



## The Effect of Brand Image and Religious Orientation on the Attitudes towards Religious Brand Names: A Study on Youth Consumers<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study examined the effect of religious brand image and religious orientation on the attitudes towards religious brand names and the relationship between religious brand image and religious orientation. The study also investigated whether the participants' attitudes towards religious brand names varied based on levels of religious orientation. The sample of this study consisted of university students residing in Eskisehir. Data were collected from a sample determined by convenience sampling method due to the constraints of time and cost as well as the difficulty in reaching an updated list of university students residing in Eskisehir. Data were obtained with a questionnaire and the drop-and-collect method after briefing the participants. The findings showed that religious brand image and religious orientation had a positive significant influence on the attitudes towards religious brand names and that in comparison with the participants with lower levels of religious orientation, the participants with higher levels of religious orientation held more positive attitudes towards religious brand names. Finally, a significant relationship was found between religious orientation and the brand image of religious brand names.

**Keywords:** Brand Image, Religious Orientation, Attitude Towards Brand.

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## **Introduction**

There are different variables or motivations that affect individuals' perception of brand image. Research suggests that religious values have significant effects on individuals' brand perception (Fam et al., 2004; Tiltay and Torlak, 2011). Religious values play a key role in individuals' emotional experiences, behaviors, and thoughts. They are also thought to play an important role in shaping social behavior. In addition to guiding individuals' lives, commitment to religious values also affects their preferences and consumption behavior. A 2009 report by Turkish Statistical Institute revealed that one of the most popular subject Turkish people religious values (TSI, 2009). In this sense, it could be suggested that religious values play an important role in shaping social life of Turkish society.

Religious values can also influence perceptions and attitudes towards religious terms. Words used in a brand name are known to be effective on consumers' brand perceptions (Klink, 2003; Bao et al., 2008; Ranchhod et al., 2010). In the light of this, religious terms used in a brand name might lead to changes in consumer perception. In this sense, examining the relationships between religious-orientation and attitude towards the use of a religious brand name and a religious brand image could make a significant contribution to the literature. At the time of this research, there were no studies in the relevant literature about the relationship between brand image and religious orientation as a result of using religious terms in brand names. The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the use of religious brand names and brand image, and religious orientation.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Brand image represents the total of a person's impression, emotions, thoughts, beliefs and associations regarding a brand. Brand image is the result of the impressions about a brand gained by consumers from various sources. Brand image is the sum of generally controllable perceptions such as the strengths and weaknesses of a brand and its positive and negative perceptions. These perceptions represent a process emerging in time as a result of direct or indirect experiences about a brand (Perry and Wisnom III, 2002:15). It is possible to suggest that individuals' cultural values, previous experiences and intentions and attitudes play a key role in the formation of brand image. In this regard, an individual's belief system can affect his or her attitude towards any product and brand.

Religion is an important cultural variable and it has a significant impact on individual values, habits and attitudes (Delener, 1994). In addition, religious beliefs play an important role in shaping social behavior. As well as directing individuals' life, variances in religious orientation affect their preferences, what they consume it, and with whom they are in a relationship (Fam, Waller and Erdoğan, 2004). In this sense, religion can provide a framework to make life understandable and explainable (Peterson and Roy, 1985). Holm (2004: 24) defines religious orientation as an individual reflection of religious life, which appears in three dimensions as religious thinking and opinions, religious attitudes and behaviors, and religious experiences.

Allport (1950 in Vitell et al., 2006) states that perceived religious motivation varies as intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness. While extrinsically motivated individuals make use of their religion, intrinsically motivated individuals experience their religion and the concept of religion occupies a central place in their lives (Allport and Ross,

