THE EFFECT OF SELF IMAGE CONGRUENCE ON BRAND PREFERENCE:
A STUDY CONDUCTED IN İZMİR
FOR A SWIMWEAR BRAND
AND A SUNGLASS BRAND

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak sunduğum "The Effect of Self Image Congruence on Brand Preference: A Study Conducted in Izmir for a Swimwear Brand and a Sunglass Brand" adlı çalışmanın, tarafımdan, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve bunu onurumla doğrularım.

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Anabilim Dalı   :İngilizce İşletme Yönetimi
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Tez Konusu   :The Effect of Self Image Congruence on Brand Preference: A Study Conducted in Izmir for a Swimwear Brand and a Sunglass Brand
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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Kişi İmajı Uygunluğunun Marka Tercihine Etkisi:

Bir Mayo Markası ve Bir Güneş Gözlüğü Markası için İzmir'de Yürütülen Bir Çalışma

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Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

İngilizce İşletme Yönetimi Anabilim Dalı

Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı

Rekabetçi iş ortamında varolabilmek için, şirketlerin etkili pazarlama stratejileri geliştirmeleri gerekmektedir. Bugünün rekabetçi pazarında ayakta kalabilmenin bir yolu da güçlü bir marka yaratmaktır. Güçlü bir marka, bir şirketin önemli bir varlığıdır. Güçlü bir marka yaratabilmek için pazarlamacıların tüketici istek ve ihtiyaçlarını derinlemesine anlaması gerekmektedir.

Tüketiciler çok sayıda seçenek ile karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Tüketicilerin satınalma davranışlarını ve marka tercihlerini etkileyen birçok faktör vardır. Bu faktörler, pazarlamacılar için önemli bir araştırma alanı olmuştur. Tüketicilerin belli markalar için tercihlerini etkileyen faktörler arasında, kişi imajı uygunluğu büyük öneme sahiptir. Kişi imajı uygunluğu, bir bireyin kendi imajı ile, bir ürünün tipik kullanıcısın imajı arasındaki uyum olarak tanımlanabilir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, kişi imajı uygunluğunun, değişik ürün gruplarından iki marka olan Zeki Triko mayoları ve RayBan güneş gözlükleri için marka tercihlerine olan etkisini ölçmektir. Ölçüm için, literatürde daha önce kullanılan geçerli bir ölçek uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca, yaş, medeni durum, gelir düzeyi ve eğitim gibi demografik faktörlerin, kişi imajı uygunluğu ve marka

tercihleri arasındaki ilişkiye etkileri analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, kişi imajı uygunluğu ve marka tercihi arasında her iki marka için de pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu göstermekte, demografik faktörlerin de kişi imajı uygunluğu ve marka tercihi arasındaki ilişkiye etkisi olduğunu desteklemektedir

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici davranışı, kişi imajı uygunluğu, marka tercihi

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

The Effect of Self Image Congruence on Brand Preference

A Study Conducted in Izmir for a Swimsuit Brand and a Sunglass Brand

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Companies should develop effective marketing strategies to exist in the competitive business environment. One way to survive in today's competitive market is to build a strong brand. A strong brand is an important asset of a company. For building a strong brand, marketers need to understand the needs and wants of the consumers deeply.

Consumers are faced with numerous choices. There are many factors that influence their buying behavior and brand preferences. These factors have been significant area of research for marketing professionals. Among all the factors that influence consumers' preferences over specific brands, self image congruence has a significant importance. Self image congruence can be defined as the consistency of an individual's self image and the image of a typical user of the product.

The objective of this study is to measure the effect of self image congruence on brand preferences for two brands from different product groups which are Zeki Triko swimsuits and RayBan sunglasses. A valid scale previously used in literature is applied for measurement. In addition, the influence of demographic factors such as, age, marital status, income and education on the relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference is analyzed. The results of this study indicate a positive relationship between self

image congruence and brand preference for both brands, Also findings show that the demographic factors have influence on the relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, self image congruence, brand preference**.**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMA: American Marketing Association

CBBE: Customer Based Brand Equity

TOMA: Top of Mind Awareness

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INTRODUCTION

Competition forces companies to find more effective ways to build long term strong relationships with the consumers. In order to develop a strong bond with the consumer, marketers need to have a deep knowledge of the concept of consumer behavior and the main factors influencing that. Consumers in all over the world are affected by many internal factors and also external conditions surrounding them during their decision making process. While external factors such as culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, family and marketing activities influence the buying behavior, internal factors like perception, motivation, attitudes, learning, personality, and the self concept also affect consumers' purchase behaviors.

One way to build a strong relationship with the consumer is to build a strong connection between that consumer and the brand of the company (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 130. However it becomes more complicated to understand what makes a consumer to select a certain brand over others, as the market becomes more crowded by the continuous introduction of new brands. To be able to understand consumers' brand preferences, the factors affecting brand preferences should be well examined.

Consumers' brand preferences are influenced by many factors related to the brand and its components. Brand preferences can also be affected by the external and internal factors influencing consumer behavior as previously stated. Self image congruence is one of the significant factors affecting consumers' references over certain products or brands. The self image congruence is based on the concept that consumers prefer and select brands that are consistent with their own self images. In other words, they choose to buy and consume products that reflect their self images. Previous researches support that, self image congruence can influence consumers' preferences for particular brands (Jamal and Goode, 2001; Sirgy, 1982, 1985; 1997; Mehta 1999; Onkvisit and Shaw; 1987; Landon 1974; Grubb and Gratwhol; 1967; Grubb and Hubb, 1968)

This thesis is conducted for finding out the effect of self image congruence on brand preferences for a swimwear brand and a sunglass brand. The study is composed of three chapters. In the first chapter, the main factors influencing the consumer behavior is discussed and supported by an extensive literature. In the second chapter, the literature about the concept of brand, its components, and the concept of brand preference, the factors affecting consumer brand preferences and its relationship with the self image congruence is reviewed. The last chapter involves the methodology and the findings of the study. In this chapter, the design of the study, the hypotheses, the methodology, the measures adopted to the study and the findings of the analyses are stated. Following the third chapter, the conclusion of the study is presented.

CHAPTER ONE
FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

In literature, there are various definitions for consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is not just a term, but it is a field of study in marketing. It is very important for marketers to understand the behavior of consumers in building up their strategies for their organizations. That is why consumer behavior is studied by a various number of academicians, and these academicians have defined consumer behavior in different ways.

Solomon describes consumer behavior as the field of study where the actions of a person or a group of people are studied while choosing, buying, using, or disposing of goods or services to fulfill their needs and wants (Solomon, 2004; 7).

Schiffman and Kanuk define consumer behavior as focusing on how individuals decide to spend their money, time and effort for consuming items. This involves studying on many facts like the items consumers buy, the reasons for buying them, the timing, place and frequency of buying them, the frequency of using them and the evaluation of the purchased good or service and the effects of this evaluation for future purchases (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 8). Consumer behavior is actually a composition of several activities. "Consumer behavior involves activities such as, feelings, plans, decisions, purchases, and experiences that follow." (Wilkie, 1986; 16).

In marketing, consumer behavior studies the preferences and the way these preferences are formed in the minds of consumers. The consumer behavior approaches in marketing can be diversified as cognitive approaches versus behavioral approaches. Cognitive studies focus on dealing with the mental structures and thinking processes where as behavioral approach focuses on the relationship between the environment and the behavior (Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002; 643). In our research we will be studying a cognitive approach; the affect of our self-image on our brand preferences. However we will also be going over the literature conducted in the behavioral approaches in order to have a better insight to consumer behavior.

Consumers are divided into two categories; the individual consumer and the organizational consumer. The individual consumer purchases goods and services for his or her own use. In this context, the goods are purchased for final use by individuals who are described as end users or the ultimate consumers. The other category is the organizational consumer who purchases goods or services to operate their organizations which can be either profit or non profit organizations (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 9). In this study, main focus will be on the personal consumer and for that reason when the term "consumer" is used, it will be referring to the ultimate consumer, which will also form the consumer market (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 134).

Consumers around the world differ according to their gender, age, income level, education level, taste and various other variables. How these different types of consumers make their purchasing decision among different goods or services incorporate a big number of factors (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 134). These factors that are the determinants of consumers in their buying decision processes are related to many personal or environmental attributes. The consumer behavior's relation to these factors is evaluated further in detail in this study.

Table 1.1 Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

EXTERNAL INFLUNCES	INTERNAL INFLUENCES
Culture	Attitude
Subculture	Perception
Social Class	Learning
Reference Groups	Motivation
Family Influence	Personality
Marketing Activities	Self Concept

Source: Adopted from: Hawkins, Best and Coney, 2004; 27.

The concept of influence requires attention because it's vitally important in comprehending consumer behavior. Consumers in the consumer market can easily suit into the circumstances around them. If a consumer is influenced during the

decision making process, it means that he/she is affected by some factors surrounding them (Wilkie, 1986; 20). Figure 1.1 illustrates the factors that can influence consumer behavior. These influencing factors can be both external and internal in a decision making process. External influences are factors that are circumstantial and are related to a consumer's environment. Internal influences refer to the factors about the consumer himself/herself such as the consumer's personality, perception, memory, attitudes, motivation, emotions and his/her self concept. This separation of influences and detailed analysis and evaluation of external and internal factors is of vital importance to be able to comprehend the consumer's decision making process.

1.1 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

External factors influencing consumer behavior can be categorized in six major groups that will be described in detail in this section. These groups can be identified as; Culture, Subculture, Social Class, Reference groups, Family Influence, and Marketing Activities. The significance of the external influences on Consumer behavior is remarkable since the consumers typically do not live in Isolation and the average person can be easily identified as a part of one's society.

1.1.1 Culture

Culture can influence consumers' thoughts and actions affecting their decision-making styles and purchase behaviors. That is why it is important to focus on culture as an external factor influencing consumer behavior. It is a common influence which underlies all dimensions of social behavior and interaction and it is apparent in the values and norms that control the society. Culture takes place in daily life and the society's communication types. The numerous definitions of culture in the literature, also indicates its complexity (Craig and Douglas, 2005; 323). Some definitions of culture are given below.

Hofstede is well known with his studies about culture. His definition of culture is one of the most common definitions used in literature. "Culture can be

defined as "the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1997; 5). Schiffman and Kanuk define culture as the "sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct consumer behavior of members of a particular society." (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 408).

Culture, can be thought of as a society's personality. According to Solomon, culture is the "accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or a society." (Solomon, 2004; 526) Of all the definitions, perhaps the most widely accepted is that given by Tylor (1881) who described culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor, 1981 as cited in Craig and Douglas, 2006; 323).

Due to the advancement in transportation and a global economy, members of different cultures exchange their values, rituals, and behavior patterns while interacting with people from hosting cultures. So the social boundaries become vague (Andreasen, 1990; 847).

Culture is one of the factors affecting consumer behavior but it is important to understand that culture has a deep influence on all aspects of human behavior. This influence may be, direct or indirect, permanent or temporary, subtle or pronounced, but it is often hard to exactly determine how and in what ways its influence is evinced since it is surrounded with all dimensions of human existence (Craig and Douglas, 2005; 322).

Culture influences consumer behavior, where also in return of this influence consumer behavior may strengthen the signs of culture (Peter and Olson, 1998 as cited in Luna and Gupta, 2001; 47). Consumers' overall priorities tied to different goods and services can be regulated by their culture. The success or failure of specific goods or services may depend on that culture and how these goods and services are adjusted according to the needs of that culture. If a product is superior to other products based on the cultural attributes desired by the members of a culture, it

has a better chance of being accepted in that market (Solomon, 2004; 526). An individual's consumption behavior may be imitated or rejected by other people around him. It can then become the group's norm of behavior and be identified as part of the culture of a given population (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 47).

The overall model below may give a better idea about the interaction of culture and consumer behavior.

Figure 1.1 Model of the Interaction of Culture and Consumer Behavior
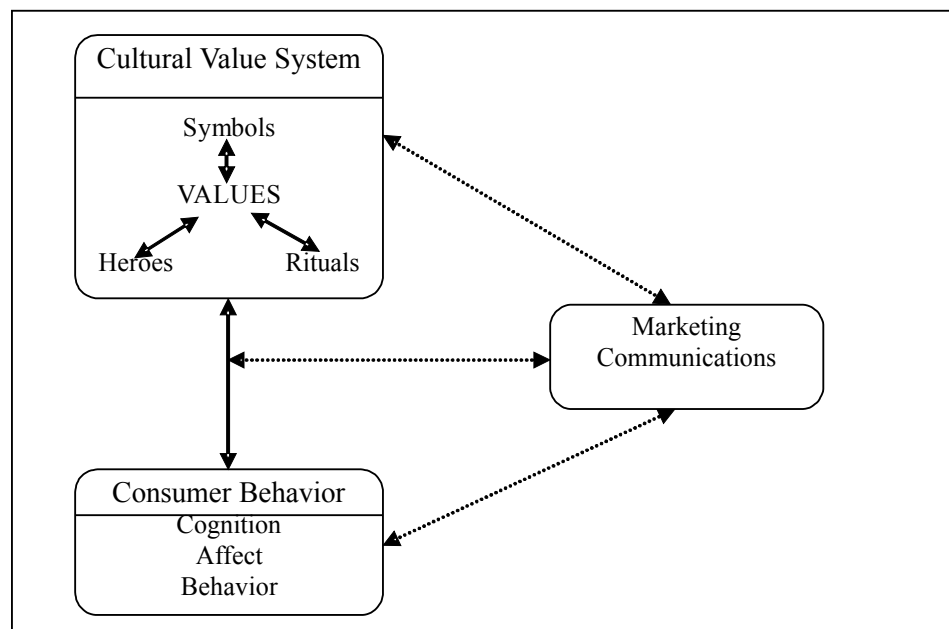
Source: Luna and Gupta, 2001; 47.

As the Figure 1.1 suggests, culture influences consumer behavior which itself may strengthen the signs of culture. The figure also shows that, marketing communication is the moderator effect on the relationship between consumer behavior and culture, where as it also affects consumer behavior independent of culture (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 48).

Marketers need to study the cultural dimensions in order to better understand those factors that affect consumers' brand preferences.

1.1.1.1 Signs of Culture

According to Hofstede, culture influences human behavior through values, heroes, rituals, and symbols. These are actually the figures in which understanding determined by culture is stored and stated. Thus, each cultural group owns different cultural signs (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 48).

1.1.1.1.1 Values

Value is one of the cultural signs, defined in culture. Actually it is the most important component of the definitions of the term culture. Moreover, it is agreed by some studies that, a person's behavior is driven by values (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 49). Rokaech's definition of value is the most common definition which is referred to by many researchers. "Value is a centrally held, enduring belief which guides actions and judgments across specific situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate end-states of existence." (Rokeach, 1968 as cited in Luna and Gupta, 2001; 48).

Values play a very important role in forming an individual's behavior. More precisely, an individual's behavior is driven by his/her cultural value system for a specific context. The formation of an individual's cultural value is influenced by the societal culture, regional culture and the family values. Thus, the cultural value system is formed of both the cultural elements and the idiosyncratic values that belong to the individual. As individuals socialize over time, their cultural value systems also improve parallel to this socialization (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 47).

1.1.1.1.2 Beliefs

Another important cultural sign is beliefs. Beliefs are similar to values but there are some distinctions. Belief and values reflect individuals' feelings, ideas and priorities about things. Literally, beliefs are composed of the numerous mental or verbal statements that represent an individual's specific acquirement and evaluation of matter. Values are considered to be beliefs but they are different than beliefs in

various ways. Values are less in quantity, make guidance to convenient cultural behavior, and are hard to change. They are not attached to particular items or positions and are widely accepted by the members of a society (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 408).

1.1.1.1.3 Norms

Another important component of the term culture is norm. In order to better understand culture, it is necessary to define norm. Norms are the borders that culture puts on human behavior. They are simply the rules that avoid some behavior in particular situations. Norms are aroused from cultural values, or common beliefs that confirm what is proper (Hawkins et.al., 2004; 43).

1.1.1.1.4 Heroes

Hofstede stated that heroes are another important element of culture that is influencing human behavior. According to Hofstede the term heroes refers to "persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behavior" (Hofstede, 1997; 8). When observed from the marketers' view, heroes can be an important influence factor on consumer behavior. Marketers use "heroes" for affecting their product or brand preferences through marketing communication channels. This influence occurs, in their relationship with certain products or brands (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 49).

1.1.1.1.5 Rituals

Rituals are also other elements of culture. The term ritual refers to a type of indicative, symbolic activity set up of numerous behaviors that occur in a stable, episodic series, and that have a tendency to repeat over time. Ritual behavior is performed with procedure, significance, and consistency (Rook, 1985; 252). Rituals can appear at different levels. Some rituals support wide cultural or religious values whereas some rituals may occur in smaller groups (Solomon, 2004; 536). There are

grooming rituals, romantic rituals, feeding rituals, and they are performed by all members of a society.

Consumer behavior and rituals are related to each other. Some consumption activities at these rituals indicate how the consumer goods are introduced in the cultural structure of the society (Arnould, 1989; 261). Rituals are important for consumer behavior because consumption of goods or services can be considered as a kind of ritual. Marketing activities lead the relationship between rituals and consumer behavior which shape the ritualistic behavior and provides it to expand (Luna and Gupta, 2001; 50).

1.1.1.1.6 Symbols

Symbols are the other component of the whole culture concept. "Symbols are a broad category of processes and objects that carry a meaning that is unique to a particular group of people." (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Luna and Gupta, 2001; 50). A society's symbols sometimes do not take place in other cultures. There are various types of symbols such as language, different gestures, pictures or objects. The most common symbols consumer researchers study are language and consumer products (Sherry and Camargo, 1987; 179). Symbols are important for understanding consumer behavior. They carry a meaning for consumers in some situations. One can design and market a product as a reminder of a cultural symbol.

1.1.1.2 Brand as a Cultural Sign

Culture can play a vital role in influencing consumers' brand preferences, but also brands can be considered as a cultural sign as much as values, beliefs, norms, heroes, symbols and rituals (Holt, 1998; 20). These cultural signs may vary among different cultures. Joy (2001) suggests that, the group of affiliations and meanings encompassing a brand name and also brand categories may differ from one culture to another. This may lead to a difference in brand preferences depending on culture, so it is important to understand cultural factors underlying a society (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988; 531).

1.1.2 Subculture

One of the external factors influencing consumer behavior is subculture. In order to understand the relationship between subculture and consumer behavior, it is better to go over the definition of subculture first.

Subculture is part of a society formed of different people sharing familiar cultural meanings for affective and cognitive reactions (emotional reactions, beliefs, values and goals), behaviors (customs, scripts and rituals, behavioral norms), and environmental factors (living conditions, geographic location, important objects). Although most subcultures share some cultural meanings with the overall society and/or other subcultures, some of subculture's meanings must be unique and distinctive (Peter and Olson, 1999; 299-300).

The lifestyles of consumers are influenced by subculture memberships within the society-at-large by sharing beliefs and common experiences that make them different from others. Each consumer may belong to many different subcultures. Consumers in similar age, race, gender, religion or even a strong identification with an activity can take place in these subcultures (Solomon, 2004; 472-473).

It is important for marketers to understand the influences of subculture on consumers' behavior and decision making processes. In modern societies, there are numerous subcultures influencing the brands and types of goods and services which are demanded by the consumers of these subcultures. Sub-cultural needs may be the source of demands for some products or services. That is why marketers must have a good understanding of the society's subcultures and do a careful analysis while developing their marketing strategies (Chisnall, 1985; 105).

There are a variety of subcultures that are studied by the researchers in the field of marketing. Marketers more often use the demographic features for specifying subcultures of consumers. They can combine demographic differences to specify smaller subcultures (Peter and Olson, 1999; 301). Age, gender, ethnicity, religion are

the major subculture groups observed by the marketers in understanding the consumer market.

1.1.2.1 Age Subculture

Having distinguishing values and behavior, age groups which are considered as a subculture are analyzed by marketers in understanding consumer behavior (Peter and Olson, 1999; 304). It is possible to analyze each age group as subculture, but it is usually divided into two as youth and mature markets.

1.1.2.1.1 The Youth Market

The youth market is considered as a subculture by marketers because of its influences on economic life. The reason is that their buying power is growing significantly (Strong, 1998 as cited in Grant and Stephen, 2005; 451). Teenage markets have emerged in sectors like sports, food and beverages, fashion and many others (Chisnall, 1985; 106). These young people form a market directing the consumption and spending habits of their families and themselves (Strong, 1998 as cited in Grant and Stephen, 2005; 451). Marketers view the youth market as having double potential both for their influence on their parents and also the youth market consumption. Marketers also think that the youth is important as being the future market because young consumers build strong and loyal consumption habits which continue in their future adult lives (Moschis, 1985; 904). That is why; brand loyalty should be formed in early ages (Peter and Olson, 1999; 305).

Marketers should deeply analyze and understand the values and beliefs of the youth subculture and the demands derived from those values in order to better develop marketing strategies for specific products and services and use this knowledge during launching new brands. They should always give attention to the fact that the youth market is an important influencer in the consumer market.

1.1.2.1.2 The Mature Market

As well as the young population, older people, in other words the adults make up an age subculture on their own. The mature market is also a subject of interest for marketers, because just like the youth market, the mature market takes a very big place in the consumer market.

Adult consumers; sharing common concerns, values and purchasing patterns form a subculture. Their interests reflect their age. Especially some products or services are developed for this market such as medical care, retirement, social contacts and companionship. Usually marketers give more attention to the needs of the mature market (Assael, 1984; 309).

The mature market is important for marketers for several reasons. First of all, they have a stronger purchasing power than the youth market because of their economic conditions and the wealth saved during many years. The economic power of the subculture affects the consumption patterns of that subculture. They also have strong loyalties towards specific products, services, and in fact for brands that they are acquainted with over the years. Their consumption patterns, economic conditions and more important than all, their needs should be analyzed carefully by marketers while establishing marketing plans. Marketers should look forward and see what the mature market needs now, and moreover what will it need and demand in the future.

