

## **BRAND AWARENESS AND LOYALTY IN SPORTS MARKETING: AN IMPLEMENTATION IN AKSARAY UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF SPORTS SCIENCES**

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### **Abstract**

Branded products are consumed by all segments of society in almost every sector in today's world. Consumers prefer brands that are known and familiar to them so to increase customer loyalty, businesses should offer quality products and services to customers constantly. Since the consumer evaluates according to the quality of the product s/he buys, sports businesses should be able to market their products effectively. Being able to compete with other sports businesses can only be achieved by becoming a brand. This research aims to determine the brand awareness and loyalty of students studying at Aksaray University Faculty of Sports Sciences to sports brand products. For this purpose, a questionnaire form was applied and the data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed in the SPSS 25.0 statistical program.

**Keywords:** Sports Marketing, Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is one of the most important factors for businesses to introduce the concept of brand, which has become an indispensable part for young people, to young consumers (Marangoz, 2006:111). A brand is “a combination of a name, symbol and shape that determines the identity of the products of sellers or manufacturers and distinguishes their products from their competitors” (Cemalcilar, 1994: 116). In other words, a brand is “a concept that meets the demands, needs and expectations of consumers and facilitates the decision-making time of consumers” (Keller & Sood, 2003: 2).

Recently, the development of special sports marketing strategies and the presentation of sports products and services to consumers have started to gain importance. Sport is a social product and service marketed within a community (Traquattrini et al., 2015). Many businesses (large businesses), are trying to increase their market shares by taking advantage of the attractiveness of sports in the minds of consumers. Actually, one of the reasons behind the transformation of sports into a big industry is its "social power". Sports branches, news about sports and people who specialize in sports come across consumers at every point of life and they are in demand. Therefore, sport turns into a large-scale industry and it is used its power to influence interconnected sectors (Yoon & Choi, 2005). To market more effectively, it is important to understand how consumers are defined by sports (Ratten&Ratten, 2011). Marketing can be used to create an intense impact in the context of sports from individuals' personal preferences and definitions of sports (Chalip, 1992). Marketing is a useful way that when done properly can have a positive impact because of the emotional investment people have in certain sports products.

The success of businesses in the sports industry depends on a good understanding and application of the concept of sports marketing. In today's societies, one of the most noticeable and ubiquitous activities is sports (Parkhouse, 2001: 200). The term "Sports Marketing" was first used in the USA in 1978 in the advertising era (Chalip, 1992). Sports marketing is carried out in the process from the production of a sports product to its marketing to realize the goals of the enterprises and to satisfy the demands and needs of the consumers (Pitts & Stotler, 1996: 80).

In the sports products sector, which is one of the sectors where competition is intense, businesses offer new products and brands to the market in order to influence the consumers who prefer sports products and to protect and increase their market shares, and at the same time, they make improvements in their existing products and also apply intensive promotion activities. Sports has attracted the attention of many companies with the effect of the rapidly growing consumer society and has gained a commercial dimension by being used as a marketing tool in many fields (Ceritoglu, 2005: 135).

The increasing purchasing power of the young population, the effects on the purchasing behavior of families, and the fact that the young population meet brands at an earlier age with each passing day, as well as having a high level of brand awareness, have made young people a different target group from adults in terms of businesses (Ceritoglu, 2005: 135). Therefore, in this research, it is aimed to evaluate how well the students of the Faculty of Sports Sciences know sports brands, their brand awareness about sports brands and their loyalty to brands in sports products.

### **Brand Awareness**

Changes in social and economic life greatly change and affect the purchasing habits of consumers who are the main actors in the economic field called the market. In the last ten years, brand equity and brand awareness has become an increasingly researched structure in the marketing literature, especially with the understanding of the advantages and importance of brands. Brand awareness is the ability of potential customers to recognize and remember that a particular brand belongs to a particular product category (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, brand awareness is the extent to which the brand is considered by consumers during purchase and consumption in different situations, and this is expressed using a brand salience dimension (Keller, 2003). In other words, brand awareness is one of the clearest indicators of the context in which the brand exists in the mental map of consumers (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). When consumers are familiar with the brand, the probability of purchasing the branded product of the company increases. (Draganska&Klapper, 2011). With the development of brand awareness, the increase in branded product preferences has made the economic activities

of consumers an indispensable focus of businesses.