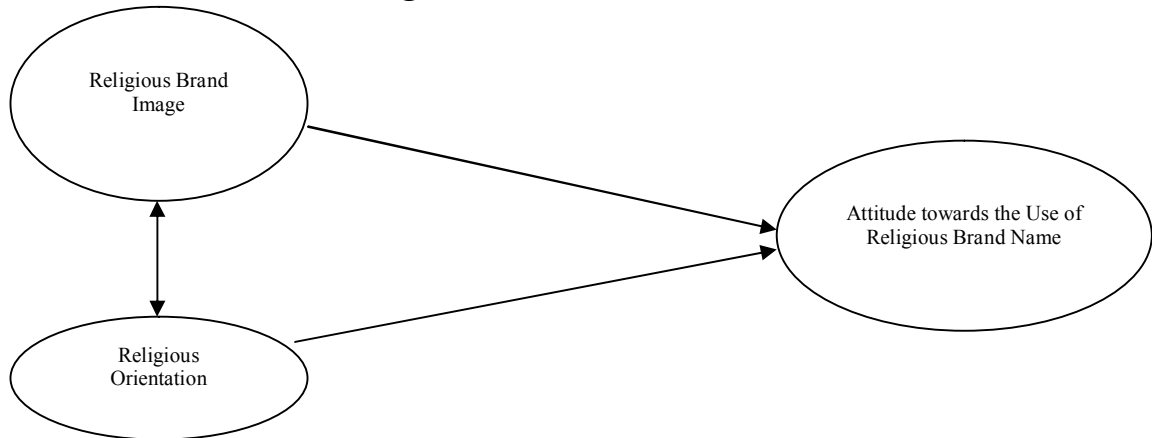
1967). In comparison with extrinsic religiousness, intrinsic religiousness is believed to have a higher level of relationship with religious orientation (Donahue, 1985).

Brand name is becoming one of the important determiners of brand image emerging with consumers. Marketing practitioners have been working on brand names which are sustainable and can have a positive effect on brand image. Various studies suggest that there is a link between the brand name and brand image (Klink, 2003). Researches also suggests that brand names affect consumers' product choices (Oakenfull et al., 2000; Bristow et al., 2002; Wänke et al., 2007). Another variable affecting consumers' choice of products and brands is religious orientation. Individuals' religious orientation influences the way they choose products and brands (Rehman and Shabbir, 2010; Alam et al., 2011).

### The Aim, Significance and Hypotheses of the Study

This is an exploratory study that investigates the effect of religious brand image and religious orientation on the attitude towards the use of religious brand names (using a religious term in a brand name). In other words, the model tested the relationship where the attitude towards religious brand names is a dependent variable and religious brand image and religious orientation are independent variables. In addition, this study tested the relationship between religious brand image and religious orientation. The research model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model



Consumption is guided by individuals' characteristics and tendencies (Doğan and Torlak, 2012). In fact, individuals' religious values and tendencies might have an impact on consumption decisions. In this sense, examining consumers' perceptions of brands, which are significantly effective on their consumption processes, with respect to their religious affiliation and values can make a significant contribution to the literature. The following are the research hypotheses designed based on the findings mentioned above:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Religious brand image has a positive effect on the attitude towards the use of religious brand name.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Religious orientation has a positive effect on the attitude towards the use of religious brand name.

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

**H<sub>4</sub>:** There is a significant variance between the attitudes of the participants with lower or higher religious orientation towards the use of religious brand names.

Women and men might display different attitudes towards brands. The main reason for this situation might be the fact that the cognitive evaluation processes of the two genders have different typologies. Research on brands reveals that many components related to a brand vary depending on gender (Tucker, 1964; Doğan and Özkara, 2013). In this sense, examining whether the variables involved in the study vary depending on gender or not could make a significant contribution to the literature.

**H<sub>5</sub>:** There is a significant variance between the attitudes of the female and male participants towards the use of religious brand names.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** There is a significant variance between the religious orientation of the female and male participants.

**H<sub>7</sub>:** There is a significant variance between the religious brand images of the female and male participants.

### **Population and Sample**

The study population consisted of university students living in Eskisehir, Turkey. About 50.000 students live in Eskisehir from all over the Turkey. Convenience sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used in this study. A total of 408 people were initially included in the study. However, the analyses were carried out on 391 questionnaires because 17 of them were either incomplete or contained or incorrect data.