It seems that the demand for goods and services for the mature market will be increasing in the following century. Products such as healthier food which include low calories and cholesterol, and also health services such as health care and daily care will be more popular. Also services regarding the social needs of the adults and older consumer such as travel services, restaurants, adult education will be gaining more attention (Peter and Olson, 1999; 308).

Marketers for the mature market should focus into the needs and the related demands of the elder market while building their marketing strategies.

1.1.2.2 Ethnic and Racial Subculture

In many societies, there are different ethnic groups based on different nationalities living together. In some societies, the ethnic groups are very crowded while in others, there are ethnic minorities which make up a very little proportion of the whole society. Whether large or small, ethnic groups are very important in the formation of a society's social structure.

An ethnic sub-cultural group can be defined as "a social sub-group of a larger society where members share a common ancestry, cultural traditions, history, sense of identity and possibly have their own language, religion and customs" (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2004 as cited in Chattalas and Harper, 2007; 353).

Ethnic subcultural groups have influences in the consumer market with their different beliefs, values and traditions and tastes. The brands and types of products consumed can be affected by some ethnic or cultural distinctions (Chisnall, 1985; 106). For example some of the Turkish citizens living in Germany as an ethnic subculture prefer to eat Turkish cuisine and there is a great variety of Turkish restaurants to choose from.

In some cases, ethnic and religious influences combine to form distinctive behavioral patterns (Chisnall, 1985; 106).

1.1.2.3 Religion Subculture

Religion is considered as a subculture, because people from the same religion share the same or familiar cultural meanings, belief and value systems customs, rituals and behavioral norms. For example Muslims in our country make up a great proportion of the population but there are also Christians and Jews living as a subculture in our country. Each religion has different values, beliefs and habits from each other and these distinctions can be easily seen in their lifestyles.

It is important to study the impact of religion on consumer behavior because, as an aspect of culture, it has a remarkable effect on people's beliefs and value system. This effect in people's values and beliefs also has an impact on their overall lifestyle which also influences their consumption decisions (Delener, 1994; 36).

Marketing science has not studied religion deeply (Solomon, 2004; 490), but some studies show that devotion to a religion is also an important predictor of consumer behavior (Solomon, 2004; 491). In other words, people's religious views can show us, how they are going to behave in the consumer market. For example, the Jews consume kosher food that is of vital importance in their cultural traditions (Chisnall, 1985; 107-108). Marketing kosher food in the places where Jews are more crowded would be right thing to do, because it would be consistent with the consumption habits of the Jews. Muslims are forbidden to eat pork which is extensively consumed by Chinese (Chisnall, 1985; 107-108). An international bacon brand making an investment and entering the Turkish market would not be targeting a large population, because of Turkish people's eating habits depends mostly on their religious beliefs.

1.1.2.4 Gender Subculture

There are still significant distinctions between men and women even though people tend to underestimate these differences in our modern world. These differences can be so outstanding that, marketers can view the two sexes as subcultures.

The gender subculture is divided into two, as masculinity and femininity. In a masculine environment, characteristics such as assertiveness, performance, success and competition have more value. Femininity is just the opposite of masculinity. Thus, femininity gives more importance to the quality of life, sustainability of personal relationships, and other values typically related to female roles (Ogden, 2005; 99). In this masculine and feminine world, men and women have different needs. They behave different from each other during the consumer decision processes. Previous research indicates that women treat ownership of a product

differently than men do. According to the research, men think that they can dominate other people and separate themselves from others by owning a product. On the other hand, females see their ownership of a product as a tool for improving their social and personal relations. For this reason, marketers tend to build different marketing plans and apply different strategies for male and female subcultures (Peter and Olson, 1999; 313).

1.1.3 Social Class

A social class refers to a national status hierarchy where groups and individuals are differentiated in terms of respect and reputation (Peter and Olson, 1999; 317). There is more than one piece of information while talking about someone's social class. The most important determinants of social class are income and occupation. Educational background is almost as important and has a strong relation with income and occupation (Solomon, 2004; 449). In addition to income, occupation and education; social class is also influenced by social skills, status desires, society participation, and history of the family, level of culture, physical look and social acceptance by a specific group and is a combination of a lot of personal and social properties rather than a single attribute. Social classes can be defined as large subcultures in other words, because their members share common cultural meanings and behaviors (Peter and Olson, 1999; 317).

As mentioned previously, there are many factors reflecting the social class that an individual belongs. Demographic variables such as age, marital status, education level, income and occupation serve as dimension of social status (Hawkins et.al., 2004; 112).

Demographic Variables

Consumer behavior may also vary across the demographic variables. Demographic variables refer to variables such as age, gender, marital status, income, occupation, education (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 204).

● *Age*

Consumer needs and wants can change according to the age of consumers. Some companies apply age segmentation which means they use different marketing approaches for different age groups (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 204).

● *Marital Status*

Marital status of a person is a demographic variable serving as one of the dimension of his/her social status. Marketers are interested in the influences of married couples on consumption decision making (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 356). According to the literature, the general view about the role structure of family purchase decision-making is (1) husband-dominated decisions, (2) wife-dominated decisions, (3) autonomic decisions (in which either the husband or wife is the primary or sole decision maker, but not both), and (4) synchronic or joint decisions (in which both are influential) (Xia, Ahmed, Ghingold, Hwa, Li and Ying, 2006; 203).

● *Education*

"The level of an individual's education level is another commonly accepted approximation of social class standing." The more a person is educated, the better occupation he/she has which directly influences income level (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 380). Education, occupation and income levels are interrelated with each other serving as the most significant determinants of a person's social status.

● *Occupation*

Occupation is probably the most widely used cue to primarily evaluate and define an individual at first sight. Occupation is strongly associated with education and income. It can be determined by education and it can determine the income level. A person's occupation provides a social status and income for an individual (Hawkins et.al., 2004; 113,114). It is probably the best measure of social class (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 378).

- *Income*

Marketers are very much interested in the income levels of the social classes because wealth and the way it is distributed in the society determines the purchasing power and is a predictor of the potential market (Solomon, 2004; 450). Marketers need to know who is going to spend what and more important than that is how they will spend their money. The answer to their question lies in that person's place in the social structure. "The place one occupies in the social structure is an important determinant not only of how much money is spent, but also how it is spent." (Solomon, 2004; 444). A marketing plan is competent if it can address the social class and fulfills its members' need for a good or a service (Rich and Jain, 1968; 41).

The social classes that the consumers belong to have a direct impact on their consumption behaviors. While a consumer from a high income level can consume luxury goods, the one from the lower income level can not because, he/she has to invest his/her earnings into food and accommodation mostly. A person with high education level spends more money on books, and other works of art, while a person with poor education does not. These very common examples show how the social class belonging affects a person's consumption patterns. That is why; marketers divide the market into segments, and launch products or services for specific target groups related to the characteristics of that product or service.

1.1.4 Reference Groups

Individuals can be members of many different types of groups. A group of people involves two or more people interacting with each other for attaining the same goal (Peter and Olson, 1999; 329). There is a term called reference groups which are very important in individuals' lives, as well as they are important for marketing. "Reference groups consist of people who share common beliefs and values and with whom we have regular direct contact and can be classified as either primary or secondary and both are important as they influence buying behavior." (Grant and Stephen, 2005; 453). Family and friends therefore fall into this category, as they are important influencers of behavior, through their social communication activities (Antonides and Van Raaj, 1998, as cited in Grant and Stephen., 2005; 453).

In reference groups, members make comparisons or use point of reference while behaving or making cognitive responses. Members in the same reference groups may be in different social classes, subcultures or in fact in different cultures (Peter and Olson, 1999; 329).

Reference groups have an influence on consumer behavior; in fact they are important sources of influence. The reason is that people in reference groups have a tendency to behave more like the other members of the group. That is why we can say that reference groups serve as a guide for marketers in gathering information about the consumers, their behaviors, values and norms (Ward, 1974; 1). Reference groups can influence consumers in three ways such as informational, utilitarian and value-expressive (Solomon, 2004; 366). There are several types of reference groups around us. Sometimes a family can be classified as the primary reference group because of its effective role in consumer socialization especially for adolescents. In addition to this, a peer group can be an influencer for an adolescent in a product decision (Moschis and Moore, 1979; 103, 104). The choice of reference groups could be a result of heightened interaction with peers and less dependence on parental figures (Singh, Ik-Whan and Pereira, 2003 as cited in Chattalas and Harper, 2007, 353).

Reference groups do not influence all product and brand purchases to the same degree. It is important to know whether the product is consumed publicly or privately, and whether it is a luxury or a necessity, because reference groups have more impact on luxury products rather than necessity products (Solomon, 2004; 366, 367).

1.1.5 Family Influence

Family influence is the most common and important factor in the consumer socialization process. The way parents react to children's request for influencing their family's purchases shape up the future behavior of children as consumers (Caruana and Vassalo, 2003; 55). Parental socialization is helpful for children in

composing their own habits and values (Baumrind, 1980, as cited in Grant and Stephen, 2005; 453). Also some parents try to infuse their own values of consumption to their children, thus shaping their consumer behaviors (Solomon, 2004; 426).

The type of parental influence in the consumer socialization process can be direct or indirect (Solomon, 2004; 426). The direct influence can be through discussions, where as indirect influence can take place in trying covertly to shape the child's consumption behavior (Ward, 1974; 3, 4). Parents with different characteristics and styles affect their children's consumption behaviors in different ways. For example some authoritarian parents that do not build close relations with their children have negative opinions about advertisements where permissive parents are shown while communicating with their children and where they also do not restrict the child's consumption pattern (Solomon, 2004; 428).

The importance of the family as a unit of analysis in consumer purchase decision making is well established. In the previous 50 years there have been some changes in the societies' private lives, such as the increase of non-family households or single-parent families but still the number of traditional families with parents and children are high and because of that, family is still the central fact in marketing and consumer research as a consuming and decision making unit (Xia et.al, 2006; 201, 202). Marketing and consumer researchers heavily depend on family influence on children. It is important for marketers to have a good understanding about parental influence on children for trying to create brand loyalty because; children get to know about consumption through observing their parents' behaviors and simulating them. This type of behavior helps to develop brand loyalty for these consumers of future by the passing down of product preferences (Solomon, 2004; 427).

While talking about family influence we do not only mean the parental influence on children. Partners may influence each other in consumption decisions as well. Family consumer behavior research has been studying the spousal influence on individual family members' purchase decisions mostly as opposed to household (Commuri and Gentry, 2000; 185). The influence that individual family members

exercise over each other's behavior can determine the activities that form part of consumer decision-making (Cox, 1975; 189, 190).

1.1.6 Marketing Activities

Advertising, promotion and public relations are the main marketing activities used by the marketers in applying their marketing strategies. In other words they are mass communication tools (Ayanwale, Alimi and Ayanbimipe, 2005; 9). They establish the familiarity with the brand and are also the introductory tool of marketing (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 130). As it can be understood from the name, mass communication gives the same message to everybody at the receiving end (Ayanwale et.al., 2005; 9). Advertisements are mostly used to present consumers with decision and evaluation criteria to consider when making buying decisions. A marketer focuses on giving the message of their brands performance which is the most important attribute of that brand for the consumer (Graeff, 1996; 7). In other words, advertising is used to build an awareness of the product or service in the minds of the potential consumers and to establish knowledge about it (Ayanwale et.al., 2005; 9). Advertiser's primary goal is to get in touch with anticipated consumers and affect their awareness, attitudes and purchase behavior. They allocate a large budget to keep individuals interested in their products. To accomplish this they have to understand the reasons of potential consumers behaviors (Ayanwale et.al., 2005; 10), and they must consider how consumers improve their likes and dislikes, for they can infuse strong, convenient, positive brand preferences (Crimmins, 1992; 16).

1.2 INTERNAL INFLUENCES

Internal factors influencing consumer behavior can be categorized in six major groups that will be described in detail in this section. These groups can be identified as; Attitude, Perception, Learning, Motivation, Personality and the Self Concept.

1.2.1 Attitude

"An attitude is an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of our environment. It is the way someone thinks, feels, acts toward some aspect of his or her environment." (Hawkins, et.al., 2004; 386). In other words it gives an idea about people's likes and dislikes about goods, services, opinions, the society and other human beings (Grant and Stephen, 2005; 453). Attitudes are internal influence factors in the consumer decision making process and they can result in harmful or useful consumption decisions.

Our attitudes are related to how we see our environment. That is why they are very important in shaping our every behavior including our consumption behaviors. A consumption attitude can be defined as "an overall favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a product or service" (Jobber 2001, as cited in Grant and Stephen, 2005; 453). Consumers develop some attitude towards the products or services they consume. These attitudes can be learned through the socialization and cognitive processes and they can be changed. They are built on our thoughts and beliefs and they act as a framework. However, changing attitudes can be hard, because they suit into a model and require radical adjustments to change the attitude (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 150).

1.2.1.1 Functions of Attitudes

An attitude has four functions. Namely these are The Utilitarian Function, Value-Expressive Function, Ego-defensive Function, and Knowledge function that will be considered in detail here.

1.2.1.1.1 The Utilitarian Function

This function is related to the basic rules of reward and punishment. People make up some attitudes towards goods depending on whether these products provide satisfaction or distress. For example if a person likes the smell or taste of some food

product, he/she will develop a positive attitude about that product (Solomon, 2004; 224-225).

1.2.1.1.2 Value-Expressive Function

Some attitudes let personal values to be emphasized in consumer behavior (Wilkie, 1986; 283). Sometimes a person may develop a product attitude not because of its utilitarian function, but because of the meaning of the product, in other words what the product says about him or her as a person (Solomon, 2004; 225). A Rolex watch can give an idea about the product user as a person. Rolex in general is mostly worn because of its value-expressive characteristics rather than its functional properties.

1.2.1.1.3 Ego-Defensive Function

For protecting their egos and self image, individuals sometimes develop attitudes against threats and defects. People who feel insecure in social situations may compose appropriate attitudes towards goods and brands that provide safety and comfort in such situations (Hawkins et.al., 2004; 387). Women use products such as Tampax to feel more secure and comfortable during their periods.

1.2.1.1.4 Knowledge Function

The knowledge function of attitudes bring harmony into an individual's frame of reference, whereby helping to organize and structure that person's environment. This basic function is likely to appear in almost all attitudes to some degree (Katz 1960 as cited in Shavitt and Nelson, 2002; 137).

It is very important for marketers to deeply understand consumer attitudes towards products or services. The attitude of a consumer towards a brand has an impact on his/her decision making process (Ross and Harradine, 2004; 14). Positive attitudes towards a product may result in a buying decision where as negative attitudes do not. Attitudes related to the buying and consuming of a brand has a

function of satisfying their target market (Hawkins et.al, 2004; 387). Marketers need to address the attitudes directing the consumers to make purchases for sustaining the target market's satisfaction level. They should also know the factors that affect consumers' attitudes. These attitudes are influenced by more than one factor such as education, economic conditions, family, peer group, age, experience, the law and the consumer's social class (Ross and Harradine, 2004; 22-25).

1.2.1.2 Components of Attitudes

An attitude has three major components, these are the Cognitive, Affective and the Behavioral Components that will be further explained in this section.

1.2.1.2.1 The Cognitive Component

The cognitive component is the knowledge and perceptions of an individual which are collected by the experiences that this individual had with the attitude object and information obtained about that object. The knowledge and the perceptions resulting from that knowledge mostly take the form of beliefs. In that case, the consumer believes that the attitude object has different attributes and that certain behavior will lead to certain outcomes (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 256).

1.2.1.2.2 The Affective Component

The affective component of an object is the feelings and the emotional reactions related to an object. When a consumer is stating his/her idea about a good, he/she is actually wording his/her emotional evaluation of that good (Hawkins et.al, 2004; 390).

1.2.1.2.3 The Behavioral Component

The behavioral component indicates the tendency of a consumer to behave towards the attitude object (Wilkie, 1986; 282). In marketing and consumer research, the behavioral component is mostly expressing the consumer's objective to purchase.

A positive brand commitment in the form of a positive answer to an attitude intent question has an impact on the actual brand purchase in a positive manner (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 259).

1.2.2 Perception

"Sensation is the immediate and direct response of the sensory organs to stimuli. A stimulus is any unit of input to any of the senses" (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 159). Perception is a process of how an individual chooses, organizes and defines these sensations (Solomon, 2004; 49). Consumers' perception of goods or services is important for marketers because they represent the way in which individuals analyze, interpret and make sense of incoming information. (Ross and Harradine, 2004; 14).

People's perception of a product or a brand has a significant importance. Sometimes these perceptions are more effective than the product's physicals aspects for the success of that product. Favorable perception of a product or service in a consumer's mind increases the probability of a product or a service to be preferred. Perceptions and motivation can come together to form people's attitudes (Ross and Harradine, 2004; 14). Favorable perceptions and strong motivation for a product can lead to a positive consumer attitude about that product. Hence, it is possible to say that perception is an important factor influencing consumer behavior.

1.2.3 Learning

Learning is a relatively constant change in behavior as a result of an experience. The learner does not have to have direct experiences, but he/she can also learn by watching the events that influence other people (Solomon, 2004. 83). From a marketers' point of view, learning can be defined as the process by which consumers obtain the buying and consumption information and past experience that they adapt to future behavior (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 207). Consumers' good memory about a product or a service can lead them to a new purchase; where as the

unpleasant memories about a product might affect future purchases in a negative manner.

Memory is a process of collecting data and storing it over time so that, it will be available when necessary (Solomon, 2004; 95). Memory has an important role in learning which directly affects the consumption. Marketers depend on consumers to keep the data they have gained about goods and services, confiding that it will later be used in conditions in which buying decisions should be made (Solomon, 2004; 95).

There are several learning theories, used by marketers and applied to different situations.

1.2.3.1 Behavioral Learning Theories

Behavioral Learning theories can be organized under two categories; Classical conditioning and Instrumental conditioning which are both explained in this section.

1.2.3.1.1 Classical Conditioning

In general, classical conditioning is a process by which a neutral stimulus becomes capable of eliciting a response because it was repeatedly paired with a stimulus that naturally causes the response (Peter and Olson, 1999; 202). Over time this second stimulus brings about a response alike since it is linked with the other one (Solomon, 2004; 84). During the 1920s, the Russian physiologist Pavlov first publicized his work on classical conditioning in USA. With the introduction of Pavlov's work American advertisers quickly adopted need association in their advertisement campaigns. This need association can be used to create brand preference. The core of this simple brand preference-building mechanism is simply to introduce the product or brand name and a specific need, simultaneously and repeatedly and the repetition should be constant (Alreck and Settle,1999; 131).

Mood association is also very closely linked to classical conditioning and the work of Pavlov is bonding the mood with a need followed by the need association. The main purpose of the mood association is to fill the product or brand with a positive aura. It is one of the most popular techniques for creating consumer preferences (Knowles, Grove and Burroughs, 1993 as cited in Alreck and Settle, 1999; 132).

1.2.3.1.2 Instrumental Conditioning

There should be an association between a stimulus and a response for instrumental conditioning. However in instrumental conditioning, the learned stimulus is the one that results in the most satisfactory response (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 221).

Instrumental conditioning takes place in three different ways. If the environment presents a positive reinforcement in the form of an award, the response is supported and suitable behavior is learned. Negative reinforcement also supports the response and then suitable behavior is learned. In contrast to circumstances in which we learn to do certain things properly, punishment occurs when a response is followed by unfavorable events, so that we learn the hard way not to repeat those unwanted behaviors (Solomon, 2004; 90).

Arising from the study of the psychologist Skinner, behavior modification through instrumental conditioning first caught the attention of marketers and advertisers in the 1950s (Skinner, 1953 as cited in Alreck and Settle.,1999; 134). Instrumental conditioning became a very important tool for advertisers. They developed ads that influenced consumers through positive or negative reinforcement. There is the look of very beautiful ladies in the ads of cosmetic products. The aim in here is to make the consumers think that, they are going to look like those nice looking ladies if they use the product mentioned. This can be considered as a typical example of positive reinforcement. The same is true for negative reinforcement. The pictures of diseased lungs were used in the campaigns for avoiding cigarette

consumption. These methods of learning can be the influencer of consumers' future buying behaviors.

Four main components of a behavior modification program are drive, cue, response, and reinforcement. Marketers should be aware of all the components and how to use them to modify the behavior to create the desired behavior. Drives are the main human needs which gain the attention of marketers. Marketers use the tools such as advertisements, signs, logos, or packages which make up the cues. Purchase and/or consumption are mainly the responses that consumers give. Finally the reward (or maybe the punishment) for the consumer, which provides reinforcement. "In this behaviorist model, learning is defined as: the increase in the probability of response (purchase) on cue as the result of previous reinforcement." If so, the probability that this person will buy the same thing on a subsequent, similar occasion will increase. Each time the result of the purchase is satisfactory, the probability of that consumer to buy that product will increase until that person has built a strong brand preference (Alreck and Settle., 1999; 134).

1.2.3.2 Cognitive Learning Theories

Cognitive learning theories emphasize the importance of internal human mental process. According to this view, people solve problems by using information from their external environment. The role of creativity and insight takes an important place in this learning process (Solomon, 2004; 93).

When people observe the activities of other people and record their reinforcement, observational learning happens as a result of this indirect experience (Solomon, 2004; 93). It is much easier for marketers, to see how the consumers are learning vicariously by watching how other people's behaviors are reinforced. In this way, marketers do not have to directly reinforce the consumers. Rather, they can display what happens to their models that use their products or services. Cognitive learning process is more likely to be used in conscious selections where the buyer is highly involved in the buying decision process (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 136).

1.2.4 Motivation

Solomon thinks that, motivation leads individuals to behave as they do. It appears when a need wished to be satisfied arises. The human needs can be classified as utilitarian needs and hedonic needs. A utilitarian need is the desire for achieving functional or practical benefit where as a hedonic need is representing a person's emotional desires (Solomon, 2004; 114). Whether the need is utilitarian or hedonic, the motivation element starts to work to satisfy that need. It is important for marketers to understand the needs that are directing the consumer behavior and the motivation factor aroused from those needs. The reason is that needs and motivation have a great impact on consumer behavior.