The fact that consumers remember brands from which they have obtained information in various ways is an indicator of their awareness of the brand. These brands, which are remembered by consumers while choosing among alternatives, increase the chance of being selected from the brand group that consumers create during evaluation (Cevikbas, 2007: 47). In this way, the decision-making process of consumers is shortened. Consumers tend to prefer the brand that comes to their mind first or that they are familiar with (Cevikbas, 2007: 27).

### **Brand Loyalty**

When choosing branded products, consumers take risks as well as whether the brand will meet their needs, whether it will provide benefits for the time and money spent. In order to minimize risks, consumers tend to prefer a certain brand in their purchasing decision processes. The constant purchase of a brand brings up the concept of "brand loyalty" (Polat, 2013: 54). Keller (2001) argues that consumers should be loyal to the brand in order to increase brand loyalty. Brand loyalty becomes meaningful when the consumer benefits from the brand.

According to Uztug (2003) brand loyalty is the power of the consumer's belief in the brand (Uztug 2003: 34) and can be defined as commitment or deep commitment to a brand (Oliver, 1999). Moreover, brand loyalty can be expressed as consumers' tendency to buy a certain brand regularly and consistently (Cetinturk, 2010:11). Ehrenberg (1988) and Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) mentioned that brand loyalty gives a brand an emotional and behavioral bond and creates a bond with the consumer (as cited in McAlexander et al., 2002).

The most important thing in the success of the brand is to increase its recognizability and awareness by creating a positive image. As the popularity of the brand increases, the

acceptance of the brand by the consumers is also stronger (Seturi, 2017).

## **2. Methodology**

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between brand awareness and brand loyalty with the consumer in the marketing of sports. Among the students studying at Aksaray University Faculty of Sport Sciences, 300 students could be reached randomly and a questionnaire was applied. However, 275 of the questionnaires were returned. Since 32 of the returned questionnaires had inconsistent answers and 33 of them were incompletely answered, these questionnaires were excluded from the evaluation. Finally, 210 questionnaires were evaluated. After the data required for the research were obtained, they were analyzed with the SPSS 25.0 package program.

In the section used in brand awareness in the research, developed by McNeal (1992,1997,1999), Ebeling(1994), Sommer(1998) and d'AstousGorgouri(2001), in the section used in brand loyalty Bauer et al. (2000), Rio et al. (2001), Bennett et al.(2002) and Ceritoglu(2004) developed scales were used. This survey consists of 3 parts. In the first part, there are questions prepared to collect the demographic information of the students. In the second part, there are 5 questions that measure the brand awareness of the students in sportswear products, and in the last part, there are 6 questions that aim to examine the brand loyalty to sports products.

### **2.1. Descriptive Statistics**

In the research, 61,4% of the students participating are male and 38,6% are female. 87,2% of the students are in the 19-25 age group, 7,1% are in the 18 and under age group, 5,2% are in the 26-32 age group and 0,5% are in the 33-39 age group. In addition, 92,9% of the students are single and 7,1% are married. It is seen that 57,6% of the students have an income of 1500 TL and below, 21% of them between 1501-3000 TL, 11,9% of them between 3001 and 4500 TL and 9,5% of them have an income of 4501 and above.

*Table 1 Descriptive Statistics*

	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	81	38,6
Male	129	61,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

Age	N	%
18 and below	15	7,1
19-25	183	87,2
26-32	11	5,2
33-39	1	0,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital status	N	%
Married	15	7,1
Single	195	92,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>
Monthly Income	N	%
1500 TL and below	121	57,6
1501-3000 TL	44	21,0
3001-4500 TL	25	11,9
4501 TL and above	20	9,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

When the distribution of the students who answered the questionnaire according to their preferred sportswear brands is analyzed, it is seen that 44,5% of the students prefer

Nike, 26,1% Adidas, 11% Hummel, 9% Puma, 4,8% New Balance and 4,5% prefer other sportswear brands.