### **Data Collection Method and Tools**

Research data were collected through a questionnaire. The data were collected through a questionnaire and “drop and collect” method. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts and 36 statements. The first part included the “Brand Image Scale”, which was developed by Salinas and Perez (2009) and whose validity and reliability were tested, the “Religious Orientation Scale” developed by Allport and Ross (1967), and the “Attitude towards Religious Brand Name” was measured five items. These items were tested with expert opinion and pilot data. The second part consisted of questions aimed at collecting personal information about the participants. Data collected with the scales of “Brand Image”, “Religious Orientation”, and “Attitude towards Religious Brand Names” were arranged according to 5-point Likert scale consisting of statements “(1) Strongly Disagree... (5) Strongly Agree”. Central distribution and measures of variation were used in analyzing the data.

The validity of the scales used in this research was assessed based on expert opinion and translation and back-translation and the final versions of the statements were determined by means of a pilot application of the questionnaire. The reliability of the scales was measured by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Research data were obtained from the students Eskişehir Osmangazi University by using the convenience sampling method due to time constraints and the difficulty in

accessing the sample. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. The results are also limited to the period between October 2012 and November 2012, when the data were collected.

### Findings and Interpretation

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of gender, age, education level and monthly income.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	226	57.8
Male	165	42.2
<b>Age</b>		
25 and below	375	95.9
26 and over	16	4.1
<b>Education</b>		
Undergraduate	368	94.1
Graduate	23	5.9
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
1000 TL and lower	279	71.4
1001-2000 TL	62	15.9
2001-3000 TL	33	8.4
3001 TL and higher	14	4.3

Cronbach's alpha values for the scales used in this study are shown in Table 2. All the values are within the limits.

**Table 2: Internal Consistency Analyses**

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<b>Religious Brand Image Scale</b>	
0.898	8
<b>Religious Orientation Scale</b>	
0.803	19
<b>Scale of Attitude towards Religious Brand Name</b>	
0.781	5

Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis of the model. The linear regression analysis was conducted to test H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> hypotheses. The regression analysis simultaneously assessed the attitude towards the use of religious brand names as the dependent variable and image of religious brand and religious orientation as the independent variables. The analysis results showed that religious brand image (B=0.456, p=0.001) and religious orientation (B=0.204, p=0.021) has a positive significant effect on the attitude towards the use of religious brand name.

**Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis Results**

<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adj. R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
0.483	0.233	0.229	0.842	48.549	0.001*
<b>Un-stand. Coefficients</b>			<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>		
	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
(Constant)	0.953	0.255		3.740	0.001*
<b>Religious Orientation</b>	0.204	0.088	0.123	2.311	0.021**
<b>Religious Brand Image</b>	0.456	0.058	0.421	7.877	0.001*

\*p<0.01

\*\*p<0.05

Table 4 shows the results of conducted to determine the relationship between religious brand image and religious orientation. A significant positive correlation ( $r=0.394$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) was identified between religious brand image and religious orientation.

**Table 4: Results of Correlation Analysis between Brand Image and Religious Orientation**

	<b>Religious Orientation</b>
<b>Religious Brand Image</b>	Pearson Correlation <b>0.394</b>
	Sig. (two-tailed) <b>0.001*</b>

\*p<0.01

Table 5 shows the results of independent samples t-test analysis. Whether the attitudes towards the use of religious brand names varied according to religious orientation levels or not was tested. In this regard, by using the value 3.09, which was the mean of the participants' agreement with the statements in the religious orientation scale, the participants were divided into two groups as those with higher levels of religious orientation and those with lower levels of religious orientation. The test assessed whether the attitudes of these two groups towards the use of religious brand names demonstrated a significant variance. According to the analysis results the attitudes of the participants with higher levels of religious orientation and of those with lower levels of religious orientation towards the use of religious brand names varied significantly. Also, the Scheffe test results showed that the participants with higher levels of religious orientation had a higher level of attitudes towards the use of religious brand names (mean=2.733) than that (mean=2.302) of the participants with lower levels of religious orientation ( $p=0.001$ ).

