



The Effects of Branding on Purchasing Preferences of Tourists at Accommodation Enterprises: An Implementation at Chain Accommodation Enterprises in Antalya

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Extensive Summary

One of the main conditions of being steady in the service industry and providing a competitive advantage is branding. Branding is of vital significance for accommodation enterprises in the service industry. Branding is the process in which the company promotes its product or service to the consumer as a brand or the dependence of current brand on the target mass is increased (Branding guide, 2007, p. 8)

As there are so many service-producing businesses at a similar level in the tourism industry, it makes the choice difficult. In this case, consumers prefer the branded products and services of the accommodation enterprises they trust in, which reduces the risks and make their life easier.

Business that want to achieve the success in the long term need to be aware of how to ensure brand loyalty and establish an emotional bond between the brand and the consumer, create a consumer group who doesn't care about the price increases. They also need to know how brands are perceived by consumers to create sympathy for the brand and be aware of the effect of the brand on purchasing preferences. In this context, considering the increasing significance of branding today, accommodation enterprises in service industry are expected to give necessary importance to branding.

The aim of this study is to determine the effect of branding on the purchasing preferences of tourists at accommodation enterprises. For this purpose, literature was examined and research models and hypothesis were developed. Tourists staying at chain accommodation enterprises in Antalya make up the study population. As access to the whole population exceeds the current opportunities in terms of time and cost, the sample is made up of volunteer tourists staying at chain accommodation enterprises (Asteria, Gloria, Majesty, Rixos, Robinson chain hotels) to fill in the questionnaire.

In this study, a questionnaire was applied to a total of 500 tourists. 398 valid questionnaires were evaluated. SPSS 13.0 statistical programme was used in data analysis. The data control variables were evaluated by frequency and percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation. To measure the relations between the variables, correlation and regression analysis were used.

According to the findings of field research carried out for tourists staying at chain accommodation enterprises included in the scope of research, it was seen that tourists, in large part, perceived the brand as a trust and a name. Brand gives confidence to provide the promised benefits and brand name supplies an added value to the product.

It is seen that tourists perceive the brand factor dimensions of accommodation enterprises in high level. The highest average size of brand factor dimensions is the one of perceived quality and trust of accommodation enterprises. In the fact that the perceived service quality is high, the share of employees, as service providers, is larger. The remarkable result is that the risk perceptions of tourist are very low. Of the hypothesis, it is seen that the first hypothesis with highest correlation is between the perceived brand attitude and purchasing preference ($r = .717$, $p < .01$), and the second hypothesis with a high correlation is between brand loyalty and purchasing preference ($r = .698$, $p < .01$). The third hypothesis with a high correlation is between brand quality and brand image.

As a result of regression analysis, it was seen that the variables of brand awareness, the perceived quality, brand image, the perceived risk, brand trust, brand attitude and brand loyalty except the dimension perceived risk affect the tourists' purchasing preferences positively. It was revealed that the dimension of the perceived risk affects the tourists' purchasing preferences negatively. As a result of regression analysis, the model was found to be significant. When all in one equation is given, it was revealed that the most effective factors in tourists' purchasing preferences are respectively brand attitude ($\beta = .419$, $p < .05$), brand loyalty ($\beta = .340$, $p < .05$) and brand awareness ($\beta = .101$, $p < .05$). As attitudes make up the base of behaviours, they are very important in purchasing preferences (Keller, 1993, p. 4). Brand loyalty which is the result of meeting the expectations of tourists contributes to repeat purchasing behaviour. In intense competitive environment, it is very important that businesses create loyal customers because, for enterprises, to retain the existing customers as much as possible is much more profitable than winning new customers. (Tepeci, 1999, p. 224; Yüksel, 2003, p. 31) For the formation of brand attitude and loyalty, primarily brand awareness should be, and even brand awareness (the first brand that comes to mind) should be higher.

As a conclusion, branding of accommodation enterprises increases brand awareness, raises the perceived quality, creates a positive image, reduce the perceptions of risk, gives confidence to tourists, create a positive attitude to the brand, give rise to brand loyalty and influences the purchasing preferences of tourists positively.