*Table 2 Preferred Brands for Sports Wear*

Brands	N	%
Adidas	81	26,1
Nike	138	44,5
Puma	28	9,0
Hummel	34	11,0
New Balance	15	4,8
Other	14	4,5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100</b>

*(Since multiple responses were given, the number of N exceeds the sample size.)*

*Table 3 Students' Reasons for Choosing their Preferred Brand*

Reasons	N	%
Brand Value	115	33,1
Quality	68	19,6
Robustness	54	15,6
Appearance	52	15,0
Comfort	19	5,5
Keeping Warm	19	5,5
Design	20	5,8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100</b>

It was found that 33,1% of the students preferred the brand according to the value of the brand, 19,6% on the quality of the brand, 15,6% on the strength of the brand, 15% on its appearance, 5,5% on its comfort, 5,8% on the

design of the brand and 5,5% on its warmth. According to these results, it is seen that the "brand value" is more preferred among the reasons for the students to prefer

sportswear products and the importance given to the brand by the students.

Table 4 Brand Awareness Scale Answers

Questions	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>I usually buy the brands of famous companies</i>	43	20,5	31	14,8	38	18,1	51	24,3	47	22,4
<i>Well-known brands are the best for me</i>	27	12,9	43	20,5	46	21,9	64	30,5	30	14,3
<i>Instead of buying a cheap unbranded product, I buy an expensive branded product</i>	28	13,3	34	16,2	61	29,0	47	22,4	40	19,0
<i>The brand I use is different from competing brands</i>	29	13,8	42	20,0	33	15,7	50	23,8	56	26,7
<i>I can immediately recognize the brand I use among other brands</i>	28	13,3	27	12,9	30	14,3	58	27,6	67	31,9

According to the students' answers, it is seen that most of them agree with the statements. These are “Well-known brands are the best for me”, “Instead of buying a cheap unbranded product, I buy an expensive

branded product”, “The brand I use is different from competing brands” and “I can immediately recognize the brand I use among other brands”.

Table 5 Brand Loyalty Scale Answers

Questions	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>I prefer all kinds of sports products that I have from the same brand</i>	56	26,7	38	18,1	36	17,1	39	18,6	41	19,5
<i>This brand is my first choice</i>	18	8,6	49	23,3	52	24,8	56	26,7	35	16,7
<i>I would recommend my sporting goods brand to everyone around me</i>	31	14,8	20	9,5	53	25,2	60	28,6	46	21,9
<i>I always buy the same brand of sport products</i>	27	12,9	24	11,4	59	28,1	68	32,4	32	15,2
<i>I never give up on my current brand of sports products</i>	23	11,0	30	14,3	57	27,1	59	28,1	41	19,5
<i>When my sport products wear out, I buy the same brand sports products again</i>	23	11,0	28	13,3	49	23,3	52	24,8	58	27,6

According to the brand loyalty scale, it is seen that the students mostly do not agree with the statement *"I prefer all kinds of sports products that I have from the same brand"*. Moreover, it is seen that they mostly agree with the statements that *"When my sports products wear out, I buy the same brand of sports*

*products again"*, *"I would recommend my sporting goods brand to everyone around me"*, *"I always buy the same brand of sport products"*, *"I never give up on my current brand of sports products"* and *"This brand is my first choice"*.

## 2.2. Chi-Square Tests

Table 6 Brand Awareness by Gender Chi-Square Test

Questions	Gender	Crosstabs	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Chi-Square Test
<i>I usually buy the brands of famous companies</i>	Female	F	12	12	20	25	12	<b>X<sup>2</sup>=10.956</b> <b>P=0,027</b>
		%	5,7	5,7	9,5	11,9	5,7	
	Male	F	31	19	18	26	35	
		%	14,8	9,0	8,6	12,4	16,7	
<i>This brand is my first choice</i>	Female	F	10	18	18	25	10	<b>X<sup>2</sup>=11.765</b> <b>P=0,017</b>
		%	4,8	4,8	8,6	11,9	4,8	
	Male	F	17	25	28	39	20	
		%	8,1	11,9	13,3	18,6	9,5	
<i>Instead of buying a cheap unbranded product, I buy an expensive branded product</i>	Female	F	11	15	16	24	15	<b>X<sup>2</sup>=7,484</b> <b>P=0,112</b>
		%	5,2	7,1	7,6	11,4	7,1	
	Male	F	17	19	45	23	25	
		%	8,1	9	21,4	11,0	11,9	
<i>The brand I use is different from competing brands</i>	Female	F	11	13	10	19	28	<b>X<sup>2</sup>=13,021</b> <b>P=0,011</b>
		%	5,2	6,2	4,8	9,0	13,3	
	Male	F	18	29	23	31	28	
		%	8,6	13,8	11,0	14,8	13,3	
<i>I can immediately recognize the brand I use among other brands</i>	Female	F	10	8	14	22	27	<b>X<sup>2</sup>=11,932</b> <b>P=0,019</b>
		%	4,8	3,8	6,7	10,5	12,9	
	Male	F	18	19	16	36	40	
		%	8,6	9,0	7,6	17,1	19,0	