Motivation can be identified by its strength, its effect on consumers and its direction, or the specific way the consumer strives to decrease motivational tension (Solomon, 2004; 115).

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Freud's theory summoned the attention and interest of many marketers in the advertising community. It is assumed by advertisers that the drivers and motivators of a customer's preference are based on the id, in other words on the subconscious level of the customers mind. Consequently, consumers would not know exactly why they considered a given preference consciously, and could not possibly state their true motives, even if they were persuaded to do so. The only way to develop consumer preferences is to inspirit subconscious drives, therefore motivation research is demanded to find out subconscious desires (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 133).

Figure 1.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs


```
                    /\
                   /  \
                  / Self \
                 /Actualization\
                /   Needs    \
               /--------------\
              / Esteem Needs   \
             /------------------\
            /   Social Needs     \
           /----------------------\
          /     Safety Needs       \
         /--------------------------\
        /    Physiological Needs     \
       /------------------------------\
```
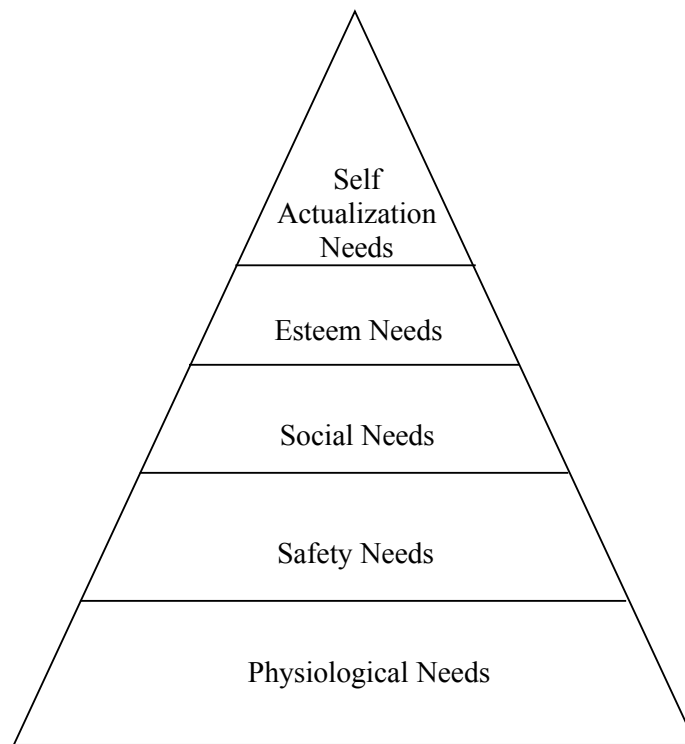
Source: Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 147.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow presented a motivation approach which is commonly known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. He tried to find an answer to why people are driven by certain needs at certain times. He found out that human needs are sequenced in a hierarchy from the most pressing to the least pressing as illustrated in Figure 1.2 (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 147). The hierarchical approach indicates that a certain level must be satisfied before the next level is activated (Solomon, 2004; 121). The hierarchy starts with the physiological needs such as hunger and thirst. The next level is the safety needs which can be generalized as security and protection needs. As the first two levels are satisfied, the social needs arise which refer to sense of belonging, friendship and love. Esteem needs represent the human needs such as prestige, status and accomplishment. The top most level in the hierarchy of needs, involves self development and enriching experiences (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 147, Solomon, 2004; 121, Hawkins et.al, 2004; 356).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an effective tool to understand consumer needs. Marketing professionals need to understand the levels of human needs in order to develop effective marketing strategies for satisfying them.

1.2.5 Personality

Personality is a person's unique psychological mark and it refers to the impact on a person in reacting to his/her environment (Solomon, 2004; 188). Personality is an important influencer in consumer behavior. Many researchers in marketing have developed theories showing that personality and consumer decision process has a close relationship. According to this view consumers with different personalities would be more or less likely to have brand loyalty, buy certain styles or colors, prefer specific brands or stores, or demonstrate other compatible buying behavior models (Brody and Cunningham, 1968; 50). In this context marketers can observe a person's consumption behaviors to have an idea about that person's social identity. We can derive some conclusions about a person's personality, depending on his choice of consumption activities (Solomon, 2004; 154). The researchers have also improved the basic hypothesis that people who consume in a particular way will also declare certain common personality traits, leading to prediction of consumer behavior (Grubb and Grathwohl., 1967; 22). Also the findings of some researches show a relationship between personalities of the consumers and the goods they consume (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 23). Furthermore "social psychology argues that consumers' personalities can be inferred from the brands they use, their attitudes towards different brands and the meanings brands have for them"(De Chernatony 1997 as cited in Quester, Karanuratra and Goh., 2000; 526).

A further development in the effort to associate personality and buying was the progress of the assumption that consumer buying behavior is defined by the interaction of the consumer's personality and the image of the purchased product (Grubb and Grathwohl., 1967; 23). How the person perceives himself is closely associated with the personality, in a way that people have a tendency to purchase brands whose personalities closely conform to the individual's own self image (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 142). In other words people state themselves by

selecting brands whose personalities are congruent with their own personalities (Aaker, 1999; 46; Sirgy, 1982; 289). Therefore the self concept of people is also an important concern for marketers. So we need to go over the self concept literature which is closely associated with personality.

1.2.6 The Self Concept

Researchers needed to work in related fields of behavioral sciences in order to totally understand the consumer behavior. Two conceptual areas within the behavioral sciences which give meaningful information about consumer behavior are self- concept theory and symbolism (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 22). Self-concept is the total of an individual's ideas, thoughts and feelings about themselves in relation to other objects in a socially determined frame of reference (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; 14). It is a cognitive structure linked with strong emotions and behavior (Jamal and Goode, 2001; 482).

An individual tends to link his/her own capabilities, boundaries, appearance and traits, based on one's own personality. An individual builds his/her self-concept over time, and it depends on how one thinks of one's self, as well as how other people think of the person and respond to them. Accordingly, self-concept is a set of knowledge and beliefs about one's self that is kept in memory (Graeff, 1996; 5).

A person, from birth, starts to build up several emotions, evaluations, dispositions and perceptions about him/herself as an object and categorizes himself. As the self develops, it collects some values and soon becomes a primary value around which life rotates. In fact this value can be something to be protected, treasured and, if possible, made still more valuable (Newcomb 1950 as cited in Grubb and Hubb, 1968; 59).

People can behave differently in different conditions and for this reason we can say that an individual has more than one self which in other words can be defined as multiple selves. The idea belonging to this expression is that varying character features can be reached or can become differently prominent under

different social conditions (Markus and Kunda., 1986 as cited in Jamal and Goode., 2001; 483).

In literature, there are four different concepts for self, which are Actual Self, Ideal Self, Social Self (Sirgy, 1982; 287, Malhotra, 1981; 457) and Ideal Social Self (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004, 143,145).

- Actual Self: The way an individual actually perceives himself/herself
- Ideal Self: The way an individual would like to perceive himself/herself
- Social Self: The way an individual feels others perceive himself/herself
- Ideal Social Self: The way an individual would like others perceive himself/herself.

Consumers prefer some products because they think that they are compatible with their actual self, while they purchase some other product because they think that they can achieve the standards determined by their ideal self (Solomon, 2004; 151).

Actual and ideal selves remain the major focus of marketing research (Quester et.al., 2000; 527) although there are also other dimensions of self such as multi selves, and also social, psychological, sexual selves and etc.(Offer, Ostrov, Howard and Atkinson, 1988 as cited in Quester et.al., 2000; 527).

The self concept is a complicated structure. It is formed of many features and we focus on some of these features more than others when we assess the overall self (Solomon, 2004; 150). The properties of self concept can be described along such facets as their content, positivity, intensity, stability and accuracy. The way a person assesses himself affects his behaviors so that, the more he values himself, the more organized and compatible his behaviors become (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 24). Even though an individual's entire self might be positive, some specific parts of his/her self can be evaluated more positively (Solomon, 2004; 150). Self esteem assigns positive part of an individual's self concept (Solomon, 2004; 151). People with high self esteem have high confidence and they believe that they can perform well. On the other hand people with low self esteem do not expect to be successful, and they fear to fail. Marketing communication may have an influence on the

consumer's self esteem. For example "self esteem advertising attempts to change product attitudes by stimulating positive feelings about the self". A way to this is to show the relationship to the product which provides help (Solomon, 2004; 151).

The same way a consumer's preference of goods affects other people's perceptions, the same products may help to resolve his or her own self-concept and social identity (Solomon, 2004; 154).

Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) suggested that the self-concept is formed in an interaction process between an individual and other people, and that an individual will try hard for self-enhancement in the interaction process. According to Onkvisit and Shaw (1987), people develop their self-concepts through their interactions with the external environment, particularly with other people. These people can be the family, the peer group and the others. The self-concept is influenced by parents, peers, teachers, and significant others and self-maintenance and self-enhancement is based on the responses of these people. The person will seek for positive responses from his important references (Grubb and Hubb., 1968; 59).

For an individual consumer and his close references, the perceptions of the types of people whom they believe consume that product are involved in the total understanding of the product's symbolic meaning When an individual approves a particular product in the interaction process, he/she is communicating that he wants to see him/herself as associated with those people he perceives consume the product (Grubb and Hubb, 1968; 59).

Associating the psychological structure of a consumer's self-concept with the symbolic value of the products purchased in the marketplace, is a more particular tool of forming a theoretical approach to consumer behavior. The concept of the self is more limited than personality, which enables measurement and centers on the crucial factor of how the person perceives himself (Baughman and Welsh., 1962 as cited in Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 23, 24).

The Self Image Congruence

"According to self-concept theory, people act in ways that maintain and enhance their self-concept. One important way people do this is through the products they purchase and use. "A consumer's self-concept (self-image) can be defined, maintained, and enhanced through the products they purchase and use" (Graeff, 1996; 5). The purchase and consumption of products can be self-enhancing in two different ways. First, the self-concept of an individual will be emerged and maintained if he believes the product he has bought is noticed publicly and classified in a way that confirms and suits his self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 24). Self-enhancement may take place in the interaction process too. Products as symbols serve for the individual, becoming a vehicle to cause wanted responses from other individuals (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 24).

Consumers often purchase products or brands that are perceived to be parallel to their own self-concept because purchase and consumption are good instruments for expressing one's self (Graeff, 1996; 5). This concludes in what is often described as self-image product image congruity or in short self image congruity (Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar and Berkman, 1997; 229). The "Image Congruence Hypothesis" expresses that consumers should have convenient attitudes and buying objectives toward brands perceived to be congruent with their self-image, and relatively less convenient attitudes toward brands perceived to be incongruent with their self-image. When a consumer's self-image is parallel to the brand's image, their valuations of that brand are more convenient (Graeff, 1996; 5). "Self image congruity is made up of two components, namely product image and self image" (Quester et.al., 2000; 525). Sirgy defends the idea that products and services also have images just like people do. The personality images that the products have can be defined as a set of features such as friendly, modern and etc. These personality traits of the products are differentiated from the functional features of the product (Sirgy, 1985; 195).

According to the Self –Image Congruity hypothesis, in some forms of consumer behavior which are particularly expressive, the consumer wants other

people to know the type of person he thinks himself to be. Brands, products or suppliers of specific services transfer diverse images to the consumers probably in the same cognitive space that involves the consumer's self image. Consumers then select products, brands and suppliers suitable with their self image (Quester et.al., 2000; 527).

The purpose of this study is to find out the relation between the consumers' self image and their brand preferences. The first section of the study covers the literature about main influences on consumer behavior. The self concept is one of those influences as suggested in this paper. A broad literature about the "brand" is reviewed in the second chapter. At the end of the chapter, the relationship between the self image and brand preferences is explained in detail.

CHAPTER 2
THE CONCEPT OF BRAND

The main aim of this thesis is to identify impact of consumers' self images on their brand preferences. Thus, for analyzing this relationship, it is necessary to understand the term brand and all its elements. Numerous researchers have studies about brand. Therefore a very large literature lies beyond this concept. This section focuses on the term brand and its components. In the marketing literature brand is defined by many researchers. It is necessary to understand these definitions and what lies beneath them.

2.1 THE DEFINITION OF BRAND

Brands play a major role in consumer marketing in today's competitive environment. Brands help to create long term relationships with the consumer. Building long term consistent relationships between the consumer and the brand is very important for existence in the market. For this reason, companies invest millions of dollars in their branding strategies. While some of them succeed, some others fail or some manage to stay in the global market.

Brands have been present for a long time in history. Literally, they have been present for differentiating one good from another (Njite, 2005; 19, 20). According to the American Marketing Association, "a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers to differentiate them from those of competition" (Keller, 2003; 3).

A brand is the consumer's anticipation for a single and defined experience, or for a specific sole benefit attainable only through consumption or ownership of a certain good or service produced by a specific company. The expectations of consumers are upheld by the marketer's coherent management of a business plan offering the consumer with a sole benefit or with a unique way to obtain a benefit.

This concept is the brand strategy that commits benefits to the target consumers (Herman, 2003 as cited in Şen, 2006; 3).

According to the definition of AMA, a brand can be created by choosing a name, logo, symbol, package, design or other feature, that specifies a product and differentiate it from others. These different elements that specify and distinguish the brand from others are called the brand elements (Keller, 2003; 3).

Branding is very important for businesses in today's economy. In fact, the brand of a company is the most important capital of that business. Producers are forced to create very strong brands because of the competitive pressure and ever changing consumer needs (Uztuğ, 2002; 20). Branding is important for the whole organization of a business, but the main concern of brand is for the marketing function of that business. In fact, it is possible to say that branding is the core of marketing. The ability in creating, managing, protecting and enhancing a brand makes a distinction among professional marketers (Kotler, 2003; 48).

In history, real estate, tangible assets, the plants and the equipment were considered to be the most important components of the value of a company. However, in today's competing business environment, beyond the business itself and all the assets it has, what consumers think about and how they perceive the company is more important in creating the real value of that business (Kapferer, 1992; 1). Firms gain a lot of advantages from developing a prominent brand like, leveraging power, desirable partnerships, consumer loyalty for the company, favorable affects on attitudes of consumers, price, stability and demand (Uztuğ, 2002; 20, 21).

There is a clear distinction between the product and the brand. Product which is a part of the marketing mix is something that goes through a chemical, technical or a physical process and then is presented to the market. It offers some functional benefits to the consumer where as the brand offers more than that because brand is a name, symbol or a design that gives more value to the product. In other words, product is something produced but brand is something created (Aktuğlu, 2004; 14). According to Kapferer (1992, 2), what the company produces is the product, what

the consumer buys is the brand. A product is something produced with the purpose of functioning for some reason and it takes place in reality, where as a brand means more than a functional benefit for a consumer, and it takes place in people's minds (Hawley, 2000 as cited in Bohrer, 2007; 31, 32). Another definition of brand mentions that it is an accumulation of consumers' perceptions in their minds (Bates 2002 as cited in Njite, 2005; 21). Brand can be defined as the total of all positive or negative emotions and thoughts that people have about a firm, a good or a service (Mc Namara, 2005 as cited in Njite, 2005; 21).

According to Doyle, "Brands are at the very heart of marketing. When a company creates a strong brand, it attracts customer preference and builds a defensive wall against competition" (Doyle and Dibb, 2001; as cited in Grant and Stephen 2005; 455). A marketer does not only aim to make a sale to a customer. His/ her main objective is to build a strong, permanent relationship between the brand and a consumer group and to create a strong bond that connects them (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 130). For this reason, the marketers promise to offer certain set of traits, benefits and services to the consumers. In other words, they should consider that, they are declaring a contract to the consumer about the performance of their brand (Kotler, 2003; 420).

Brands represent the firms and the products that they are attached to. They also reflect the image of a specific brand. Beyond being only a symbol or a name, they are actually expressing the thoughts and feelings of consumers about a specific product and the company that is producing it. Not only the shape, the structure or the package but everything attached to a brand takes place in the term brand (Aktuğlu, 2004; 12).

Brand as being the core of marketing has some functions which offer several benefits both for firms and for consumers. The importance of brands for consumers and for companies lies under these benefits.

Table 2.1 Importance of Brands

CONSUMERS' ASPECT	MANUFACTURERS' ASPECT
Identification of source of the product	Means of identification to simplify handling or tracing
Assignment of responsibility to product maker	Means of legally protecting unique features
Risk reducer	Signal of quality level to satisfied customers
Promise, bond or pact with maker of the product	Means of endowing products with unique associations
Search cost to reducer	Source of competitive advantage
Symbolic device	Source of financial returns
Signal of quality	

Source: Keller, 1998; 7.

Table 2.1 summarizes the importance of brands both from the consumer's perspective and the producer's perspective. A brand identifies the producer company of the product. By doing so, it assigns some responsibility to that producer. It is the most important function of a brand (Keller, 2003; 9). In this way, by avoiding the supply of identical products by other competitors, the brand protects the customer and the producer of a specific product (Aaker, 1991; 7). In other words by its distinction function, the brand provides a protection benefit both for consumers and for firms. Another benefit it offers for firms is that it enables the companies to have a competitive advantage over others. This in turn become a financial outcome for companies because a strong brand with competitive advantage can capture a big portion of the market.

A brand also guarantees to provide value and quality to the consumer. A brand must play a distinctive role among other competitors and should offer an advantage to the consumer in order to be successful. The more it gives what it promises to give, the more satisfied consumers will be recommending it to other consumers (Grant and Stephen, 2005; 455). By doing so, it gives a reason to a customer for choosing and consuming it and this reason is something hard to be copied by others (Barney 1991 as cited in Lee, 2000; 13).

More important, a brand carries a special meaning. Consumers have knowledge about the brand depending on their past experiences, and they know

which brands fulfill their needs and wants. Thus, this eliminates the need to spend a lot of effort in making a product decision (Keller, 2003; 9).

The brands and prices enable the products to eliminate uncertainty. Price measures the brand's monetary value. Brand identifies the product itself and shows the dimensions of its differences which are its functional value, pleasure value, and the symbolic value as a reflection of the buyer's self-image (Kapferer, 1992; 2). "Brands can serve as symbolic devices allowing consumers to project their self image." In other words, particular brands are related with being consumed by particular types of people. Using such brands is a means by which consumers can communicate to others, or to themselves, the kind of people they are or would like to be (Keller, 2003; 10). Consumers enhance their self images by the consumption of specific brands. This leads to a relationship between the brand and the consumer's self image which is the main subject of this research paper and will be explained in detail and tested in the following sections.

"Brands identify, guarantee, structure and stabilize supply. They draw their value from their capacity to reduce risk and uncertainty" In the rapidly changing environment, brands offer the benefit of stability (Kapferer, 1992; 3).

Brand managers should aim to strengthen their brand because strong brands are able to create maintainable differential advantages (Doyle, 1990; 6). They may improve market shares, expand profits, allow organizations to charge higher prices and establish customer loyalty. Strong brands are a company's valuable assets (Lee, 2000; 13). The success of strong brands on the long term does not depend on the number of consumers that buy it once, but it depends on the number of consumers who become regular buyers of the brand (Odin, Odin and Florance; 1999 as cited in Şen, 2006; 4). Regular consumption of a brand leads to the brand loyalty concept which is a very important element of a brand value. Brand managers should be concentrating on building long term relations with their consumers for strengthening their brands. Brand loyalty concept will be discussed in more detail in the following parts.

2.2 BRAND EQUITY

A brand name gives value to a product or service. This added value is commonly known as the brand equity (Aaker, 1996; 8). However, the added value can exist for the investor, for the manufacturer, and for the retailer only if the consumer perceives it (Crimmins, 1992; 11). A consumer creates a brand value in his/her mind and he/she translates it into choice behavior. It is very important for marketers to understand this process (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble and Donthu, 1995; 26). There is a huge variety of brands in the market both in terms of their quantity and their value. Not every brand has the same value in the minds of the consumers. While, some brands are not known by many people in the market, some create have high brand awareness in consumers' minds on the. On the other hand, some brands have the power to create loyalty over their consumers. Brand equity is related to the consumers' valuation of the brand and brands' ability to create awareness and loyalty in the market.

Brand equity has been defined by many researchers in the literature. According to Aaker, "Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers." (Aaker, 1991; 15, 16).

Another definition of brand equity made by Peter Farquhar states that brand equity is the set of associations and behaviors on the part of the brand's customers, channel members, and parent corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name and that gives the brand a strong, sustainable, and differentiated advantage over competitors (Farquhar, 1989; 24, 25).

Brand equity has become a very important marketing concept in the 1980s. The arising of this new term was good for marketers because, the importance of brand has increased in the marketing strategies which provided more focus on managerial interest and research (Keller, 2003; 42). Marketers paid more attention to the brand equity concept because it has started to be viewed as a valuable asset of the

company. Brand equity resulting in the increase of consumers' preference for one product over the identical other, (Kotler, 2003; 422) started to play the significant role of brand for building marketing strategies. The knowledge that has been created about the brand in consumers' minds from the firm's investment in previous marketing programs is a firm's most valuable asset for enhancing marketing productivity (Keller, 1993; 2). The principles of brand management are actually the basis of the brand equity concept (Keller, 2003; 42).