**Table 5: T-Test Analysis Results According to Religious Orientation**

Variable	Religious orientation	Frequency	Mean	t	p
Attitude towards Religious Brand Name	≥ 3.09	197	2.733	4.221	0.001*
	< 3.09	150	2.302		

Table 6 shows the results of the analysis which assessed whether brand image, attitude towards religious brand name, and religious orientation varied according to gender. According to the analysis results, only religious brand image varied based on gender (t=2.640; p=0.009).

**Table 6: Results of T Test Analysis according to Gender**

Variable	Gender	Frequency	Mean	t	p
Religious Brand Image	Male	154	2.255	2.640	0.009*
	Female	212	2.003		
Attitude towards Religious Brand Name	Male	159	2.584	0.461	0.645
	Female	218	2.539		
Religious Orientation	Male	143	3.049	-1.179	0.239
	Female	204	3.123		

\*p<0.05

Table 7 shows the results of the research hypothesis analysis. According to hypothesis analysis H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, and H<sub>7</sub> supported. In contrast, H<sub>5</sub> and H<sub>6</sub> not supported.

**Table 7: Research Hypothesis Analysis Results**

<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> Religious brand image has a positive effect on the attitude towards the use of religious brand name.	Supported
<b>H<sub>2</sub>:</b> Religious orientation has a positive effect on the attitude towards the use of religious brand name.	Supported
<b>H<sub>3</sub>:</b> There is a significant relationship between religious brand image and religious orientation.	Supported
<b>H<sub>4</sub>:</b> There is a significant variance between the attitudes of the participants with lower or higher religious orientation towards the use of religious brand names.	Supported
<b>H<sub>5</sub>:</b> There is a significant variance between the attitudes of the female and male participants towards the use of religious brand names.	Not Supported

<b>H<sub>6</sub>:</b> There is a significant variance between the religious orientation of the female and male participants.	Not Supported
<b>H<sub>7</sub>:</b> There is a significant variance between the religious brand images of the female and male participants	Supported

### Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Today, it has become a necessity for businesses which seek sustainable success in today's competitive environment to have more in-depth information about consumers in the target group. In this regard, being informed not just about general characteristics such as consumers' age, gender, monthly income but also about specific features such as religious orientation and brand image perceptions can provide a significant advantage. Possessing these kinds of specific information can help businesses determine their marketing strategies more efficiently.

This study assessed the participants' religious orientations and religious brand images and the effect of these perceptions on their attitude towards the use of religious brand names. The study also investigated the relationship between religious brand image and religious orientation. The results showed that the participants' perceptions of religious orientation and religious brand image affected their attitude towards religious brand names positively. In other words, the study demonstrated that higher levels of religious orientation were associated with more positive attitudes towards religious brand names and that religious brand image had a positive effect on the attitude towards religious brand names. According to the results, the participants perceived religious brand images differently based on gender factor. In the light of these results, it is possible to suggest that the attitude towards a brand will be affected positively in line with the increase in its religious brand image. It is possible to suggest that brands with religious names could be appropriate for consumers with higher levels of religious orientation.

Evidence also suggests that different components of brands vary depending on gender (Tucker, 1964; Doğan and Özkara, 2013). On the other hand, this study found that brand name, which is a component of a brand, varies depending on gender with respect to its inclusion of religious terms. This finding of the study can be considered as a contribution to the literature in this sense.

It is recommended that future research be undertaken concerning the moral and ethical discussion of using brand names with religious terms in goods and services offered to consumers with higher levels of religious orientation. In other words, businesses' use of terms related to the religious values a group of consumers in order to increase efficiency and productivity in marketing strategies can be discussed within the morals and ethics of marketing. Also, a marketing research conducted with a brand having a name related to the religious values of the same group could be linked with that study. Moreover, future studies can investigate whether the relationships among study variables varied based on product category or not. In this way, different insights for practitioners in different sectors could be obtained. Finally, the result found in this study about the variance of brand image perceptions based on gender could provide a hint for businesses with a religious brand name for their marketing strategies.



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