" in terms of reliability. Based on this, the "brand benefit", "brand image" and "customer loyalty" scales with a scale reliability of 0.85-0.95 are considered "good".

Below is the result of the normality test performed on the variables.

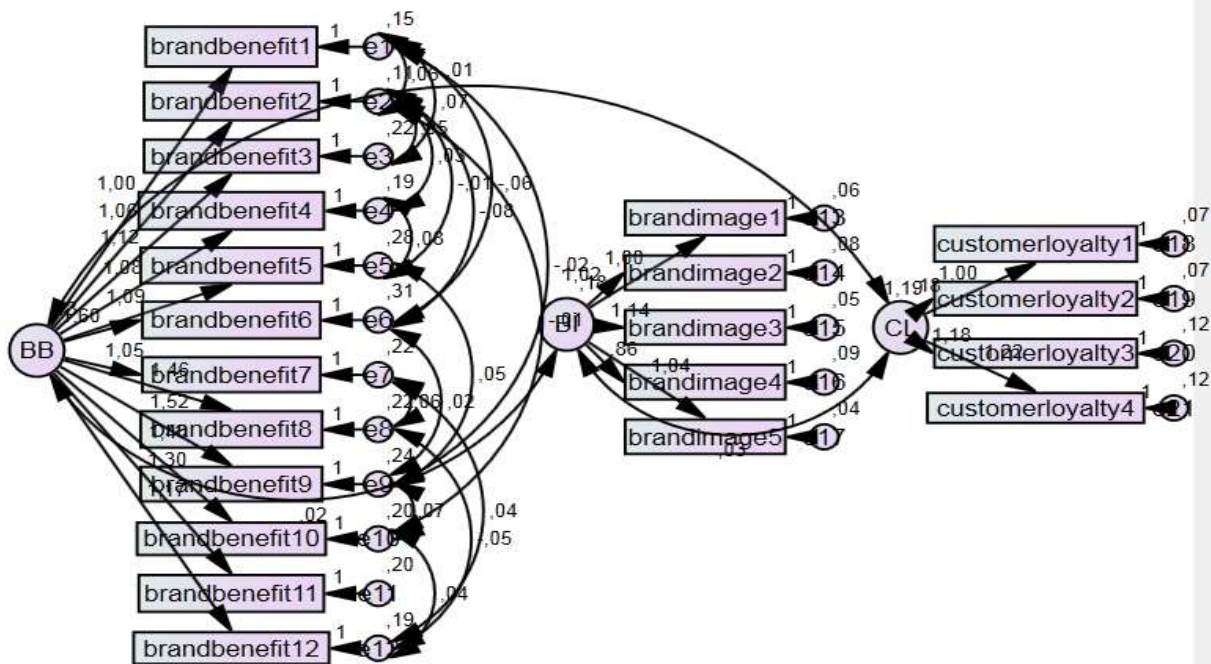
**Table 1:** Normality Test

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Benefit	4.66	0.47	-0.594	-0.578
Brand Image	5.00	0.44	-0.952	-0.752
Customer Loyalty	5.00	0.51	-1.407	1.542

According to Shao (2002), kurtosis and skewness values for the normal distribution of the data should be between  $\pm 3$ . According to the results, the data shows normal distribution.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the data. As a result of these tests, the Barlett Sphericity Test was significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the KMO test result was 0.857. As a result of the factor analysis, factor loads were found to be between 0.66 and 0.92.

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with the AMOS package program after the CFA. The confirmatory factor analysis measurement model is used to test the validity of the scale (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The relevant measurement model aims to create a latent variable with the help of the variables observed through a pre-established model (Myers, 2000). In the research, the model created by brand benefit, brand image and customer loyalty scale was tested to learn whether the items in the questionnaire explain the variables.



**Figure 2:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis

**Table 2:** Goodness of Fit Values

$\chi^2$	df	$CMIN/DF \leq 5$	$GFI \geq .85$	$AGFI \geq .80$	$CFI \geq .90$	$RMSEA \leq .08$
447.881	169	2.65	.87	.83	.93	.076

**Findings Demographic Findings** According to demographics of the participants it was seen that 50.7% of the participants were male. When the age distribution was examined, it was seen that the participants were between 18 and 24 with a maximum of 68.2%.

**Table 3:** Frequency Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Variables		n	%
Sex	Male	145	50.7
	Female	141	49.3
Age	<18	15	5.2
	18-24	195	68.2
	25-34	71	24.8
	35,44	5	1.7
	45-54	-	-
	55-64	-	-
Marital Status	65≤	-	-
	Married	56	19.6
	Single	230	80.4
Educational Background	Primary School	1	0.3
	High School	14	4.9
	Associate's degree	240	83.9
	Bachelor's degree	18	6.3
	Master's degree	13	4.5
Family Income	Very low	11	3.8
	Low	51	17.8
	Middle	185	64.7
	High	39	13.6
	Very high	-	-
Residency	Eastern Anatolia	192	67.1
	South eastern Anatolia	77	26.9
	Mediterranean Region	2	0.7
	Black Sea Region	1	0.3
	Marmara	4	1.4
	Agean Region	10	3.5
Brand preference	Arcelik	107	37.4
	Vestel	41	14.3
	Bosch	76	26.6
	Samsung	39	13.6
	Siemens	10	3.5
	Lg	13	4.5
	Others		

In the scope of the research, the correlation test was performed in order to measure the relations between the variables. The results of the correlation analysis were presented in Table 4.