Figure 2.1 Brand Equity
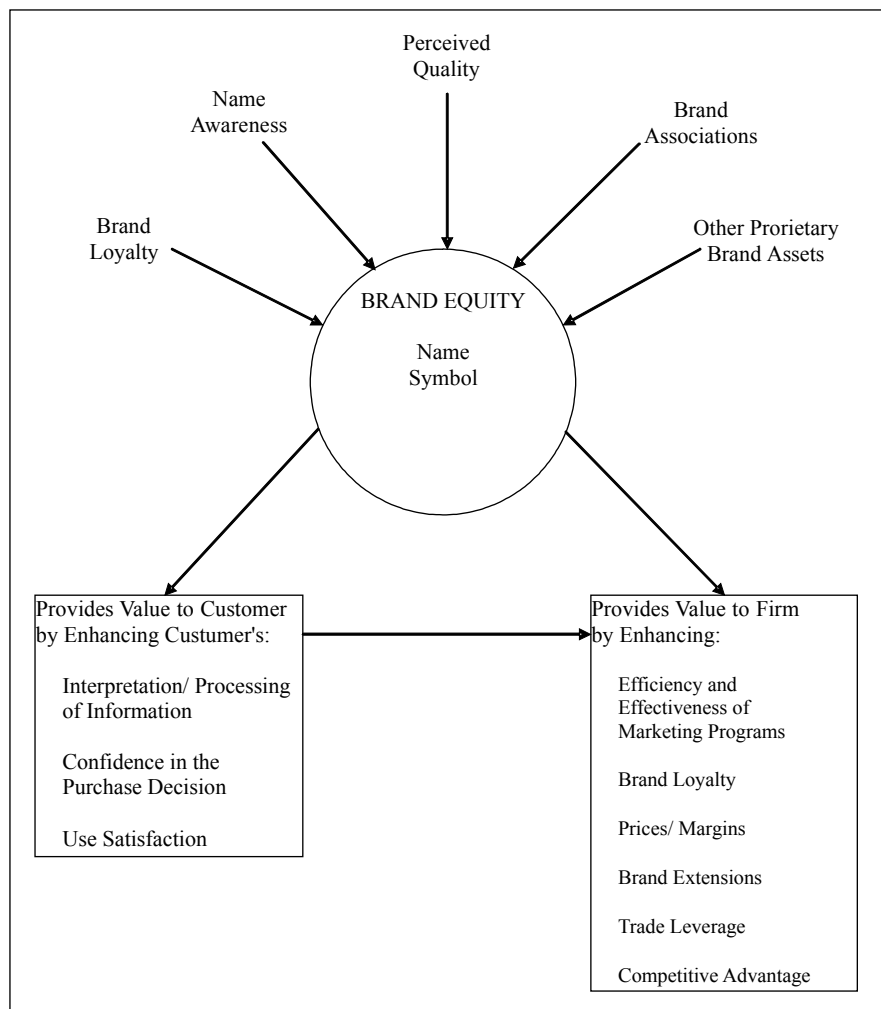
Source: Aaker, 1991; 17.

Aaker's (1991) model of brand equity in Figure 2.1 displays the five components of brand equity, which are brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived

quality, brand associations and proprietary assets. His work proposes that, brand provides value for the consumers, by interpreting and processing information about products and brands, by influencing the consumers' confidence in purchase decisions due to the past experiences and enhancing consumers' satisfaction level (Aaker, 1991; 16).

Brand can create value to the firm by creating value for the consumers. Brand equity can capture new consumers and sustain the old consumer potential. Also the brand awareness, perceived quality and other brand associations can influence the brand loyalty of the consumers. While creating value for the consumers, brand value can provide competitive advantage for the firm, which can build some barriers for the competitors (Aaker, 1991; 17, 18).

Brand equity can be viewed as an opportunity for marketers to be a basis for strategic decision making process. In addition to problem solving, brand equity can generate information to top management while making strategic decisions (Bohrer, 2007; 29). This information source should be carefully managed, so that it does not depreciate. A careful attention should be given for maintaining and enhancing the elements of the brand equity (Kotler, 2003; 423).

Each strong brand is representing the group of loyal consumers actually. Brand equity is the main contributor to the customer equity (Kotler, 2003; 423). Understanding what the consumer wants and needs and developing tools for consumer satisfaction are the major functions of marketing (Keller, 2003; 59). The appropriate thing to do is to extend the customer lifetime value with brand management functioning as an instrument (Kotler, 2003; 423). To be able to succeed in that, marketers need to approach the brand equity concept from the consumer's viewpoint. The model approaching the brand equity from the consumer's point of view is called the customer based brand equity in literature (Keller, 2003; 59).

2.2.1 Customer Based Brand Equity

Basically the Customer Based Brand Equity can be defined as the added value of the brand to the consumer (Bohrer, 2007; 38). The model interprets brand equity from the consumer's point of view, whether it is a person or an organization. The basic assumption of the CBBE model is that, the brand's power underlies the consumers' past experiences about that brand (Keller, 2003; 59). The reason is that, consumers' past experiences with the brand directly affects the future relationship of the brand and the consumer. The consumer's perceptions about the brand are the main determinants of the brand equity.

The CBBE can be defined as the distinguishing influence that brand knowledge has on consumer reactions to the marketing of that brand. When a consumer responds favorably to a good, it is possible to say that, the brand has a positive CBBE (Keller, 2003; 60). If the consumer's evaluation of the brand is unfavorable, then the brand has a negative CBBE.

Brand equity can be grouped into five categories such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations (Aaker, 1991; 17) and brand image (Keller, 2003; 70). "Among all, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand image are the important components of customer-based brand equity" (Guris, Metin and Çağlayan, 2006; 450). Brand awareness is also an important element of the CBBE. Some consumers have high awareness of a brand. They are familiar with the brand name, and they keep positive feelings and brand associations in their minds about that brand. This situation is where the CBBE exists (Keller, 2003; 67). Another view supports that, the brand equity concept in the marketing literature falls into two categories one including consumer perceptions and the other is consumer behavior. The brand awareness, brand associations and the perceived quality are actually the perceptions of consumers where as, brand loyalty or willingness to pay more for a brand is the behavior of consumers (Cobb-Walgren et.al., 1995; 26, 27). Enhancing both the perceptions and the behaviors of the consumers will strengthen the CBBE. More powerful brand equity will be generating higher profits, greater cash flow and higher market share from the managerial viewpoint. From the consumer's

perspective, it will be providing a strong consumer-brand relationship because of the strong positive brand evaluation kept in mind (Peter and Olson, 1999; 123, 124). The long term customer-brand relation in turn will provide positive managerial outcomes through the satisfaction of the consumers consistently. This is the main point that marketing professionals should be focusing on.

2.2.2 Sources of Brand Equity

As mentioned early in the definition, brand equity can be divided into five different categories, which are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand image. In other words they are the sources of the brand equity. Each of these sources of the brand equity concept has a significant influence on consumer's buying behavior, thus this will be explained in the following section of this study.

2.2.2.1 Brand Awareness

"Brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category." (Aaker, 1991; 61). The power of brand awareness lies in the consumer's ability in recalling "known" brands versus "unknown" brands when deciding on purchases (Bohrer, 2007; 51). For example, while some consumers may not have any idea about a brand, or have not heard of anything about that brand, some others may have heard of the brand but have not consumed any. On the other hand, some may have been exposed to the brand a very long time ago and have been consuming that brand for a very long time. The awareness towards a brand may vary among all these people.

Brand awareness can be defined as the consumer's capability of identifying the brand within a specific category with necessary information to make him purchase. Brand awareness increases the probability of a brand to be purchased (Rossier and Percy, 1997 as cited in Şen, 2006; 11). As the probability of purchase increases, the brand's power increases also. In other words, brand awareness represents the power of the brand's presence in the consumer's minds (Aaker, 1996;

10). An unknown brand is not able to exist in the mind of a consumer. Therefore, it is important to create brand awareness in order to establish a strong brand in consumer's minds.

Awareness of brand has different levels for every different consumer for a specific brand (Aaker, 1996; 3). Aaker's (1991) awareness pyramid in Figure 2.2 illustrates the levels of brand awareness.

Figure 2.2 The Awareness Pyramid
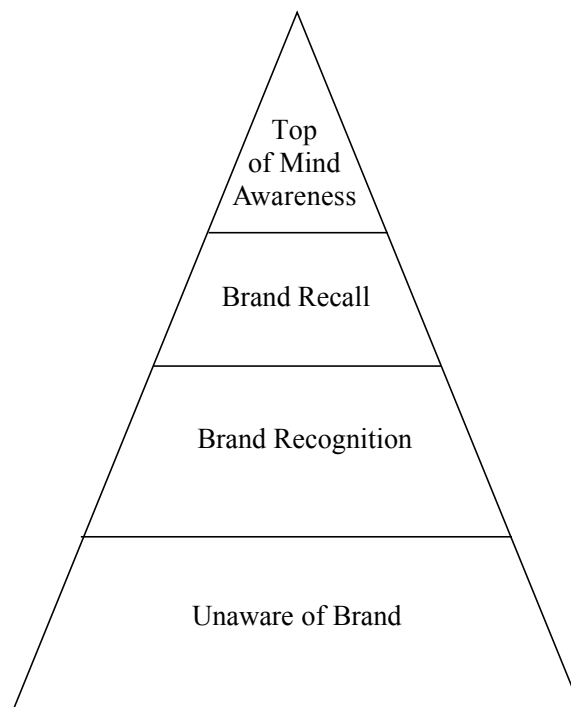
Source: Aaker, 1991; 62.

According to the pyramid, the lowest level is where the consumer is unaware of the brand. The brand recognition follows which is the minimal level of brand awareness. Brand recognition can be described as categorizing the brand for having a sufficient level of information about the brand (Uztuğ, 2003; 30). It occurs when the consumers confirm that they had been exposed to the brand when it is given as a sign (Keller, 2003; 67). Brand recognition becomes important when the customer selects the brand at the point of buying (Aaker, 1991; 62). Brand recognition covers the

physical properties such as color, size, shape and package. It is important to focus on product design, packaging, logos and symbols for it helps the brand to be kept in mind (Uztuğ, 2003; 30).

The third level of brand awareness is brand recall. Consumers' ability to take back the brand from the memory when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or a purchase or usage situation as a cue is associated to the brand recall (Keller, 2003; 67). It is related to a stronger brand position.

The highest level of brand awareness is the top of mind awareness. In this situation, it is ahead of the other brands in an individual's mind. It is in other words, the ability of naming a brand off the top of the head (Fattah, 1997 as cited in Bohrer, 2007; 53).

Building a strong brand is possible by creating consumers' awareness toward that brand. Brand awareness is the consumer's first conscious step for the brand (Uztuğ, 2003; 30). Brand awareness with its recognition and recall components can direct the consumers' brand preferences (Uztuğ, 2003; 30).

2.2.2.1.1 Creating Brand Awareness

When a consumer is being exposed to a product, the repetition of exposure increases the familiarity to the brand, which in conclusion creates brand awareness. Tools like the brand name, symbol, logo, character packaging or slogan can improve the brand awareness of consumers toward that brand (Keller, 2003; 69). Brand awareness can be improved in various ways such as advertising, direct mail, trade press, word-of-mouth communication, and promotion activities (Grover and Srinivasan, 1992 as cited in Özcan, 2007; 29). The possibility the consumer purchasing the brand is directly related to his/her awareness of the brand. As the awareness gets greater, the possibility of purchase increases (Özcan, 2007; 29). By taking this fact into consideration, the marketing professionals should be focusing on creating the brand awareness.

As a conclusion brand awareness can be created by increasing the brand's familiarity through the repetition of exposure which creates brand recognition and by strong associations with the suitable product category or other related purchasing cues which creates brand recall.

2.2.2.1.2 Advantages of Creating Brand Awareness

Creating brand awareness offers some advantages for both consumers and for organization. Aaker 's (1991) model proposes the value of creating brand awareness as demonstrated in Figure 2.3

Figure 2.3 The Value of Brand Awareness
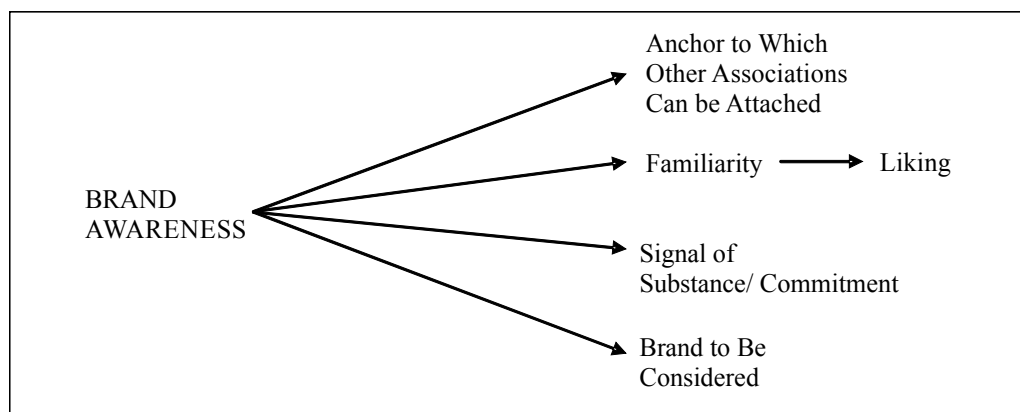
Source: Aaker, 1991; 63.

Aaker's value of brand awareness model proposes the benefits that brand awareness offers Brand awareness can create value in several ways. It can anchor to other associations that can be attached. In other words if a brand is recognized by the consumers, its associations are easily attachable .Brand recognition is the first step in the communication (Aaker, 1991; 63, 64). Accordingly, consumers think of the brand when they think about the product category (Keller, 1993; 3).

Recognition offers the brand a sense of familiarity and people like to be familiar with things. Some studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between the number of exposures and liking (Aaker, 1991; 65).

Name awareness can be a sign of existence, promise and substance. If a name widely is recognized, this is most probably because that the company has a broad advertisement campaign, it has been a long time of presence in the business, it has a wide distribution channel and the brand is successful (Aaker, 1991; 65).

Brand awareness influences the consumers' decisions affecting the brand associations in consumers' minds which develop the brand image (Keller, 2003; 68). Improving the brand awareness raises the probability of the brand being a part of the consideration set, which is very important because a handful of brands gain significant consideration for purchase (Keller, 1993 3). High degree of brand awareness influences the selection of brands in the consumers' consideration set, even if there are no other associations connected to those brands (Keller, 1993; 3).

Consumers are confronted with a lot of new marketing messages every day (Aaker, 1996; 16). Generally, the more a consumer sees a brand, hears a brand or thinks about it, the more it gets stronger in the mind of the consumer. Advertisement, promotion, event marketing, sponsorship programs, publicity or public relations can be the important tools of increasing the familiarity with the brand. Marketers need to establish effective brand awareness because, getting consumers to recognize and recall the brand can improve the brand equity. The strongest brands are managed by strategic awareness (Aaker, 1996; 17). Marketers need to develop effective programs for creating and sustain awareness for their brands.

2.2.2.2 Brand Loyalty

There is a harsh competition in the market. Companies are struggling to collect higher market shares. Consumers have interest for many different products and brands in the market. In order to be able to handle this situation, companies, should build loyalty bonds between their customers and their brands. Loyalty is one of the most important sources of the brand equity concept. Aaker (1991, 39) states that "brand loyalty is the core of a brand's equity."

Brand loyalty can be defined as the consumer's tendency to buy the same brand even though there are other alternative brands suitable (Aaker, 1996; 22). It is in other words "an orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer repetitively chooses the same brands and stores." (Shim and Gehrt, 1996; 313). The most important reason of its existence is the consumer's satisfaction of the brand (Bohrer, 2007; 48, 49).

The most common property of a strong brand is its ability of creating brand loyalty over its consumers. The most important criteria of brand loyalty is the consumers' repeated purchases without regarding the price changes among the competitors (Uztuğ, 2003; 31, 32). Repetition is the key to the brand loyalty. The brand loyalty or permanent preferences for commodities and services often requires that consumers want to sustain the interaction with the brand in a way, that directs to repeated purchasing in many cases (Oliver, 1997 as cited in Şen, 2006; 4).

2.2.2.2.1 The Strategic Value of Brand Loyalty

The importance of brand loyalty lies under the reduction of the marketing costs, the decrease in the need for advertising the increase in profits for the company (Aaker, 1992; 29, 31). It is possible to say that the loyal consumer counts up a big portion of the brand's total sales (Lipstein 1959 as cited in McConnell, 1968; 13). Consumers' loyalty to the brand can help the marketers to establish a more effective market segmentation and promotion. Also repeated purchases are helpful in creating marketing strategies for new entrance of products to the market (Massy 1966 as cited in McConnell, 1968; 13).

Figure 2.4 The Value of Brand Loyalty
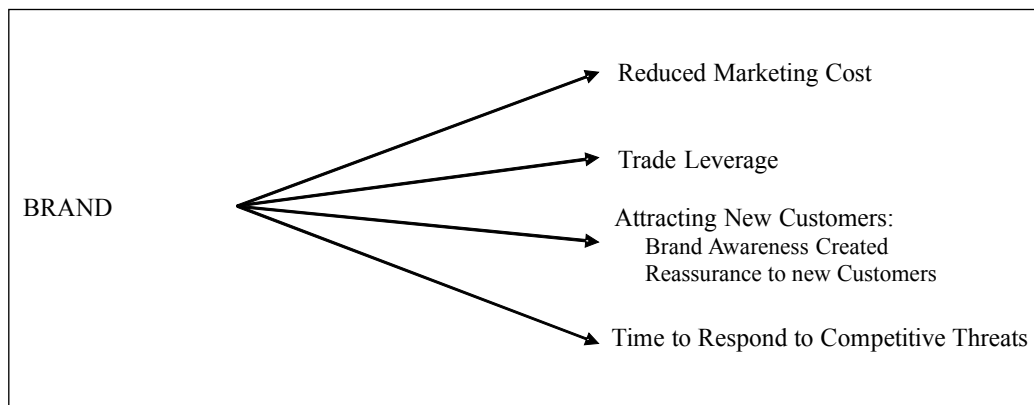
The value of brand loyalty Figure 2.4 presents the four major advantages that brand loyalty offers to the companies. The first and most important benefit is the reduction of costs. It is less costly to retain customers than trying to obtain new ones. Brand loyalty also provides trade leverage in the market. The probability of a strong brand with loyal customers to get biggest shelf space in a supermarket is higher than the unknown brands (Aaker, 1991; 47, Aaker, 1992; 29). The third benefit is to attract new customers. A big satisfied customer base provides an image of the brand as an accepted, successful product (Aaker, 1991; 48, Aaker, 1992; 29). This image will attract new customers by giving some guarantee of the brand. The final outcome of brand loyalty for companies is its ability to leave some time for responding to the competitors and their new actions.

Brand loyalty and all its benefits establish a strong brand. Therefore, brand loyalty should be the main objective of a company for its branded products. Moreover, brand loyalty is an important asset. If loyalty does not exist for a brand, it can not go further from being a trademark. A brand becomes more than a trademark with loyalty. It has a deep meaning. This meaning commits to its consumers. A powerful brand is a trustworthy, promise. Creating and increasing brand loyalty leads to an increase in the value of trust mark (Şen, 2006; 3).

Brand loyalty exists when consumers perceive that the brand presents the right product features, images or high quality with reasonable prices. The perception of the consumer leads them to a new buying habit. Fundamentally, consumers primarily will make a tryout purchase of the brand and if they get satisfied, they will be likely to gain new habits and persist buying the same brand because the product is secure and well-known (Giddens, 2002 as cited in Şen 2006; 5).

The complexity of the brand loyalty is agreed upon by many researchers and they defend that brand loyalty should be a multidimensional structure (Lam, 2007; 9). Generally there are two types of approaches for brand loyalty in the marketing literature The first is the behavioral approach, which views steady purchasing of one brand over time as a sign of brand loyalty (Şen, 2006; 6).

According to this approach, behavioral measures have defined loyalty by the sequence of purchases and proportion of purchases (Şen, 2006; 7). Jacoby (1971) in his definition focuses on the behavioral dimension of the brand loyalty. Brand loyalty, is a behavioral response given by a decision making unit for one brand or more among a group of brands. It is at the same time a function of a psychological process (Jacoby, 1971; 26).

According to Keller (2003) behavioral loyalty is crucial but not enough for resonance to occur. In order to create meaning, a strong personal connection is required where customers should go ahead of having a positive attitude to viewing the brand as being something special in a broader context (Keller, 2003).

The second approach of brand loyalty is the attitudinal approach. Attitudinal loyalty is can be defined as the average consumer's commitment to a brand. In other words attitudinal brand loyalty involves a degree of dispositional commitment in terms of some distinctive value related to a brand (Chadhouri and Holbrook, 2001; 81).

According to this approach, researchers defend the view that behavior alone does not reflect brand loyalty. Loyalty denotes dedication to a brand that can not be

reflected by just measuring permanent behavior. If the stimulus and reward links are not strong enough, an attitudinal evaluation combined with a behavioral evaluation can be needed to specify the right loyalty (Şen, 2007; 7).

While some researchers argue that brand loyalty is behavioral or attitudinal, some think that it includes both elements. Brand loyalty is the degree of a consumer's attachment to a brand (Aaker, 1991; 39). It involves both repeated purchases and strong internal attitudes (Day, 1969 as cited in Lam, 2007; 9). According to Jacoby and Chestnut brand loyalty includes both attitudinal and behavioral elements. Their definition of brand loyalty points out that it is a biased behavioral reaction to one or more brands, which involves particular psychological processes (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978 as cited in Lam, 2007; 8).

2.2.2.2.2 Levels of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty usually generates a strong dedication to a specific brand by the consumer, but this dedication is not at the same degree for every consumer. There are several levels of loyalty, each representing a different marketing challenge and a different type of asset to manage and exploit. Aaker's (1991) loyalty pyramid clearly shows all levels of consumer loyalty.

Figure 2.5 The Loyalty Pyramid
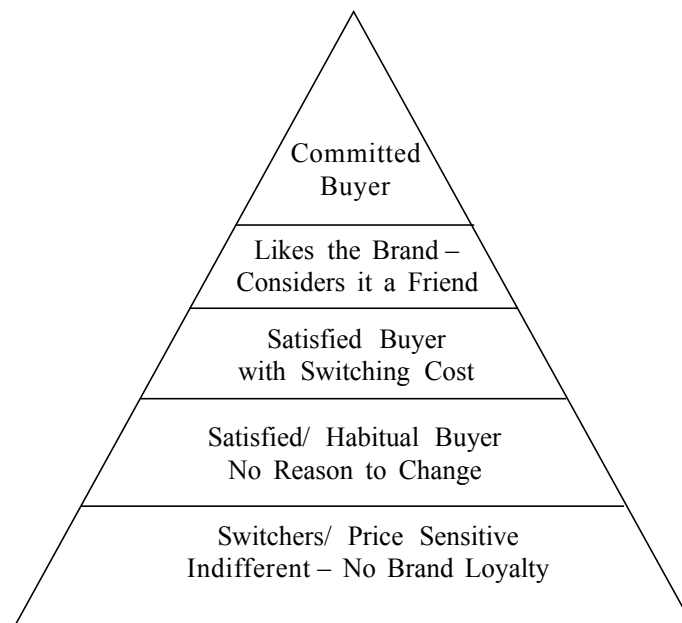
Source: Aaker, 1991; 40.