According to the gender of the students in the Faculty of Sport Sciences, it is seen that there are significant differences between brand awareness expressions of *"I usually buy the brands of famous companies"*, *"This brand is*

*my first choice"*, *"The brand I use is different from competing brands"*, and *"I can immediately recognize the brand I use among other brands"*.

Table 7 Brand Loyalty Chi-Square Test by Gender

Questions	Gender	Crosstabs	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
<i>I prefer all kinds of sports products that I have from the same brand</i>	Female	F	21	20	8	17	15	X <sup>2</sup> =7,742 P=0,102
		%	10,0	9,5	3,8	8,1	7,1	
	Male	F	35	18	28	22	26	
		%	16,7	8,6	13,3	10,5	12,4	
<i>This brand is my first choice</i>	Female	F	6	15	24	22	14	X <sup>2</sup> =2,823 P=0,588
		%	2,9	7,1	11,4	10,5	6,7	
	Male	F	12	34	28	34	21	
		%	5,7	16,2	13,3	16,2	10,0	
<i>I would recommend my sporting goods brand to everyone around me</i>	Female	F	9	10	19	24	19	X <sup>2</sup> =9,800 P=0,057
		%	4,3	4,8	9,0	11,4	9,0	
	Male	F	22	10	34	36	27	
		%	10,5	4,8	16,2	17,1	12,9	
<i>I always buy the same brand of sport products</i>	Female	F	11	8	26	22	14	X <sup>2</sup> =5,556 P=0,135
		%	5,2	3,8	12,4	10,5	6,7	
	Male	F	16	16	33	46	18	
		%	7,6	7,6	15,7	21,9	8,6	
<i>I never give up on my current brand of sports products</i>	Female	F	8	12	18	27	16	X <sup>2</sup> =6,633 P=0,121
		%	3,8	5,7	8,6	12,9	7,6	
	Male	F	15	18	39	32	25	
		%	7,1	8,6	18,6	15,2	11,9	
<i>When my sport products wear out, I buy the same brand sports products again</i>	Female	F	3	14	22	16	26	X <sup>2</sup> =10,991 P=0,027
		%	1,4	6,7	10,5	7,6	12,4	
	Male	F	20	14	27	36	32	
		%	9,5	6,7	12,9	17,1	15,2	

In the brand loyalty scale, according to gender, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the students' statement of *"When my sport products wear out, I buy the same brand sports products again"*.

### 2.3. Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Brand Awareness Scale

*Table 8 Reliability Analysis Result of Brand Awareness Scale*

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<b>0,729</b>	<b>5</b>

In order to measure sample adequacy, KMO and Bartlett's Test were applied to the "Brand awareness scale" and the KMO value calculated for the 5-item data set was found to be 0,700. The KMO value is classified as

As a result of the reliability analysis of the brand awareness scale, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was found 0,729. A Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0,7 is considered sufficient for the scale to be reliable (Kayis, 2005) so it is seen that the scale used in the research is reliable.

moderate between 0,5 - 0,7, good between 0,7 - 0,8, very good between 0,8 - 0,9 and excellent above 0,9 (Kaiser, 1974). Therefore, it appears that the data set is well-suited for factor analysis.

*Table 9 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results of Brand Awareness Scale*

Measuring Bartlett Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy		<b>0,700</b>
Bartlett's Test	Chi-Square	223,726
	Df	10
	Sig	,000

### 2.4. Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Brand Loyalty Scale

As a result of the reliability analysis of the brand loyalty scale, Cronbach's Alpha

value is 0,848 and it is seen that it is highly reliable.