**Table 4: Results of Correlation Analysis**

		Brand Benefit	Brand Image	Customer Loyalty
Brand Benefit	P. Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	286		
Brand Image	P. Correlation	.105	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077		
	N	286	286	
Customer Loyalty	P. Correlation	.057	.171**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.338	.004	
		286	286	286

A significant positive correlation ( $r(286) = .17, p < 0.01$ ) was found between the brand image and customer loyalty, in which the significance ratio (Sig. 2-tailed) was less than 0.05 as it can be seen in Table 4. However, there is no significant relationship between "brand image and brand benefit" ( $r(286) = .10, p = .077$ ) and "brand benefit and customer loyalty" ( $r(286) = .057, p = .338$ ). A regression analysis was conducted to explain the relationship between the hypotheses. The results of the relevant hypotheses are shown in the table 5.

**Table 5: Brand Image Regression Analysis Results**

Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	T	P	olerance	VIF
Fixed	3.727	.318		11.705	.000		
Brand Image	.0198	.068	.171	2.922	.004	1,000	1,000
R= .171	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.029	$\Delta R^2 = .026$	Durbin-Watson= 1.898				
F <sub>(1,285)</sub> = 8.538				p< 0.000			

Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

According to the results, it is seen that brand image has an effect on customer loyalty. Therefore, H1 hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 6: Brand Benefit Regression Analysis Results**

Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	T	P	olerance	VIF
Fixed	4.374	.293		14.948	.000		
Brand Image	.061	.064	.057	.960	.338	1.000	1.000
R= .057	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.003	$\Delta R^2 = .516$	Durbin-Watson= 1,863				
F <sub>(1,285)</sub> = .922				p< 0.000			

Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Table 6 shows that the brand benefit has no effect on customer loyalty. H2 hypothesis was, therefore, rejected.

**Table 7: Result of Regression Analysis of Brand Image and Brand Benefit**

Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$	T	P	olerance	VIF
Fixed	4.018	.297		13.515	.000		
Brand Image	.112	.063	.105	1.777	.077	1.000	1.000
R= .105	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.011	$\Delta R^2 = .008$	Durbin-Watson= 0.931				
F <sub>(1,285)</sub> = 3.159				p< 0.000			

Dependent Variable: Brand Benefit

Table 7 shows that the brand image has no effect on the brand benefit. H3 hypothesis was also rejected.

### Result and Discussion

The study was conducted in order to determine the effect of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty. Analyzes were made by examining the factors based on the answers obtained by the questionnaire which was conducted on a consumer group living in Bingol.

The structural model was proposed to investigate the impact of brand image and brand benefit on customer loyalty. In general, our measurement results are acceptable in terms of reliability and validity. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was performed and the values of goodness of fit were examined. According to the results of factor analysis, the factor loads were found to be between 0.66 and 0.92.

According to the results of the frequency analysis, the proportion of men participating in the survey was determined as 50.7%. Moreover, when the age range of the respondents was examined, 68-2% of the participants were in the age range of 18-24. This may be due to the fact that the region where the survey was conducted was close to the university. The percentage of single people was 80.4%, supporting our assumption above. It was determined that Arcelik was the most preferred brand (37.4%). The reasons for preferring the brand were predicted as being the result of brand image, benefit, resilience, availability, service facilities, etc.

CFA was performed in the study and the Barlett Sphericity Test was found significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the KMO test result was 0.857. According to the results of the DFA, the chi-square value was 2.65 and the RMSEA value was 0.076. These results show that the model's goodness of fit values are appropriate.

As a result of correlation and regression analysis, the hypothesis "H1: Brand image affects customer loyalty in a significant and positive way" was found to be significant and accepted ( $p < 0,05$ ). Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) and Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) found that brand image has a significant effect on customer loyalty. In the study of Eren and Eker (2012) conducted in Istanbul with a customer group of 475, it was concluded that the brand image was influential on customer loyalty. Kurtoglu and Sonmez (2016) found that brand image and brand benefit are positively related to customer loyalty in their study. The results we have obtained are partially consistent with these studies.

As a result of our study, "H2: Brand benefit affects customer loyalty in a significant and positive way." (P: 0,338) "H3: There is a positive and positive relationship between brand image and brand benefit" (P: 0.077) hypotheses were not supported.

### Implications

The sample group can be extended in the future studies with different age groups and make a comparison between them. In addition, in future studies the effects of brand image and brand benefit on satisfaction, loyalty, experience, and trust can be examined.

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