The lowest level in the pyramid represents the non loyal buyer. The brand name does not play a significant role in the buying decision of this type of consumer. Whatever on sale, or appropriate can be preferred by this type of consumer. This type of consumer switches his choices relative to the changes in price (Aaker, 1991; 40).

The second level in the pyramid represents the consumers who are satisfied with the brand, or at least not dissatisfied. This type of consumer does not easily make a change, especially if changing requires some effort. The problem with this group of buyers is that, they are not easily accessible because they do not want to try new alternatives (Aaker, 1991; 40).

People who are named the satisfied buyer with switching costs compose the third group. The switching cost is associated with time, money or performance risk. In other words, the satisfied buyer does not want to take risk of wasting time or money, or being exposed to a bad surprise by the consumption of a new brand' performance. For that reason they want to stay loyal to the brand they got used to.

The marketing professionals of competitor companies should offer reasonable terms for switching brands (Aaker, 1991; 40).

The fourth level buyers are the people who really like the brand. They are attached to the brand closer than the other levels' consumers. Their relation with the brand is usually an emotional link (Aaker, 1991; 41).

The fifth level of the loyalty pyramid signifies the highest level of loyalty and commitment. These kinds of people are usually proud of themselves for using the brand. They in fact recommend the brand to other people. The brand means a lot to them either for its functionality or its self expressing features. A Harley Davidson driver can be a typical example to the committed buyer (Aaker, 1991; 41).

Brand loyalty is an important source of brand equity. A brand's value to a firm is mostly created buy consumers' loyalty. Moreover, brand loyalty can enhance the brand equity (Aaker, 1996; 21). Creating and sustaining brand loyalty over the consumers should be one of the major focuses of consumers to able to build and sustain a strong brand.

2.2.2.3 Perceived Quality

Quality is one of the important attributes of a brand. It is a significant source which makes up the value of the brand. To be able to have a strong brand, high degree of quality should be targeted by the firms.

According to Aaker (1991), perceived quality provides value by offering the customer a reason to buy a particular brand. In other words, the brand certifies some degree of quality for its consumers. That means, the consumer knows that he is buying quality when he is buying that brand. Once the consumers are convinced that the brand offers what they anticipate, they stay with the brand (Özcan, 2007; 30). In other words, consumers' perception of quality of the brand has an impact on their future purchases of that brand. As the level of perception of quality gets higher, the brand will be preferred more. The marketing professionals should be able to identify

the attributes that consumers are seeking that is regarding to their perception of quality (Bohrer, 2007; 50).

Zeithmal's (1988, 3) definition of perceived quality supports that, it is the customers' perception of the overall quality of a product or service relative to relevant alternatives and with respect to its intended purpose. Kotler and Armstrong (1999; 244) define product quality as "the product's capability of performing all its functions; including the products' overall stability, consistency, precisions, ease of operation and repair and other valued attributes.

Perceived quality represents a company's convincing promise. Perceived quality can even affect the customer's perception in areas like the company's capability to fulfill its brand promise with consistency, the firm's quality level being high enough relative to its brand promise and the brand's capability to stand behind its offering (Aaker, 2004; 8). Companies should be able to describe perceived quality attributes particular to the business and distinguish the cues or the signals that are present for the perceived quality (Bohrer, 2007; 50). Recently, continual product enhancements raised the consumers' quality expectations which in turn increased the number of researches associated with increasing the quality perception and evaluation (Esgin, 2006; 17). Continuous enhancement of quality should be aimed by companies, for being able to survive in the competitive environment.

The brand name offers a symbolic meaning which helps the consumer in the recognition and decision-making process. A consumer will pick a well-known name because brand names hold higher perceived quality. "Customers feel more comfortable with branded than unbranded products" (Özcan, 2007; 30).

As being the source of the brand equity, the perceived quality has a significant impact on the brand equity. As the consumers' perception of quality for a brand gets higher, its effect on the brand equity becomes positive (Bohrer, 2007; 51). The higher brand value, leads to more commitment to the brand by consumers. Other sources of brand equity like high awareness and loyalty to the brand, directly affects the buying decision of the consumers for that brand positively when combined with

the high quality perception in the their minds. However in some cases, perceived quality can act as the only reason for purchasing that brand (Denli, 2007; 60).

The sources of brand equity influence each other as well. It was confirmed significantly that brand awareness affected the brand's perceived quality and especially for low involvement products, awareness had a greater magnitude impact on the quality of the perception of a brand than either price or packaging (Hoyar and Brown, 1990; 146). Perceived quality of the brand has also a relation with the satisfaction level of its consumers. However there is a distinction between perceived quality and consumer satisfaction that should not be overlooked. "A customer can be satisfied because he/she has low expectations about performance level". Perceived quality should also be set apart from consumer attitude. While a B- consumer constitutes a positive attitude for a very inexpensive brand, an A+ consumer can have negative attitudes for the same brand because of the differences in their perception of quality (Sethuraman, 2003 as cited in Esgin, 2007; 18).

Figure 2.6 The Value of Perceived Quality
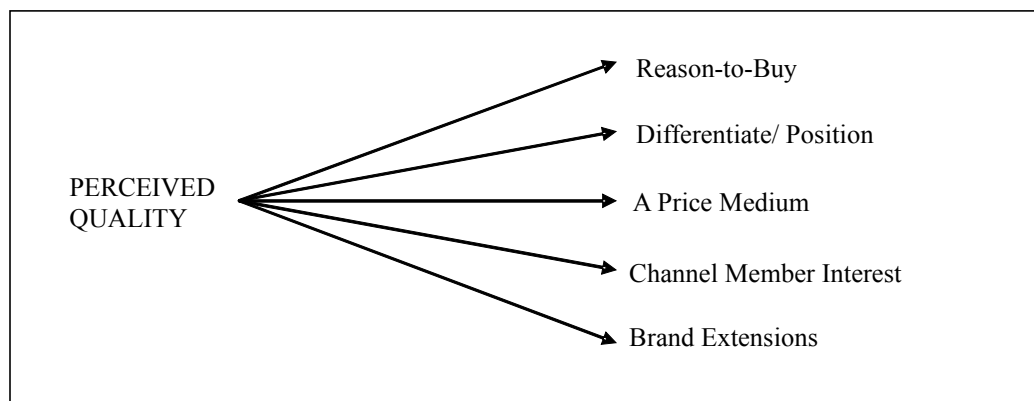
Source: Aaker, 1991; 86.

Aaker's model of the value of perceived quality represents the five significant benefits of perceived quality both for consumers and firms. First of all, high perceived quality is one of the major reasons to purchase that particular brand by affecting which brands are involved and which are excluded from the evoked group of consumers. Sometimes consumers do not have the capability to access the

information about the product or do not have the motivation to reach the information. In these situations, perceived quality is the key motivator to purchase that brand (Aaker, 1991; 86). Secondly, perceived quality can be the primary positioning characteristics of a brand which generates a competitive advantage in the industry (Aaker, 1991; 87). Perceived quality also provides the option of charging a premium price. The price premium can raise the profits and offer resources with which to reinvest in the brand (Aaker, 1991; 87). The perceived quality can be benefited from introducing successful brand extensions to the market by using the same brand name (Aaker, 1991; 88).

As a conclusion, perceive quality is the overall sense about a product. Efforts to enhance the consumers' feelings towards a brand will enhance the brand equity of the brand which will lead to positive attitudes toward that brand.

2.2.2.4 Brand Image

Brand image is another important component of the brand equity concept. It has been a matter of interest for marketers. There is a variety of definitions of brand image in the marketing literature. Many researchers have studied the brand image and its effects on consumers' brand preferences. The following section of this study will be conceptualizing the relationship between brand image, self concept and their affects on brand preferences. Before that it is necessary to review the literature about brand image for having a better insight into the concept.

Brand image is viewed as an important concept in marketing literature. "Brand image is the set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way." (Aaker, 1991; 109, 110). In other words, brand image can be summarized as the consumers' perceptions about a brand that are reflected by the brand associations kept in the consumers' minds (Keller, 1993; 3). A positive brand image is created by marketing programs that link strong, favorable and unique associations to the brand in memory (Keller, 2003; 70).

If the brand's image is well known and can differentiate among the others then its brand's identity can improve the value of that brand. In today's extremely competitive business environment, a well positioned brand image is very important for the success of companies. A lot of attention has been committed to brand image in the marketing literature, and marketing professionals approve the power of brand image in attaining a competitive advantage that can be used to raise the market share (Salciuviene, Lee and Yu, 2007; 464). The image circling a company's brand is the primary source of its competitive advantage and for that reason it is a valuable strategic asset (Şen, 2006; 14). Nevertheless, company efforts to create a good brand image are sometimes unsuccessful for the two major reasons. On of them is the lack of congruence between brand image and consumer benefits expected; and the other is the insufficient assessment of the influence of brand image benefits and brand preferences (Salciuviene et.al., 2007; 464).

2.2.2.4.1 Benefits of Brand Image

It is a commonly accepted actuality that brands have images that are perceived by individuals as having a variety of symbolic meanings (Han, 2006; 19). Marketers and advertisers also accept that products (and services) have symbolic images that; are often more important to a product's success than are its actual physical attributes and characteristics (Graeff, 1996; 4). It is possible to say that, brands have their own images just like people do.

Each brand image should be built on the basis of a brand concept or a brand-specific abstract meaning resulting from basic consumer needs such as functional, symbolic and experiential needs. The long-term accomplishment of a brand's image requires having a structure for strategically managing the three benefits of image (Park, Jaworski and Maclnnis, 1986; 136).

● *Functional Needs*
Consumers try to fulfill their functional needs by seeking for products that resolve problems -related to consumption. According to Bhat and Reddy (1998, 32), "functional brands satisfy immediate and practical needs".

● *Symbolic Needs*

Symbolic needs are requirements for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-specification. Symbolic brands are related to individuals with a desired group, role or self-image. Symbolic needs such as expressing the self and prestige are satisfied by brands with symbolic characteristics (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; 32).

● *Experiential Needs*

Experiential needs are wished for sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation (Park et al., 1986, pp.136).

Brand image can mainly have three benefits according to the needs it satisfies. It provides symbolic benefit for the consumers, if it satisfies the symbolic needs. It can offer functional benefits for consumption related needs. It can also present experiential benefits for individuals with pleasure needs.

One common mistake some brand strategists make is narrowing the view of the brand and only focusing on functionality when creating a brand's image. The result is often a misalignment with the emotional expectations of consumers (Salciuviene et.al., 2007; 464). However, product symbolism is in the center of brand image concept. It was originally defended by Levy (1959), who presented that the symbolic expression of consumption behavior can be more significant to the consumer than the functional advantages of a product. He proposed that consumers are not only functionally oriented and consumer behavior is considerably influenced by the symbols that specify products in the marketplace (Levy, 1959; 118, 119).

2.2.2.4.2 The Importance of Brand Image

The term "brand image" obtained popularity as it got apparent that the feelings and images related to the brand were powerful purchase influencers, through brand recognition, recall and brand identity. It is based on the assumption that consumers buy identification and association with other users of the brand (Şen,

2006; 14). It is also the most efficient manner of talking to consumers through translating the distinct advantages about a brand (Kapferer, 1992; 37). The image of a brand is built in the long term and once placed positively in the mind of consumers; it may become a long-term competitive advantage (Şen, 2006; 14).

A successful brand's image is the only element that reminds of differentiation to consumers. This differentiation is actually created in the minds of the consumers. Consumers perceive the brand superior than the competing brands, and they make purchasing decisions regarding these perceptions (Rooney, 1995; 54). The perception of consumers about a brand and their expectations from it directly affects the power of the brand's image. Consumer knowledge is at the heart of creating a brand image (Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 464). When consumers confront various choices of many different products, they have a greater tendency of making a purchase decision on the basis of their knowledge of product, brand or past experience. In the mind of consumers, awareness of the brand is the easier way to describe them with the certain product. Brand image and brand associations directly relate to a specific product in general (Keller, 2003; 74) or connect to all features of a certain brand in consumers' minds (Kotler, 2001 as cited in Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 465).

Keller's (1993) definition mentioned before points out that brand image is the perception of the brand by consumers. This reflection is based on brand associations kept in consumers' minds. Brand association refers to the collection of other information nodes in the memory with brand node links, involving the brand's meaning to consumers.

Associations can take different forms, and may reflect product features or independent traits outside the product. Strength, benefit and uniqueness of brand association generate different reactions in consumers' mind and play a major role when preferring a brand. Particularly, when consumers engage actively in making a decision in the buying process, brand image influences the buying motive and purchase behavior of consumers (Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 466).

There are a lot of choices of products in the market which makes it hard for consumers to decide what to buy. In such cases, brand image becomes the main criteria for making a decision rather than the product's physical traits. This is especially true of products that are in the "maturity" stage of their life cycle (Graeff, 1996; 4). There are three stages of a brand life. First, a new brand is introduced to the market. Second is the competitive stage where rivals match the functional characteristics of the brand and which requires some effort of finding new ways to maintain an important product advantage. Third is the "image stage" of the brand life cycle where symbolic values have much greater importance than functional ones in differentiating the brand from its competitors (Murphy 1990 as cited in Graeff, 1996; 4).

2.2.2.4.3 Brand Image/ Self Image

As marketers get more aware of the strategic importance of brand image, there exists a need for research into the influences of brand image on consumers' brand assessments and ways in which marketers can manage these influences. In the history, marketing researchers have tried to describe meaningful relations between a consumer's personality and their purchasing behaviors. A personality theory defends that individuals have an actual self-concept based on who they think they are, and an ideal self-concept based on who they think they would like to be. A consumer's self-concept may be used to affect attitudes and consumer buying decisions (Graeff, 1996; 5). While the self concept of an individual affects his/her purchase decisions, brand image can have an influence on the individual's self concept. This may result in the self image congruence, where an individual tries to express him/herself through the image of the product or the brand he consumes. This relationship will be discussed later in the chapter in detail.

The brand managers have to manage the relationship between their respective brands and the meanings that consumers associate with those brands. In this context they spend millions of dollars each year to create and support brand images which can be consistent with the symbolic meaning of brands as well as with consumers' self images (Jamal and Goode, 2001; 482). The main reason is that, the impact of

brand symbolism depends upon the interrelationship between a brand's perceived image and the consumer's self image (Zinkhan and Hong, 1991; 348) because consumption of some products can express the person' self concept. Therefore, the symbolic values of products as represented in their images, affect the consumers' purchase and preferences for a product more than their functional values. Marketers try to construct images for their brands so that they are placed to fit a discrete market segment engaged by no other brand. They show great effort to build a brand image that is congruent with the self concept of the target consumers (Kapferer, 1992; 48).

2.2.2.5 Brand Associations

Another component of the brand equity concept is the brand associations as mentioned before. Brand associations are a crucial element of brand success, brand image and brand knowledge (Farquhar and Herr, 1993 as cited in Njite, 2005; 22). Consequently it is critical that marketing professionals must understand the structure and nature of associations for their brands (Njite, 2005; 22).

"A brand association is anything "linked" in memory to a brand". In addition to this, brand associations do not only occur but they also have some degree of strength (Aaker, 1991; 109, Keller, 1993; 3). Moreover, connection to the brand gets stronger if it based on more experiences or exposures to communications rather than few. It will also get stronger if it is supported by a network of other links (Aaker, 1991; 109).

The meaning a customer relates with a brand after hearing brand's jingle or seeing brand name, logo, or color scheme extensively affects how well brand is recognized. Associations are the shortcuts of a mind to a company's brand promise and a significant element of establishing consumer loyalty. When consumers see a specific brand, the brand association is any idea caused by that particular brand, covering emotions, exposures, evaluations, and brand positioning. It is the shared combination of informational nodes and the brand node in the minds of consumers including the meanings in consumers' memories in relation to the brand (Keller, 1993; 3). Successful associations assist the brand create closer customer relationships

by affecting in a positive way your customers' senses, minds, and feelings during the purchase experience (Esgin, 2006; 29).

Brand associations play a significant role in product/service assessments and selections by a consumer because it helps consumers to establish the kind of mental image a brand stimulates-either positive or negative (Bohrer, 2007; 47). Aaker (1991) asserts that brand associations help in obtaining or managing information, forming positive attitudes or emotions, positioning of brand and distinguishing it from competitors as well as creating value for the company (Aaker, 1991; 110).

The associations consumers link to brands can either be "hard" (specific, tangible, functional) or "soft" (emotional, based on attributes of a brand such as trustworthiness). Besides, some brand associations are closely linked to certain brands (Biel, 1991 as cited in Njite, 2005; 22, 23).

2.2.2.5.1 Measuring Brand Associations

Companies show a lot of effort for developing their brands; therefore it is vitally important for these companies to collect feedback about their efforts and performance. The main functions of marketing are raising the power of a brand, reducing brand weaknesses, and creating and maintaining value to the owner of the brand. According to Fournier (1998), consumers' perception of the brands is the key determinant of the business-consumer relationship. Consequently developing positive brands perceptions is the primary objective of many marketing professionals. For this purpose, marketing observes consumer-brand associations, generally using a various measurements. According to the findings of these measurements, marketers can show effort to form better consumer brand associations. Keller (1993) has studied the measures of brand associations which summarize the measures in the branding literature.

According to Keller (1993), strength, favorability and uniqueness of brand associations are the significant determinants for choosing a brand. In general strength influences the recall of the association, favorability generates a positive attitude and

uniqueness has a significant impact in consumers' brand decisions. Besides, the strength, favorability and uniqueness of brand associations have a major role in differential response that constitutes brand equity (Keller, 1993; 3).

- *Strength of Brand Associations*

Connecting the associations strongly to the brand depends on the way that the marketing plan and other facts influence the consumers' brand experiences. Associations differ in the strength of their linkage to the brand node. Strength is a function of quantity of processing that information receives as well as the quality of that processing. The more profoundly, the consumer thinks about the brand information, and associates it to the present brand knowledge, the stronger becomes the brand associations (Keller, 1993; 5).

- *Favorability of Brand Associations*

Favorable brand associations are made by persuading consumers that the brand has related attributes and benefits that fulfill their needs and desires, namely they develop brand judgments in general. Hence favorable associations are desired by the consumers and successfully transferred to the product, and conveyed by the marketing program (Keller, 2003; 72).

- *Uniqueness of Brand Associations*

A brand's uniqueness is another important measure of its association's influencing the success of the brand. Uniqueness may give consumers a reason to buy the brand.

The presence of strong and favorable associations that are unique to the brand and imply superiority over other brands is crucial to a brand's performance (Keller, 2003; 73). Unique brand associations are distinctive that are not shared by other competitors' brands. Attitudes towards unique attributes and benefits for brands that are more favorable than the competing brands can direct to greater chance of consumers selecting the former brand (Keller, 2003; 74).

2.2.2.5.2 The Value of Brand Associations

There are many associations varying according to their way of offering value. Brand associations generate value by being the source of information processing or retrieval, by creating a basis of differentiation, by providing a reason to buy. They also create positive feelings and present a basis for brand extension (Njite, 2005; 23).

Figure 2.7 illustrates the functions of brand associations.

Figure 2.7 The Value of Brand Associations
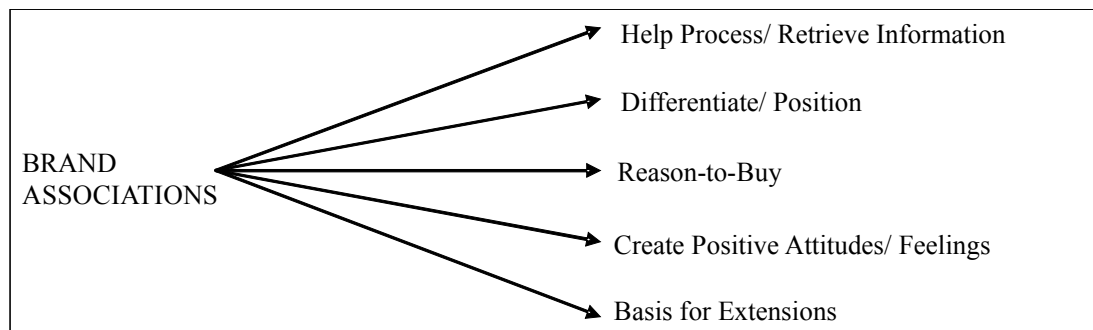
Source: Aaker, 1991; 111.

● *Differentiation:*

A brand association can provide a significant basis for differentiation. In some product categories, products are similar and it is hard for consumer to distinguish among them. In such cases, brand name association can play an important role in separating one brand from another. A differentiating association provides the competitive advantage for a certain brand. If the brand is well positioned, it evokes positive and strong associations that provide a reason for purchase (Keller, 2003; 74; Aaker 1991; 111, 112).

● *Creating Positive Attitudes and Feelings*

Some associations stimulate positive feelings that can be transferred easily to another brand. Celebrities using the brand, some symbols or slogans are likeable and stimulate good feelings. Then the association and companion feelings become linked to the brand. Some associations in general provide positive feelings during the use

experience, serving to transfer and add more value than in the absence of the brand (Aaker, 1991; 112, 113).

- *Basis for Extension*

A brand can have specific associations. For example, Starbucks has the consumer association of young, trendy coffee houses. When Starbucks launches a new product, new beliefs and associations are transferred from the original brand and possibly from the original product category to the new product category through brand extension (Park, Milberg, and Lawson, 1991 as cited in Njite, 2005; 25).