*Table 10 Reliability Analysis Result of Brand Loyalty Scale*

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<b>0,848</b>	<b>6</b>

In order to measure sample adequacy, KMO and Bartlett's Test were applied to the "Brand loyalty scale". It is seen that the KMO

value calculated for our 6-item data set is 0,849 and is well-suited for factor analysis.

*Table 11 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results of Brand Loyalty Scale*

Measuring Bartlett Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Adequacy		<b>0,849</b>
Bartlett's Test	Chi-Square	480,601
	Df	15
	Sig	,000

### 2.5. Factor Analysis

*Table 12 Explanation of Total Variance of Brand Awareness Scale and Factor Loads*

Components	Eigenvalue			Subtraction of Sum of Squares of Charges		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	2,427	48,546	48,546	2,427	48,546	48,546
2	,825	16,504	65,049			
3	,790	15,790	80,839			
4	,603	12,065	92,904			
5	,355	7,096	100,000			
ITEMS			FACTOR 1			
Item-1			,789			
Item-2			,777			
Item-3			,707			
Item-5			,585			



<b>Item-4</b>	,600
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By applying factor analysis to the brand awareness scale, it is seen that it is gathered under a single factor. Factor loadings are between 0,58 and 0,79 and the percentage of

total variance explanation of this factor is 48,546%. In addition, its eigenvalue is 2,427.

*Table 13 Explanation of Total Variance and Factor Loads of Brand Loyalty Scale*

Components	Eigenvalue			Subtraction of Sum of Squares of Charges		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	3,427	57,114	57,114	3,427	57,114	57,114
2	,832	13,870	70,984			
3	,503	8,377	79,362			
4	,481	8,023	87,384			
5	,427	7,123	94,507			
6	,330	5,493	100,000			
<b>ITEMS</b>			<b>FACTOR 1</b>			
<b>Item -1</b>			,775			
<b>Item -2</b>			,800			
<b>Item -3</b>			,742			
<b>Item -4</b>			,784			
<b>Item -5</b>			,725			
<b>Item -6</b>			,704			

When factor analysis is applied to the brand loyalty scale, it is seen that it is gathered under a single factor and factor loads are between 0,70 and 0,80. The percentage of explanation of the total variance of this factor is 57,14% and its eigenvalue is 3,427.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Companies and businesses create brands to grow their businesses and increase their profitability, and they encourage consumers to buy their products and services by differentiating their brands from their competitors. Moreover, they try to convince consumers that their products are more valuable to turn their products into a reliable and familiar brand in the minds of their customers. They often use a name, word, symbol, design, or combination of these items to convey what sets their products and services apart from their competitors.

Aaker (1991) believes that brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived brand quality lead to the creation of brand equity, which is very important for companies in building strong brands. When customers remain loyal to the brand, they are willing to pay a higher price. As the customer is considered a key and important factor in guiding the orientation of all objectives for

businesses, it is necessary to attract the attention of the customer and to maintain and increase customer loyalty.

In this research, it is aimed to determine the brand awareness and brand loyalty of sportswear products. For this purpose, the data obtained were analyzed with the SPSS 25 statistical package program. As a result of the analysis, it is found that the students mostly preferred Nike brand sportswear products. Moreover, it is seen that the reasons for choosing the brands they prefer are brand value and quality. Gender and brand awareness scale questions were subjected to the chi-square test, and significant differences emerged between the scale expressions in the gender and brand awareness scale questions, except for the statement " *Instead of buying a cheap unbranded product, I buy an expensive branded product*". There is a significant difference between the gender and brand loyalty scale expressions only that " *When my sport products wear out, I buy the same brand sports products again*". Therefore, it is said that brand awareness and loyalty can change according to gender. There was no significant difference in chi-square analyzes between other demographic characteristics and brand awareness scale. The reason for this is that the study does not cover a large universe and it

may be possible that the results from the sample emerged in this way.

It should be known that businesses producing sportswear products will achieve more efficient results when they act differently from each other on the basis of brand value, quality, robustness, appearance, comfort, keeping warm and design variables, which are the factors that determine the brand preference. In addition, they should know how they can affect the consumer while showing the difference of their own brands from the brands of competitor to the consumers.

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