- *Reason to Buy*

A variety of brand associations include the product attributes or customer benefits which offer a certain reason to buy or consume the brands. Some associations provide trustworthiness and confidence (Njite, 2005; 26.). The brands consumed by celebrities create confidence in that brand. Additionally it creates a reason to buy.

- *Processing and Retrieval*

According to Aaker (1991), associations summarize a set of details and conditions that would be complicated for the customer to access and costly for businesses to communicate. Brand associations consist of nodes that work as information lumps (Miller 1956; Anderson, 1983 as cited in Njite, 2005;) or "stores" of information. Associations can also affect the understanding of factors and recall of information, especially during decision making process (Aaker, 1991; 111).

2.2.2.5.3 Categories of Brand Associations.

Table 2.2 Categories of Brand Associations

According to Keller (1998);	According to Aaker (1991);
Attributes	● Product attributes
● Product-related attributes (features, ingredients, performance etc.)	● Intangibles
● Non-product-related attributes	● Customer benefits
● Price	● Relative price
● User imagery (i.e. What type of person uses the product or service)	● Use/ Application
● Usage imagery (i.e. Where and under what types of situations the product or service is used)	● User/ Customer
● Feelings and experiences	● Celebrity/ Person
● Brand personality	● Life style/ personality
Benefits	● Product class
● Symbolic benefits	● Competitors
● Experiential benefits	● Country/ Geographic Area
● Functional benefits	
Attitudes	

Source: Adopted from Keller, 1993; 7; Aaker, 1991; 115.

2.2.2.5.3.1 Keller's Association Model

According to Keller (1993) brand associations can be classified into three major categories of increasing scope: attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

2.2.2.5.3.1.1 Attributes

Attributes are descriptive factors which differentiate a product or service, such as a consumer's thoughts about the product or service and what is involved with its purchase or consumption (Keller, 1993; 4). Attributes can be either product related or non-product related.

- *Product Related Attributes*

Product-related attributes can be described as the components essential for performing the product or service function sought by consumers (Keller, 1993; 4).

They are related to a product's physical form or a service's necessities and are what make up the nature and level of product performance (Keller, 1998; 93). Product related attributes vary by product or service category (Keller, 1993; 4).

- *Non-Product Related Attributes*

Non product related attributes are the external features of the product or service that often associate to its purchase or consumption in some way but they do not have a direct impact on the performance (Keller, 1993; 4).

Various associations can be linked to the brand that do not directly affect the product performance, for example, the color of the product, or outlook of its package, the manufacturer and the country of origin, the kind of store and where the sale is (Şen, 2006; 15).

Types of non-product related attributes are price, user and usage image, brand personality and feelings and experiences.

✓ *Price* represents a necessary step in the buying process but normally does not directly relate to the product performance or service function (Keller, 1993; 4).

✓ *User and usage image* attributes can be shaped directly by the consumer's past experiences and relation with brand users or indirectly through the description of the target market and usage situation as communicated in brand advertising or by some other basis of information such as word of mouth communication (Keller, 1998; 95).

User and usage image attributes can be based on descriptive demographic factors such as gender, age, race, income; psychographic factors like attitudes toward career, possessions, social issues, or political institutions. They can also exist on the

basis of the time of day, week, or year, the location, inside or outside the home, or the type of activity-formal or informal (Keller, 1993; 4).

✓ *Brand Personality*: According to Plummer (1985, 28), one element of a brand image, is the personality and character of the brand itself. User and usage image attributes can also produce brand personality attributes (Keller, 1993; 4). They reflect how people feel about a brand rather than what they think the brand is or does. A brand with the right personality can help the consumer feeling close to the brand, so that he/she may want to invest in developing a bond with that product (Keller, 1998; 97).

✓ *Feelings* and *experiences* strengthen the perception of consumers for products while giving meaning and increasing the consumers' satisfaction. The feelings related to a brand and the emotions they remind can become so strongly associated that they can be accessible during the consumption or usage of the product (Keller, 1998, 96).

2.2.2.5.3.1.2 Benefits

Benefits can be defined as the personal values and meanings that consumers attach to the product or service attributes, what consumers think the product or service can do for them and what it represents more broadly (Keller, 1993; 4).

Furthermore, benefits can be classified into three categories according to the fundamental motivations to which they relate: functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits (Park et.al., 1986; 136).

✓ *Functional benefits* are the more inherited advantages of product or service consumption and generally comply with product-related attributes. These benefits are often connected to fairly essential motivations such as physiological and safeties needs and include a wish to fulfill problem removal or avoidance (Keller, 1993; 4).

✓ *Symbolic benefits* are the more external advantages of product or service consumption and generally comply with non-product-related attributes, particularly user imagery. They are associated to fundamental requirements for social approval or personal expression and outer-directed self-esteem (Keller, 1993; 4).

✓ *Experiential benefits* are related with the feeling of using the product or service and can comply with both product-related attributes and non-product-related attributes such as usage imagery. These benefits fulfill the experiential needs such as sensory pleasure (sight, taste, sound, smell, or feel), variety, and cognitive stimulation (Keller, 1998; 100).

2.2.2.5.3.1.3 Attitudes

The most essence and highest-level type of brand associations is attitudes. Brand attitudes are defined in terms of consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Wilkie, 1986; 283) and often rely on the strength and favorability of the attributes and benefits provided by the brand. They are very important because, they form the basis of the consumer behavior (Keller, 1993; 4). The significant reason for considering brand attitudes to be a brand association is that, they can differ in strength (Farquhar, 1989; 28). Brand attitudes are the most compound of all the brand associations. According to Keller (1993), brand attitude associations can be understood from distinct perspectives. Zeithmal (1988) proposes that, brand attitude associations can relate to beliefs about product-related attributes and the functional and experiential benefits, consistent with the work on perceived quality.

2.2.2.5.3.2 Aaker's Association Model

Aaker's (1991) categorization of brand associations has some distinctions when compared to Keller's model. To summarize, the attributes of brand associations can be listed as, product attributes, intangibles, customer benefits, relative price, use/application, user/customer, celebrity, lifestyle/personality, product class, competitors and country of origin. Product attributes and customer benefits are more important classes of brand associations, even though others are important depending on the

context. Product attributes are important, because the most commonly used strategy is associating an object to a product attribute. Developing such a relation is effective because, if the attribute carries a meaning, the association can directly turn into buying behavior (Aaker, 1991; 114).

As a conclusion of the whole brand equity concept, it should be noted that brand equity has been studied mainly by two researchers Aaker and Keller. They have developed models of brand equity differing in some details. They both support each other's views but there are some distinctions in between. According to Aaker brand equity has five sources, brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets where as Keller proposes a model of brand equity from the perspective of consumers. According to his model, customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer reactions to the marketing of the brand. Brand knowledge is conceptualized according to an associative network memory model in terms of two components, brand awareness and brand image and a set of brand associations linked to the brand image as illustrated in Figure 2.8 (Keller, 1993; 1).

Figure 2.8 Brand Knowledge
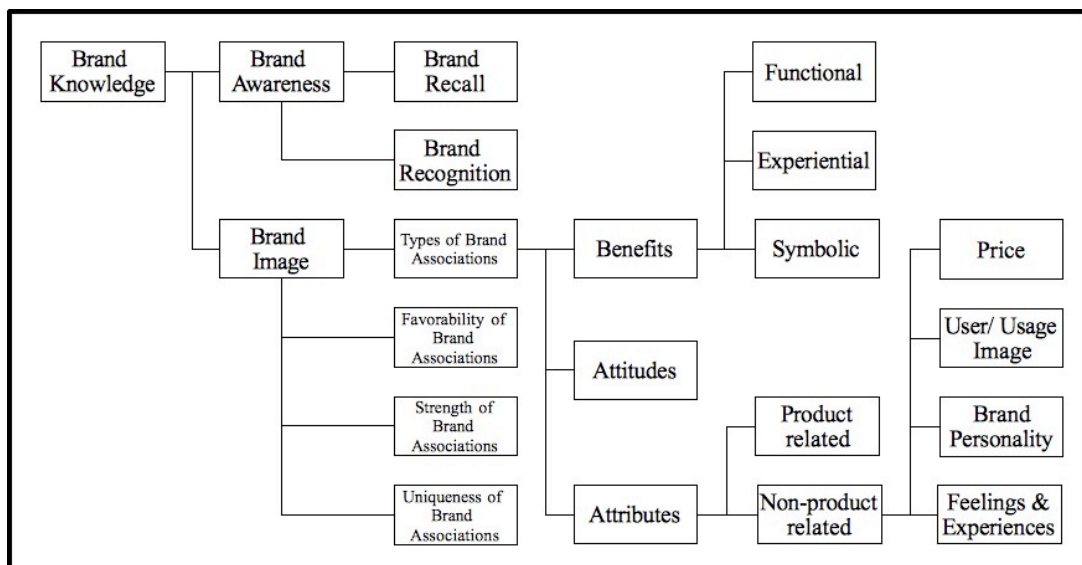
Source: Keller, 1998; 94.

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The dimensions that differentiate brand knowledge and influence consumer response are the awareness of the brand, (in terms of brand recall and recognition) and the favorability, strength, and uniqueness of the brand associations in consumer memory. The favorability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations play a significant role in determining the differential response that composes brand equity, especially in high involvement decision setting (Keller, 1993; 3). The Figure 2.8 depicts that brand knowledge has two elements which are brand awareness and brand image, as reviewed in the literature before. There are also three types of associations linked to the brand image, which are attitudes, benefits and brand attributes.

Figure 2.8 illustrates Keller's brand equity model and summarizes what has been reviewed. This model leads this study to another point, which is brand preference. Previous marketing literature indicates that, the elements of this model have effects on consumers' brand preferences. Park and Srinivasan (1994) states that brand associations have a positive impact on consumer choice, brand preferences and intention of purchase. According to Hoyar and Brown (1990) brand awareness is also another factor that affects consumer choices and preferences. Attitudes, brand image benefits and brand attributes are also main influences on brand preference. Accordingly, the elements of the brand equity sources have influences on brand preferences. In order to have a better insight into those influences, the brand preference concept needs to be explained in more detail.

In this study, based on Keller and Aaker models which were previously summarized, the dimensions of brand equity is analyzed from all aspects and a mixture of both models is used to form the background of this research. In the following section, the concept of brand preferences and the main influences of brand preferences will be reviewed.

2.3 BRAND PREFERENCE

The market is offering many new products and brands for consumers. The variety of options nearby the consumers is growing day by day. In many situations, that increase is nothing less than an explosion of choices (Nelson, 2002; 186).

Consumers need to make a decision among the various choices. All consumer decision making involves the element of choice. An organized cognitive structure including product perceptions and brand preferences can ease the choice process (Bahn, 1986; 382). Brand preference is defined as a consumer's tendency toward a brand over various other brands on the basis of significant beliefs (Mitchell and Olson, 1981, 318). Onkvisit and Shaw (1987) define the brand preferences as preferences for certain brands over a period of time.

Brand preference is normally developed by the collection of past experiences with a certain product, both directly related to its use, repeated purchase or through the impact of marketing communication (Salciuviene et.al., 2007; 464). In other words, brand preferences make a significant effect on consumers' repeat purchasing (Yoh, 2001; 10).

There are three stages in brand management, which are brand recognition, brand preference, and brand loyalty. The second stage which is the brand preference has a significant role in choice behavior (Kutz and Boone, 1984; as cited in Yoh, 2001; 11). In this stage, consumers will choose the product over the competitors' by relying on previous experience with the product. A consumer who prefers a particular brand of product will buy the product, sometimes regardless of the price of the product (Yoh, 2001; 11). From another perspective, brand preference can be considered as a level of brand loyalty at which consumers will select a particular brand but will choose a competitor's brand if the preferred brand is unavailable (Salciuviene et.al., 2007; 465). Another view supports that "Brand preference can be considered as a measure of loyalty which also provides valuable information for customer management and market segmentation."(Gralpois, 1968 as cited in Lin, 2002; 250).

Consumers always approach the marketplace with a well established set of tastes and preferences (Hoyer and Brown, 1990; 141). When competition is keen and the consumers are confronted with numerous brand choices in the market, it becomes very critical for the producers to realize the main factors that can take the attention of consumers to their own brand (Salciuviene et.al., 2007; 465).

A marketer's main objective is more than making a single sale to a customer. In general, the final objective is to establish a long lasting relationship between a particular brand and a certain customer group, in other words to build a strong connection between the buyer and the brand (Alreck and Settle, 1999; 130). To be able to establish this long term relationship, marketers need to understand how the brand preferences are formed. The main interest for them should be capturing the decision criteria of consumers. It is important for marketing managers to comprehend how brand preferences vary among consumers, environments, and motivating conditions. Moreover, it is more important to understand, which product attributes are associated with these changes (Yang, Allenby and Fennell, 2002; 14). Each consumer's preferences are associated with the perceived brand attributes. Therefore, the importance of these attributes will vary among consumers (Bahn, 1986; 382). For some consumers, the brand itself can be considered as the only key attribute and preference would be based on that single attribute. For other consumers, preference can be based on a combination of many attributes (Bahn, 1986; 382).

The marketers' main focus should be strengthening their brand's attributes for influencing the consumers' preferences for that brand. The emphasis should also be on enhancing the level of consumer satisfaction for providing repeated purchases (Yoh, 2001; 10). As the satisfaction level increases, the probability of preferring the satisfying brand increases. Consumers rarely make completely spontaneous impulse purchases. Even their unplanned and unexpected purchases are strongly affected by pre-existing tastes and preferences (Alreck and Settle, 1990; 130). Therefore, past experiences with the brand and the satisfaction received from that exposure leads to a new purchase which has a positive influence for that brand's preference.

Brand preference is a critical key to the success of a brand which in turn provides several benefits to the company. Increased brand preferences can provide cost savings to a company in several ways. Reduced marketing costs, lower transaction costs, reduced consumer turnover expenses, increased consumer cross selling success, more positive word of mouth and reduced failure costs are the advantages of a preferred brand to a company (Griffin 1998 as cited in Yoh, 2001;

11). Managing a strong brand requires a deep understanding of the behaviors of that brand's consumers. There are many factors affecting consumer brand preferences Marketers should be aware of all the factors that affect the consumer's brand preferences. Thus, they can develop marketing strategies accordingly.

Factors Affecting Brand Preference

As stated previously, the components of the brand equity concept leads this research to another dimension which is the brand preference. It is suggested by many researchers in their studies that the elements of the brand equity concept, such as brand awareness, brand image and the associations linked to that image has an influence on the brand preferences of consumers. Thus, a further explanation of the effects of brand equity elements on brand preference needs to be reviewed in order to have a better insight into the concept of brand preference.

- *Brand Awareness*

Although very little work has been done on the effects of brand awareness on brand choice, Hoyar and Brown states that brand awareness has an effect on consumer choice (Hoyar and Brown, 1990; 147). According to their test, the results indicate that brand awareness exercises an effect on choice and brand sampling. In particular, results have shown that brand awareness is a common choice method among inexperienced consumers confronted with a new decision task, and subjects who are aware of one brand in a selection set have a tendency to sample fewer brands across a series of product trials (Hoyar and Brown, 1990; 147). It is also suggested that "awareness" is an important first step of the readiness of a customer for encouraging him/her to develop a preference and therefore get closer to the point of purchase (Brassington and Pettitt, 2000 as cited in Ross and Harradine, 2004; 13).

- *Brand Image*

Brand image is one of the major effects on brand preferences. A unique brand image creates brand strength and growth. Developing unique, strong and favorable brand association linked to the brand image also provides uniqueness to the brand, which in turn increases the brand preference and purchase intentions (O'Cass and

Lim, 2001; 42). Strength, benefit and uniqueness of brand association play a major role when preferring a brand because they create different responses in consumers' mind. In general, brand image influences the buying motive and buying behavior of consumers when consumers engage actively in decision making process (Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 466).

- *Brand Associations*

    While the strength, uniqueness and the favorability of brand association enhance the brand image, and influence the brand preferences and purchase intentions, the types of brand associations have an impact on consumers' brand preferences. According to the work of O'Cass and Lim, there are differential effects of brand associations such as price perceptions, brand personality, brand elicited feelings, self-image and brand-user-image congruency on consumer brand preferences and purchase intentions (O Cass and Lim, 2001; 41). Other studies also, support that there is a positive relationship between brand associations, consumer choices and purchase intentions (Park and Srinivasan, 1994; 274, Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; 39). The types of association can be classified as attributes, benefits and attitudes (Keller, 1993; 7).

- *Benefits*

    Benefits of the brand are important determinants of brand preference. Individuals consume products or brands either because of their symbolic benefits, functional benefits or experiential benefits. The reason for preferring a brand can depend on what type of a need the consumers has, and how the brands satisfies that need. Several researchers empirically supported that there is a relationship between brand image benefits and brand preference (Allen, 2001; 104, Park et al., 1986; 140). Figure 2.9 illustrates the relationship between brand image benefits and consumer brand preferences.

Figure 2.9 Effects of Brand Image Benefits on Brand Preference
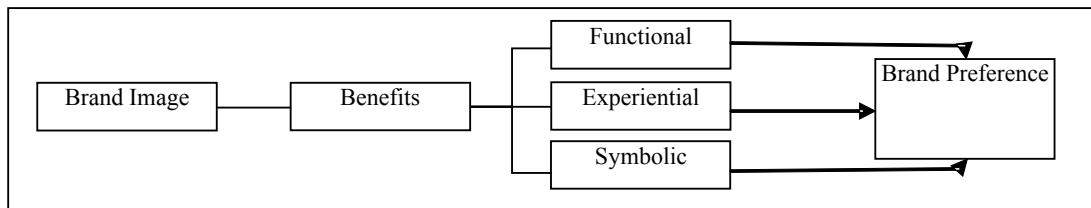
Source: Adopted from Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 466.

According to the Figure 2.9, brand image is a multidimensional structure which is directly related to the brand preference. In the model, brand preference is designated as the outcome, which is mediated by brand image with the three dimensions of functional, experiential and symbolic benefits (Salcuiviene, et.al., 2007; 466).

● *Brand Attitudes*

Brand attitudes also play a role in forming brand preferences. "They are important because they often form the basis of behavior (e.g. brand choice)." (Keller, 1993; 4). Brand attitudes refer to the consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Wilkie, 1986; 283). Attitudes towards a brand can be influential in preferring a brand because positive evaluations of a brand increases the probability of that brand to be preferred, or negative evaluations of a brand has negative effects on consumer' preferences for that brand.

● *Brand Attributes*

Other brand associations influencing the brand preferences are brand attributes. They are the descriptive aspects of a brand and they involve the consumers' ideas about a product or service (Keller, 1993; 4) as mentioned in the previous section. Attributes have been classified as product-related and non-product-related (Keller, 1993; 4). Product-related attributes represent a product's "core" physical composition, while non-product-related attributes represent "non-core" and external features of the product or service that are concerned in its purchase or consumption (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 43). Product related attributes can have an influence on consumers' brand preferences because they are associated to the features of the product

which might be an important determinant of purchase. However, in an environment where there are numerous identical products, consumers usually refer to non-product-related attributes rather than product-related ones while evaluating the brands and making a decision. Effects of non-product- related attributes have also been found to be more significant on product evaluations (O'Cass and Lim, 2007; 43). The non product related attributes are price, feeling associated to a brand, brand personality and the user image as mentioned in the previous section.

- *Price*

    Price can be an important factor on buying decision of a product. Some researches show that, consumers' perception of price can be a determinant of buying behavior and brand choice (Zeithmal, 1988; 2). For example price can be used as a quality determinant when brands are unfamiliar. Also, some research show that, people prefer the higher priced products when there is a risk of making an unsatisfactory choice of a product (Zeithmahl, 1988; 10).

- *Brand Personality*

    The personality of a brand is an important determinant of a brand choice. The perceptions within the user imageries often form a basis from which a brand personality develops (Plummer, 1985; 28). While perceptions of human personality are established through an individual's behavior, attitudes and beliefs, perceptions of brand personalities are created and affected by a consumer's any direct or indirect connection with a brand (Plummer, 1997 as cited in O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 46). If a brand is associated with proper personalities, it can become relatively long-term and unique (Perdergrast, 1993 as cited in O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 46) which can enhance the preference of that brand.

    Brand personality can summarize the user-image attached to a brand (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 46). The aim of marketers is to increase the level of congruency between the brand personalities for their brands with the self-image of their target consumers. Fournier (1998) suggest that consumers tend to build long-term relationships with brands based on the degree of congruence between the brand's user-image and the consumers' self-image. Hence, the more correspondent a brand personality is with the consumers and the higher congruency between consumer-image and brand-user-image, stronger brand preference and higher purchase intention should be found (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 47).

- *User Image*

    Product user image is also another important factor which has an impact on the preference for a specific brand. Images attached to a product reflect the stereotype of the generalized user of that product that can be named as the product user image (Sirgy et.al. 1997; 229). Individual may prefer to buy a brand where the image of the user is consistent with their own self image. Brand preferences for particular brands can arise; because consumers may perceive a certain brand acting as a mirror of their own self image (Mehta, 1999; 81). Several researchers have studied the impact of self-image and brand-image congruity deeply in academic consumer research literature and results have demonstrated that self-image/brand image congruity can moderate consumer preferences (Mehta, 1999; 81). Dolich (1969) approved that congruity between self image and product brand image is positively related to the strength of brand preferences. According to his study, results verify the psychological theories which supports that individuals tend to associate the brand symbol to self concepts. There is a greater similarity of self concept and the most preferred brand images than, self concept and least preferred brand images. As a result favored brands are consistent with the self concept (Dolich, 1969; 84). Malhotra (1998) and Sirgy (1982) also supports that consumers with distinctive personalities have higher preferences for brands that are compatible with the consumers' actual or ideal self concept, which is how they perceive their own selves or how they would ideally like to be.

    The influence of user image on brand preferences is a very wide subject that needs to be analyzed in detail. The concept will be explained in detail in the following section.

- *Feelings*

    Feelings are another component of non-product related attributes. Feelings towards a brand can influence the brand preference and purchase intentions of a consumer. There are some studies in literature about feelings and experiences and their significance in consumer evaluations of products and brands (Edell and Burke, 1987 as cited in O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 47). Edell and Burke (1987) found a relationship

between the feelings and the general attitudes towards the brands, (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 47) which in turn affects the evaluation and preferences of the brand.

- *Other Factors*

    In addition to the effects of brand equity components on brand preference, all the main factors that influence consumer behavior which has been explained din chapter one, also have influence on the concept of brad preference. For example, some studies approve that, group influence has a positive relationship with brand preferences (Stafford, 1968; 74) because groups can serve as a reference for how consumers think and behave (White and Dahl, 2006; 404). Another example indicates that, a marketing activity advertisement has an effect on brand preferences. To develop brand preference advertising, the advertising must be strong and attractive enough to influence and build brand preferences and support switching of a company's brand with another brand by changing the consumers' perception of competitor brands of the product (Salcuiviene et.al., 2007; 465). Culture can also influence the attitudes and behaviors of consumers, (Lam, 2007; 7) which in turn can affect consumer brand preferences. In consumer behavior literature, culture is considered as one of the major influences on consumer's buying motivations and product choices (Tse, Wong and Tan., 1988; 387). Social class can be regarded as another factor influencing consumers' brand preferences because according to previous literature, consumer behavior can be classified by social class. There are distinctive levels of social class and economic wealth (Rich and Jain, 1968; 41) which results in differences in consumers' shopping decisions and brand preferences.

    As a conclusion, there are many factor influencing consumers' brand preferences. However, each influence is a wide subject to be analyzed solely. As mentioned before, an individual's self image is one of the determinants of purchase behavior and brand preference which is the main subject of our study. In the following section, the affect of self image congruence on brand preference will be explained and supported with previous literature findings.

2.4 THE EFFECT OF SELF IMAGE ON BRAND PREFERENCE

As clearly reviewed in the previous section, there are various reasons for a consumer to prefer a brand. The objective of this study is to conceptualize the impact of self image on brand preference. This influence has been studied in the self image congruity model by many researchers. The self concept is significant and relevant to the study of consumer behavior because a person's image has a direct effect on the purchases he/she makes (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; 13). Self concept affects consumer behavior through motives such as the needs for self consistency and self esteem (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 230). Consistency and congruence play a major role in developing a relationship between the self concept, the individual's image and the final buying behavior (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; 13).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, self concept is the sum of a person's beliefs, thoughts and feelings about himself (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; 14). According to the self concept theory people try to enhance their self concepts and one way to do this is through the brands they buy and consume (Graeff, 1996; 5). People usually prefer brands that they think are parallel to their self concept which is called the self image congruity in the literature (Sirgy, et.al; 1997; 229).

From a consumer behavior perspective, the self-concept may direct and regulate an individual's behavior. This leads to an assumption that consumers might be influenced to guide their buying behaviors towards products and brands that will protect or enhance their self-concept (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 25). The consumer appraises the suitability of a product for his/her self enhancement by establishing beliefs about its specific characteristics. Rather than trying to capture the object's immediate utility, he/she tries to evaluate the product in his/her own value system in order to see if it is going to satisfy his/her needs or not. In other words, a consumer does not buy a product only for its primary functions, but also because of its personal and social meanings (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; 15).

The perceptions of consumers about themselves affect brand decisions in that the ownership and consumption of a certain brand with a certain image turns up to be

congruent with their own image. In other words, consumers prefer brands, products or suppliers with images that are in consistency with their own self images. Namely, individuals express themselves by selecting brands with personalities that are congruent with their own personalities. The consumer behavior of an individual is regulated toward improving his self-concept and pushing it onwards through the consumption of some brands as symbols. When a consumer displays a linkage to an object he/she uses that product to sustain his or her self concept (Quester et.al., 2000; 527; Landon, 1974; 44; Sirgy, 1985; 195; Solomon, 2004; 154; Jamal and Goode, 2001; 483; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; 23, 24).

2.4.1 The Effect of Brand Symbolism on Self Image

In order to understand the self image congruity model, it is essential to review the distinction between functional needs and symbolic needs in the literature. Park et al (1986) presents that every brand image should be built on the basis of a brand concept or a brand-specific feature aroused from basic consumer needs: functional, symbolic or experiential (Park, et.al., 1986; 136). Functional needs can be described by the fact that consumers try to make the best use of total utility by buying brands based on the intention criteria like price or performance (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 143). Experiential needs are desires for sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation (Park et al., 1986, 136). Whereas symbolic needs can be described by the fact that brands behave as symbols of their owner's self-concept, thereby satisfying the need to show success, achievement, power, or other dimensions of personality (Foxall, Goldsmith, and Brown, 1998 as cited in Han, 2006; 1). According to Bhat and Reddy "Symbolic needs are needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification, and a brand with a symbolic concept associates individuals with a desired group, role or self-image". Symbolic needs such as those for self-expression and prestige are satisfied by brands with symbolic images (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; 32).

Consumers prefer a brand which can satisfy their symbolic needs. Products are social instruments. In other words they are symbols that serve as tools of communication between the individual and his major references (Grubb and

Grathwohl., 1967; 24). A consumer may purchase products and/or services for expressing his/her beliefs and lifestyle. This self-expression affects the consumers' selection of brands. Choosing brands with images that are compatible to one's own self-image may also show his/her attempt improve an individual's self-image (Han, 2006; 20, 21).

The effect of brand symbolism relies upon the interaction between a brand's perceived image and the consumer's self image (Zinkhan and Hong, 1991; 348). If a product is to function as a symbolic communication tool, it must gain social acknowledgement, and the meaning linked to the product should be clearly introduced and understood by associated divisions of the society (Grubb and Grathwohl., 1967; 24).

Brands and the images linked to them let consumers state who they are, what they are, where they are, and how they want to be perceived by other people around them (Graeff, 1996; 6). Symbolically, the consumer aims to offer the right image and message about himself on the basis of the features he feels comfortable with the product or brand purchased (Quester et.al., 2000; 528). For example a woman can buy a certain swimsuit brand because she may feel that it reflects her personality. As a conclusion Belk (1988) indicates that individuals prefer products that match their self-concept since these purchases provide a means of self-expression.

2.4.2 Multi-dimensional Structure of Self Concept

As discussed in the previous chapter, a variety of conceptualizations for self-concept have been used in the literature including actual self-concept (how the individual perceives him/herself), ideal concept (how the individual wishes to perceive himself), and, occasionally, social self-concept (how the individual is perceived by others) (Mehta, 1999; 82). There is also ideal social self which represents how the individual wants other people to perceive him/herself (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 145).

Based on the assumption that the self-concept has a multidimensional structure, it is necessary to argue which self-concept is more suitable for the self image/product image congruity model. Within the actual self concept, various researches defended the relationship between the actual-self and brand preference (Dolich, 1969; 80). The findings identify that there is a direct relationship between the actual self and the most preferred brands. In other words, the actual self-concept was more closely matched to the most preferred brands and less closely matched to the least preferred brands (Han, 2006; 18).

Grubb and Grathwohl (1967) also discussed that a consumer's behavior is directed in an effort to improve and sustain self-concept. Moreover, consumers not only tend to behave compatibly with their self, but also to look for chances that enhance their self. A greater congruity between a consumer's actual self-concept and his/her image of a brand concludes in a higher chance of brand preference because the consumer can sustain his/her self-concept through choice of the brand. In the same context, since a consumer also tries to improve his/her self through a brand choice, the consumer will lean towards the brand which improves his/her ideal self-concept.

Sirgy (1982) proposes that self-esteem motivation should mediate the ideal self-concept process. In other words, consumers would approach brands with images that help to improve their self-esteem and avoid those brands that do not.

Assuming there is congruity between the consumer's ideal self concept and the image of the brand, Dolich (1969, 84) concluded that both actual self and ideal self are predicting the consumer's brand preferences. Among all types of self, actual and ideal self-image have received the most attention and are seen as having the most significant effect on product evaluations (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 45).

"A consumer may purchase a good because; he feels that the good strengthens his own self-image among other aspects. Also a consumer may choose not to purchase a good or not to shop at a specific store if he feels that these activities are not compatible with his own perceptions of himself" (Britt 1966 as cited in

Grubb et.al., 1968; 58). Nevertheless self image congruity is not always the most important factor in the buying decision of all product categories. Graeff (1996) studied the congruence between brand image and two types of self images (actual self image and ideal self image) and consumers' valuation of two types of brands (publicly and privately consumed). Research pointed out that valuation of publicly consumed brands was more influenced by the congruence between brand image and ideal self image than actual self image. On the other hand actual and ideal congruence have similar impacts on consumers' valuations of privately consumed brands (Jamal and Goode, 2001; 483).

A researcher, Malhotra (1988) studied the individual's social self-concept, how an individual feels others see him/herself. He compared the social self-concept with the actual self-concept and the ideal self-concept, and the results showed that the social self concept is not as congruent with product preference as ideal self-concept and actual self concept.

The question about what type of self-concept is most appropriate for self concept/product image congruity model is still vague. In this research paper the actual self-concept is studied, supporting the view that a consumer's behavior is conducted in an attempt to enhance and maintain self-concept (Han, 2006; 19).

2.4.3 Levels of Self Image Congruity

According to Sirgy, self image congruity results from a psychological comparison. This comparison can be categorized as high or low self congruity. High congruity is where the consumer matches the product user image and his/her own image (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 230). Low congruity is experienced when the consumer doesn't perceive a relation between his/her self image and the product user image. According to Sirgy's (1982; 289) work, when there is low discrepancy between brand image and self-image, positive self-congruity results in an approach motivation that directs to a positive consumer decision making. On the other hand, it results in low self-congruity which directs to an avoidance motivation, when there is high discrepancy between brand image and self image. Consumer decision making for that product should be-

come negative in this case (Sirgy, 1982; 289). In other words, high self-congruity occurs when the consumer perceives the brand-user-image to be consistent with their own self-image and low self-congruity occurs when the consumer finds no association between their self-image and brand-user image (Sirgy et al., 1997; 230).

This relationship between image congruence (between brand image and self-image) and consumers' brand evaluations is illustrated in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10 Self Image/ Brand Image Congruence

Positive brand evaluation

Brand image ⟵——————⟶ Self-image
Brand image ⟵——————⟶ Self-image
Brand image ⟵——————⟶ Self-image
Brand image ⟵——————⟶ Self-image

Negative brand evaluation
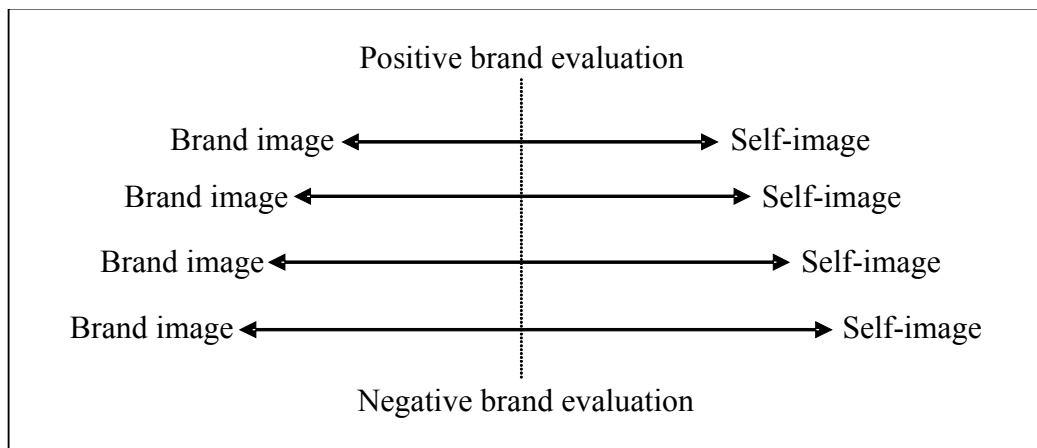
Source: Graeff, 1996; 6.

If a consumer's self-concept is activated (they are thinking about their own image and how other people view them), the degree of congruence (similarity) between the brand's image and self-image can have a significant effect on brand evaluations and purchase decisions. The more similar a consumer's self-image is to the brand's image, the more favorable their evaluations of that brand should be (Graeff, 1996; 6). If a consumer has a low self image congruity and does not take into consideration his own image, his brand assessments and buying decisions are affected by functional features of the products mostly (Graeff, 1996; 6).

A consumer's self-image may be very different from the brand's image (Graeff, 1996; 7). For those people who activate their self images will not prefer those brands with images not suitable with their self images.

The self image congruity model is a significant area of research in consumer behavior. It offers an insight to a marketing manager for building brand positioning strategies. The model can be used to position a brand depending upon what the consumer needs. If target consumers' main focus is the congruity between the self-concept and brand image, marketing professionals need to add a strategy in advertisements that encourages consumers to consider their own self-concept and how their self-concept is consistent with the brand's image (Han, 2006; 4).

2.4.4 Academic Researches on Self Image Congruence

There are various researches conducted for explaining the relationship between the self image congruence and brand preferences in marketing literature.

Many researchers studied on the relationship between the image congruence and the products preference and revealed a positive relationship between them using various consumer products in their research (Sirgy et.al., 1997; Ericksen, 1996; Grubb and Hubb, 1968; Dolich, 1969; Landon, 1974; Malhotra, 1981, Jamal and Goode, 2001; O'Cass and Lim, 2001; Han, 2006). Their researches indicated that, the self image congruity can affect consumers' product preferences and their purchase intentions.

A study was conducted by Grubb and Hupp in 1968, to support the self image congruity model (Quester et.al., 2000; 527). In this study, Grubb and Hupp wanted to test three hypotheses. Their first hypothesis was "consumers of a specific brand of a product would hold self-concepts similar to the self-concepts they attribute to other consumers of the same brand." Their second hypothesis was "consumers of a specific brand would hold self-concepts significantly different from self-concepts they attributed to consumers of a competing brand. Finally their third hypothesis was "If the person's references would accept this association, confirmation and enhancement of the person's self-concept would result (Grubb and Hubb, 1968; 59). At the end of the study, the results were positive and they supported the hypotheses (Grubb and Hubb, 1968; 60).

The empirical data supported the theory that, "that consumers of different brands of a product class would perceive themselves to be significantly different in self-concepts". The results also indicated that "consumers of specific brands have definite perceptions about the self concept characteristic of others who consume their brand as well as the self-concept characteristic of those who consume competing brands." The aspect to be tested is the relationship of consumers' self concepts and their consumer behavior to the actions and perceptions of the consumers' parents, peers, and significant references (Grubb and Hubb., 1968; 63).

Dolich (1969) studied the congruence relationships between self images and product brands. The first one was claiming that self image congruence was greater for most preferred products than, least preferred products. The measurement was done for two different brands of four different products which were beer, cigarettes, soap bars and toothpaste (Dolich, 1969; 81). The results proved that, the self image congruence was higher for the most preferred brands (Dolich, 1969; 82). Results of the research verify that individuals prefer to associate the brand symbol to self concepts. Respondents displayed greater similarity of self concept and brand most preferred images than self concept and brand least preferred images. Favored brands were steady with the self concept and thus strengthen it (Dolich, 1969; 84).

Jamal and Goode (2001; 482) conducted a research study to find out the effects of self image congruence on the brand preferences of consumers in the precious jewelry market in UK. They used the method of Sirgy et.al (1997) to test the self image congruence. Their hypothesis claimed that there was a positive relationship between the self image congruence and brand preferences in the precious jewelry market in UK. They used the brand Cartier for application. Results showed that self-concept/product-image congruity was a very strong predictor of consumers' brand preferences. Another hypothesis in their study claimed that consumers with different levels of self image congruence will have different levels of brand preferences. The results also approved this hypothesis. According to the results of the analysis, respondents with higher levels of self-concept/product-image congruity were more likely to prefer the Cartier brand.

The dissertation by Han, J.W (2006) in the Florida State University, was measuring the self image/product image congruity and functional congruity on three different products. The three products were all ski equipment. They were ski poles, skies and ski sunglasses. He wanted to test three different relations, therefore he developed three models. Model A suggests that both the self-concept/product-image congruity and functional congruity have a direct relationship with brand preference, but are independent of each other. Model B assumes that self-concept/product-image congruity has both a direct effect on brand preference and an indirect effect through functional congruity. Compared to Model B, the main focus of model C is that there are no direct effects of self-concept/product-image congruity on brand preference; but there are only indirect effects existing through functional congruity (Han, 2006; 124). For measuring the self concept of the subjects, Han (2006) used the new method of Sirgy et.al (1997).

Han (2006) divided the products into three categories. They were, convenience products shopping products and specialty products. Convenience products are inexpensive when compared to others, they are frequently purchased and buyers want to spend only minimum efforts to obtain (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 240). Shopping products are considered as items which consumers are willing spend considerable effort in planning and making the purchase. Shopping products are not purchased frequently; consumers make a comparison on suitability, quality, price, and style. Specialty products are goods or services for which the buyer has a strong confidence as to brand, style, or type (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; 241). Therefore, it is assumed that even though both self-concept/product-image congruity and functional congruity will influence consumers' brand preferences, self-concept/product-image congruity should have a greater impact on consumers' brand preference than functional congruity (Han, 2006; 125). In the context of ski equipment, ski poles, skis, and a specific brand "Oakley Sunglasses" were chosen as a convenience, shopping, and specialty product, respectively (Han, 2006; 125).

The findings analysis presented three propositions. First, for a convenience product, ski pole, Model C, which suggested that there were no direct effects of self-

concept/product-image congruity on brand preference, only indirect effects through functional congruity, was chosen as the most representative model in the current data set. More particularly, self-concept/product image congruity was not a significant predictor of brand preference. In addition, the impact of functional congruity on brand preference was a significant but very little effect. Second, for a ski, Model B, which assumes that self-concept/product image congruity has both direct effect on brand preference and an indirect effect through functional congruity was chosen as the most representative model. Even though both self-concept/product-image congruity and functional congruity have significant impact on brand preference, self-concept/product-image congruity is a stronger predictor of brand preference than functional congruity for a shopping product. Third, for Oakley sunglasses, Model B was also chosen as the most representative model. Self concept/ product-image congruity and functional congruity are both significant predictors of brand preference. Though, self-concept/product-image congruity was a more significant predictor of brand preference for a specialty product in the current study (Han, 2006; 150, 151).

This finding is reliable with the results of previous research representing a positive relationship between self concept/ product-image congruity and brand preference with precious jewelry (i.e., Cartier) classified as a specialty product (Jamal and Goode, 2001). This finding can be explained by the belief that consumers use products or brands as symbols to express their selves. It is believed that this intention to express their self-concept in consumption situation influences the consumer's brand preferences. On the basis of the findings of the current study, it is believed that a consumer's brand preference toward a specialty product, Oakley sunglasses, was slightly determined by the congruence between the product-users' image and the consumers' self-image (Han, 2006; 137).

O'Cass and Lim (2001) studied the brand preferences and purchase intentions of young South-east Asian consumers toward fashion apparel. In particular, they used self-concept/product image congruity and some other brand associations to measure their impact on brand preference and purchase intention. The results showed there was a significant relationship between self-concept/product image congruency and

brand purchase intention (O'cass and Lim, 2001; 60). Moreover there was also significant relationship between self-concept/product image congruency and brand preference and other brand associations such as, price, brand personality and feelings (O'cass and Lim, 2001; 58).

There are many other studies made or measuring the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference .For example, Ericksen's work in 1996 indicates that there is a relationship between the self image congruity and purchase intentions of the European consumers Ford automobiles. Sirgy et.al (1997) approved that there is an affect of self image congruence on brand preferences for eight different product groups as explained in chapter three in more detail. Malhotra (1981) studied the relationship between three types of self, actual, ideal and social and the brand preference for nine automobile brands and found significant relationships between the actual self and brand preferences. Landon (1974) tested the relationship between the actual self image, ideal self image and purchase intentions for many products and services like table and chairs, sun tan lotion, TV, country club membership, coffee, beer, imported wine, snow skis, shirts, mouthwashes, tooth washes and many others. Results indicated for some products, ideal self was more predictive than actual self for purchase, where as for some products actual self was more congruent with purchase intention (Landon, 1974; 50).

Overall there are many studies conducted for measuring the relationship between the self image congruence and the brand preferences for various product groups. Their results present some differences among each other. This study is conducted for measuring such a relationship in different products groups in Turkey. The previous chapter explained the self image congruity theory and all the related subjects in detail. The following chapter is based on the application of the theory, the methodology of the study and the findings of the analysis.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND THE FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Self image congruence is an important area of research in marketing and consumer behavior fields of science, because it provides significant insights about the brand positioning for marketing professionals, and helps to segment the market into consumers, who perceive congruence with the product use image versus who do not (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 230). Brands are the very important assets of a company. Building a strong brand is crucial for surviving in the competitive business environment for both consumption product manufacturers and service providing firms. Marketers spend millions of dollars to build a strong brand and position it efficiently. Moreover, they strive to create a brand image that is congruent with the self-image of the target consumers (Graeff, 1996; 1). Many of the previous studies exhibit that self image congruence has an impact consumer's brand preferences. In other words, they prefer the brands, which they assume to be the most similar to their self images (Landon, 1974; Quester et.al., 2000; Sirgy et.al, 1997; Mehta, 1999).

3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

3.2.1 The Objective of the Study

The purpose of the study is to measure the affects of self image congruence on brand preferences. The relationship has been supported with a wide literature in the previous chapter. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, many researchers have conducted studies for testing the impact of self image congruence on brand preferences for several consumer product groups and brands. In other words, this relationship is proved by many studies applied before. This thesis is an application of the previous studies in Turkish swimwear and sunglass market. There are few studies about the brand preference in Turkey. Also, a study has not been conducted in Turkey for measuring the effect of self image congruence on consumer brand preferences for these product groups. Therefore, this research is a distinct study.

To test the effects of self image congruence on brand preferences, a swimsuit brand Zeki Triko, and a sunglass brand Ray Ban has been selected. As well as having functional properties, swimsuits and sunglasses also carry symbolic meanings because they are fashion related product groups. In others words, while providing some functional benefits like ease of swimming, quick drying and protection from the UVA rays, they also provide symbolic benefits to the consumers. Swimsuits and sunglasses enable a nice outlook, with loading adjectives such as trendy, fashionable, chic, beautiful and many others to the users of those products. In other words they offer symbolic benefits to the users of these products. Therefore, it is possible to attach symbolic meanings to their brand images. Furthermore, the brand image/self image congruence and its influences on the preferences for these two brands can be measured.

Zeki Triko and RayBan brands were selected for the application because; a pre-test was applied to a focus group for measuring the best known brand in the two product categories. The focus group was composed 10 people, from different ages and income groups. The subjects were asked to tell a brand name from the two product categories, which are swimsuits and sunglasses. This is called the unaided recall test, since respondents are not aided with several brand names of each product category. Results indicated that, Zeki Triko is a brand, which has the greatest brand recall among other swimsuits. The same test applied to the members of the focus group, for sunglasses showed that, RayBan is the brand with highest brand recall. In other words, a swimsuit reminds of the Zeki Triko brand and a sunglass reminds of the RayBan brand for consumers. Since, the awareness levels of these brands are higher compared to other brands; they have been used in the application of this research.

Zeki Triko brand is one of the best known brands in swimwear sector in Turkey. The company was established in 1958. The brand has become the market leader in the domestic market. There are 22 stores of Zeki Triko in Turkey. On the other hand, Zeki has become a world brand by operating in five continents, twenty five countries. The company produces about 800 new swimwear models for female.

The company has a production capacity of 1.2 million pieces per annum. . The company describes the bran as a highly dynamic, customer oriented brand. Unique designs provide competitive advantage for the brand (www.zekitriko.com.tr). Ömer Baybars Tek states that, Zeki Triko a succesful brand specialized in focusing on the needs of the consumers (www.radikal.com.tr).

Ray-Ban is a producer of sunglasses, founded in 1937 by Bausch and Lomb (www.wikipedia.com). The Ray-Ban brand debuted in with the Aviator style created for U.S.A.F. pilots and was added to Luxottica Group's brand portfolio in 1999. In 1999, Bausch and Lomb sold the brand to the Italian Luxottica Group for 1.2 billion dollars (www.wikipedia.com). Ray-Ban's sunglasses are one of the best-selling sunglasses in the world (www.luxottica.com).

3.2.2 Type of the Study

A descriptive study is undertaken for ascertaining and describing the characteristics of the variables of interest in a particular situation (Sekaran, 2003; 121). The research paper has the characteristics of a descriptive study because, analyses for describing the demographic profile of the respondents have been made. At the same time, hypothesis testing has been done to explain the nature of certain relationships (Sekaran, 2003; 124) in this thesis. Correlation analyses have been made for testing some hypotheses, therefore it is possible to state that, this thesis is also a correlational study because, the aim is to define the important variables associated in the hypotheses.

3.3 THE MODEL OF THE STUDY

The model that is presented to demonstrate the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference has one dependent variable and one independent variable. The two variables that are presumed to have correlation in between are displayed in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 The Effect of Self Image Congruency on Brand Preference

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                           │
│   ┌──────────────────┐            ┌──────────────────┐   │
│   │   Self-Image     │──────────▶ │     Brand        │   │
│   │   Congruency     │            │   Preference     │   │
│   └──────────────────┘            └──────────────────┘   │
│                                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
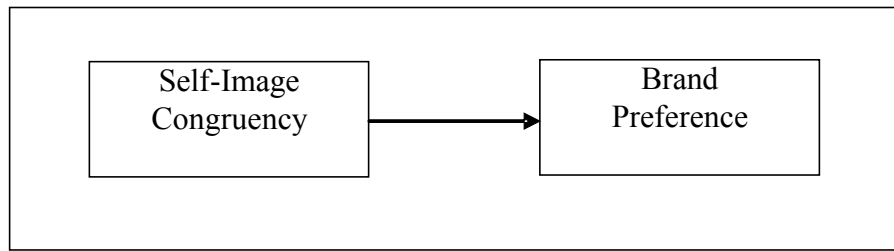
Self image congruence is considered to have an effect on the brand preferences of consumers as supported by the literature presented in the previous chapter (Grubb and Gratwohl, 1967; Dolich, 1969; Sirgy, 1982, 1987; Sirgy et.al., 1997; Mehta, 1999; Jamal and Goode, 2001). The figure depicts the relationship between the two variables. According to the model, self image congruence has an effect on the brand preference for Zeki Triko and RayBan brands.

Previous literature also indicates that individuals with different levels in self image congruence show differences in their behaviors in terms of brand preferences (Mehta, 1999; 86, 87). The model represents the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preference for Zeki Triko and Rayban brands. According to the model, the differences in the self image congruence for these brands result as differences in the brand preferences for those brands.

Figure 3.2 The Hypothetical Relationship Between Self Image Congruency and Brand Preference

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                           │
│  ┌──────────────┬─────────┐        +      ┌────────────┐ │
│  │  Self-Image  │  High   │··············▶ │   Brand    │ │
│  │  Congruency  ├─────────┤        _       │ Preference │ │
│  │              │  Low    │··············▶ │            │ │
│  └──────────────┴─────────┘                └────────────┘ │
│                                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
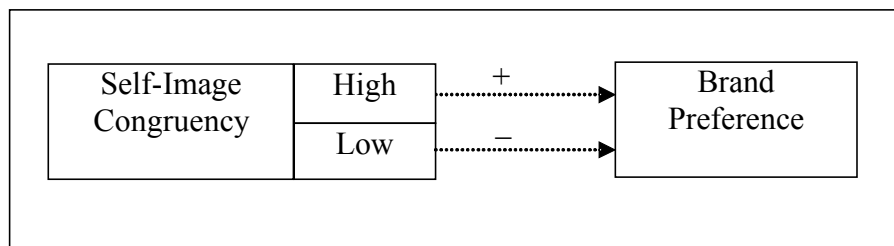
Source: Adopted from Jamal and Goode, 2001; 486.

In the first chapter, some literature about the effects of demographic factors on consumer behavior has been reviewed. While the main purpose of the study is to find out the effect of self image congruence on the brand preference for Zeki Triko and RayBan brands, it is also necessary to find out if the demographic factors have any moderator effect on this relationship. The figure depicts that, there is a relationship between self image congruence and brand preference under the influence of demographic factors such as age, education, income level and marital status.

Figure 3.3 The Effect of Demographic Factors on the Relationship Between Self Image Congruency and Brand Preference
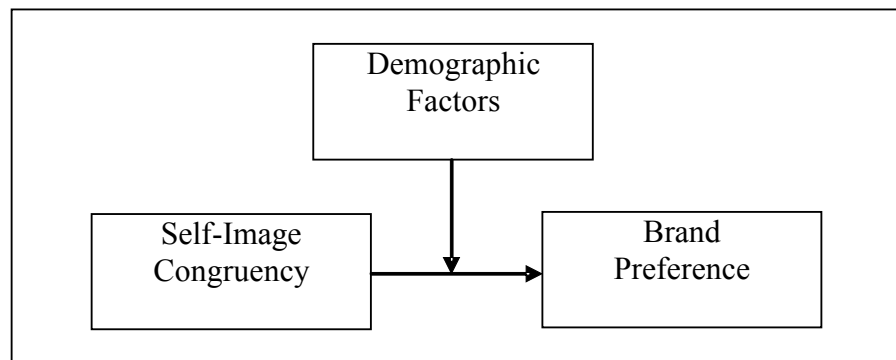
3.3.1 Variables of the Study

3.3.1.1 Independent Variable

In the model used for this research study, the independent variable is the self image congruence. As reviewed in the literature, self image is one of the determinants of brand preferences of consumers. Consumers prefer the brands which they think are compatible with their self images (Mehta, 1999; 81, Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988; 531). This means, brand preference is affected by an independent variable which is the self image congruence.

3.3.1.2 Dependent Variable

Brand preference is a consumer behavior. As mentioned in the first chapter, consumer behavior can be influenced by many external and internal factors. In this study, the effect of self image congruence on brand preference is measured. Therefore, the dependent variable is the brand preferences of consumers.

3.3.1.3 Moderator Variables

As stated in previous literature, demographic factors have effects on consumer behavior as well. According to the model the main aim is to measure the correlation between one independent and dependent variable as mentioned previously. However, in addition to that, in the model developed for this study, demographic factors are also included as moderator variables, because their effect on the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable is measured.

3.3.2 Hypothesis Development

In this study, the main aim is to measure the effect of self image congruence on brand preference for two brands. One of the products is a swimsuit and the brand is a domestic brand Zeki Triko. The other product is a sunglass and the brand is world's one of the leading brands Ray-Ban.

The first two hypotheses are developed for testing the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The first hypothesis aims to test the positive relationship between self image congruence on brand preferences for the Zeki Triko swimsuits. The hypothesis was supported by the literature in chapter 2, stating that consumers prefer brands that are consistent with their self images (Landon, 1974; Quester et.al., 2000; Sirgy et.al, 1997; Mehta, 1999).

The first two hypotheses are developed for testing the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

H1: There is a positive relationship between the self image congruency and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

The same hypothesis is developed for the sunglass product, Ray Ban brand.

H2: There is a positive relationship between the self image congruency and the brand preferences for Ray Ban brand.

Previous studies propose that consumers with different levels of self image congruence show some differences in their brand selection behaviors (Mehta, 1999; 86, 87). According to their study, Mehta (1999) indicates that, consumers with higher self image congruence levels are more likely to purchasing the brand than those with lower levels of self image congruence. Therefore, the third hypothesis is developed as follows;

H3: Individuals with different levels of self image congruency will exhibit different behaviors in term of their brand preferences for Zeki Triko swim suits.

The same hypothesis is developed for the sunglass product, Ray Ban brand.

H4: Individuals with different levels of self image congruency will exhibit different behaviors in term of their brand preferences for RayBan sunglasses.

In addition to those hypotheses, the effects of the demographic factors on the relationship between the self image congruence and the brand preferences of the respondents are analyzed. Therefore the following hypotheses are developed. The demographic factors are the moderator variables and their effect on the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable are tested through the hypotheses below.

H5: Age of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

H6: Age of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

H7: Marital status of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

H8: Marital status of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

H9: Education level of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

H10: Education of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

H11: Household monthly income of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand

H12: Household monthly income of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

3.4 METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Questionnaire Design

The common and traditional methods of measuring the self concept involve the use of semantic differential scales or Likert type scales (Grubb and Hubb, 1968; Sirgy et.al, 1997). According to the traditional method, the perception of an individual about the product user image is obtained. Then the perception of his/her self image in relation to product user image is determined. Then the discrepancy ratios are computed by tapping all answers for each dimension. And finally the

discreapnacy ratios are summed to seethe overall consistency of self image of the individual and the typical product user' image in his/her mind (Sirgy et.al 1997; 230). By making a comparison between the two profiles, the correspondences or differences between that person's self concept and his/her perceptions of the brand are attained.

Sirgy et. al (1997) examined the predictive validity of the traditional method and found out three significant problems in the use of that method. Those problems are the use of discrepancy scores, the possible use of irrelevant images and the possible use of compensatory decision rules.

● *The Use of Discrepancy Scores*

The use of discrepancy scores involves a massive amount of problems (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 231). Discrepancy measures have been criticized as being inconsistent and having suspicious validity. The most significant problem with the traditional method is the fact that it does not integrate any reference to the psychological congruity experience. The method captures the congruity experience indirectly by joining two psychological constructs mathematically (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 231). However a better method of measuring congruity should be capturing the congruity experience directly.

● *The Use of Predetermined Images*

The second important problem with the method is the use of irrelevant images. A list of predetermined images is presented to the subjects and they were asked to identify congruence or incongruence with images that they may or may not associate with the product (Sirgy, et.al, 1997; 231). For example, a subject can think of himself as having three image dimensions (self image) and thinks that he/she has a high level of self-image congruity with the product because he/she thinks that, the typical user of the product has those three images as well (product user image). However, since other dimension of images will be added to the measurement as presented in the list of predetermined images, these images will not have anything to do with the subjective experience and they will not be meaningful and they will make up random error in the measurement of the self image congruity.

● *The Use of Compensatory Decision Rules*

The traditional method of self image congruence uses the compensatory decision rule in incorporating the self congruity results across all image dimensions. The underlying assumption is that subjects experience self congruity with various image dimensions and then incorporate the information across all image dimensions additively. In other words, consumers experiencing self congruity with more than one image dimension use the compensatory decision rule to make judgment. One can easily argue against the validity of the compensatory rule assumption (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 232).

New Measurement Method of Self-Concept

Sirgy et.al (1997) have found out the shortcomings of the traditional method of measuring self image congruence, and they developed a new method to deal with these shortcomings. The self image congruity is measured directly rather than indirectly in the new method. This prevented the errors caused by the use of discrepancy score. Second, the method persuaded the respondents to imagine and respond the product user image right at the moment of response rather than through the use of some predetermined images. Finally, the new method deals with the problem of the compensatory decision rule by using a practice that directs respondents to focus on the product-user image and rate the self image congruity globally (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 232).

According to the new method, the subjects are asked to take some time and think about the brand. Then they are required to imagine the typical user of that brand in their minds and asked to describe them with some personal adjectives that can expressing their character traits. After doing that, thy need to indicate their agreement or disagreement about the consistency of their own self and the typical user image in their minds, by answering the question " The X brand is consistent with how I see myself" on a Likert type scale. This measurement method is guidance for subjects for signifying their perception of the degree of the consistency between their self image and the product user's image.

Sirgy et.al (1997) made six studies with different customer groups, products and dependent variables and compared the predictive validity of the methods. The result showed significant evidence that the new method has higher predictiveness than the traditional one. Therefore, new method s was replaced with the old method for the measurement of the effects of self image congruence on brand preferences. It was never used before. After Sirgy et.al.(1997)'s work Jamal and Goode (2001) used the new scale for measuring the impact of self image congruence on precious jewelry brands' preferences in UK.

In this study, the same scale is applied to measure the self image congruence and brand preference because of its evident validity in the two studies mentioned previously (Sirgy et.al., 1997; Jamal and Goode, 2001). The scale involves four questions for measuring the brand preference and five questions to measure self image congruence. Except the first section involving questions about demographic information, the following two sections are answered by using the 5 point Likert Scale. According to the scale, the respondents answered the questions by choosing most appropriate option, 5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree for themselves.

The questionnaire is composed of three sections. The first section asks 5 demographic questions excluding gender, because the research is conducted only for female consumers.

The second section involves questions about the Zeki Triko brand. First two questions are developed by the researcher regarding the frequency of swimsuit purchases and a specific brand preference. Then the four questions followed, taken from the scale of Sirgy et.al (1997) measuring the brand preferences of consumer towards the Zeki Triko brand. The questions were directly translated to Turkish, because the sample group is composed of only Turkish female consumers. After those four questions, the questionnaire involves the five questions taken directly from the same scale measuring the self image congruence. These five questions are the questions measuring the actual self. As mentioned previously in literature review, self is a multidimen-

sional structure and there are more than one self such as, ideal self, social self, social ideal self (Sirgy, 1982; 287, Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; 143-145). Dolich (1969, 84) concluded that both actual self and ideal self are predicting the consumer's brand preferences. Among all types of self, actual and ideal self-image have received the most attention and are seen as having the most significant effect on product evaluations (O'Cass and Lim, 2001; 45). Therefore, in this study actual self will be used while measuring the self image, by following the previous work of Sirgy et.al (1997), Mehta (1999) and Jamal and Goode (2001). The five questions measuring the self image congruence, aim to explain the respondents' ideas about their self image and its consistency with the Zeki Triko user image.

The third section involves questions about the RayBan sunglasses. The first two questions are measuring the frequency of purchasing a sunglass and whether the respondents prefer a specific brand or not. The following four questions are again the brand preference questions taken from the original scale, this time measuring the brand preferences of respondents for RayBan sunglasses. Finally, the following five questions are the self image questions taken from the scale. They are measuring the levels of self image congruence of respondents towards the RayBan sunglasses.

After the questionnaire was developed, it was first tested on 30 people to see if it was clear and easily understood. Respondents' feedback showed that everything was clear; therefore there was no need to make any changes. However before continuing the application of the questionnaire, a reliability test was done for the two sections of the questionnaire separately. First reliability analysis was done covering the four questions regarding the brand preference and the five questions regarding the self image congruence for Zeki Triko section. According to the results, the Cronbach's alpha value was 90.33% which is very good value showing that the scale used is reliable (Sekaran, 2003; 205). The same analysis was applied to the second section for RayBan questions. The result was 86.81% which is a high value of reliability. As a result, the reliability of the scale was accepted and it became possible to apply it to the whole sample.

3.4.2 Sampling

In this research study, the sample is selected by using the nonprobabilty sampling technique. According to this technique, the elements in the population do not have any probability of being selected as sample subjects (Sekaran, 2003; 276). Among the methods of non-probability sampling, convenience sampling was used while composing the sample group. Convenience sampling is the collection of information from the members of the population who are conveniently available for providing it (Sekaran, 2003; 276).

The sample is composed of women only; because the Zeki Triko brand chosen for the application is produced for only for women. RayBan is a unisex brand, but because of the time and financial limitations, it was very hard to apply a separate questionnaire to another sample. Therefore, a scale for two different brands is applied to one sample. Hence, a chance of comparing the effects of self image congruence of the same respondents on the preferences for two different brands has occurred.

The study is conducted in Izmir. The questionnaire was distributed in Izmir and the in districts of the city like Çeşme, Urla, Foça, Gümüldür, Seferhisar, Özdere, Karaburun and Mordoğan. Summer resorts were chosen for application mostly, because the aim was to apply the questionnaire to people who consume both swimsuits and sunglasses. The questionnaire was mostly distributed at beaches of the resorts listed previously. Also friends, relatives and neighbors in the summer compound are given some questionnaires. They both answered the questionnaire and applied them to their own friends.

Respondents were kind and helpful and they found it entertaining. Many of them told that, they had recently purchased sunglasses and swimsuit since the questionnaire started to be applied beginning of the summer and it ended in the mid August. The time of the application was very effective because, respondents answered the questions with fresh memories of purchase.

400 questionnaires were distributed but 332 of them returned. Very few people didn't want to answer the questions.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The statistical analysis software SPSS 11.0 was used for analyzing the data collected from the respondents in this research. First of all, the reliability of the scale was measured by using the reliability analysis in SPSS 11.0. For identifying the demographic profile of the sample group, the descriptive analyses have been made and frequencies were computed. Then, correlation analyses were used for figuring out the significance of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In addition, regression analysis was made for identifying how much the independent variable explains the dependent variable. On the other hand, partial correlation was used for finding out the significance of the effect moderator variables on the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. Finally the independent student t-tests were also applied to find out the statistical difference between the high and low levels of independent variables for the dependent variable.

3.4.4 Limitations of the Study

Because of the time limitation and financial matters, the study could only be applied in Izmir and in the districts near the city. An application could be made in all the summer resorts in Turkey.

The impact of self image congruence on brand preference could be tested for various product groups and brands. In fact, it could have been also tested in the service industry. The time limitation makes it impossible to apply the model to all consumer product brands and service brands. If it was possible, it could have been found that some brands in other product groups or service industry have a stronger relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference.

Brand preference is a very wide subject. Therefore, there are many factors influencing consumers' brand preferences as mentioned before in the previous chapter. However, each factor and its impact o brand preference is a single research topic on its own. Because of the limitations, it was impossible to study all the factors affecting the brand preference. Hence, only the impact of self image congruence on brand preference is deeply analyzed in this research paper.

3.5 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Validity of the Scale

As stated in this chapter before, the new method of Sirgy et.al (1997) was used in this thesis for measuring the relationship between the self image congruence and brand preferences. According to the model, they designed six studies each testing the predictive validity of the new method of measuring self image on diverse consumer behaviors. One of the six studies was testing the effect of self image congruity on brand preference, on eight different product groups. They were, automobile, camera, tires, watch, beer, soft drinks, TV and headache remedy. The results show that the correlation between the self image and brand preference in the new method were high and significant. According to the results of the analysis the correlation between the brand preference and the new measure of self image congruence was high and significant ($r=0.522$, $p<0.001$). Also a standard multiple regression was applied with new method of self image congruence as independent variable and the brand preference as the dependent variable. The results showed a high significant beta weight for the new method ($\beta=0.581$, $p<0.001$) (Sirgy et.al., 1997; 238). These results show evidence for the predictive validity of the scale used in this study.

3.5.2 Reliability of the Scale

A reliability test is done for the whole scale used in the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha value 90.52% for the whole scale used in both sections of the questionnaire. This value is very high which represents that the scale is reliable.

Although the scale was found out to be reliable, the reliability test was applied for each section of the scale separately to see their reliability on their own.

The first four questions of the scale were aiming o measure the brand preference for Zeki triko brand in the first section. According to the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha value was 93.27%. It is a very high and good value showing that the first part of the first section is reliable. The next five questions make up the next part of the first section measuring the self image congruence for Zeki Triko brand. The alpha value was 89.90% meaning that the second part is also reliable. In order to double check the reliability of the first section of the scale, the two parts were tested by the reliability analysis and the result was 88.82%. Results provided evidence that the first section of the scale is highly reliable.

The same reliability analysis was conducted for the second section of the scale. The first part was found out to be reliable by 94.72% alpha value, the second was reliable by 91.77% and the both parts were reliable by 90.52% Cronbach's alpha value. As a conclusion the scale used in this thesis is highly reliable.

3.5.3 Descriptive Analysis

3.5.3.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

The demographic profiles of the respondents are demonstrated in the following tables by the frequency distributions.

3.5.3.1.1 Age of the Respondents

Table 3.1 Sample Age Frequency

Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15- 24	33	9.9
25-34	198	59.6
35-44	68	20.5
45-54	27	8.1
55 and above	6	1.8
Total	**332**	**100**

Table 3.1 shows that, 9.9 % of the respondents are from the first group between the ages of 15 and 24. The 59.6% of the sample groups is between the ages of 25 and 34. 20.5 % are between 35 and 44 which are relatively young. 27% of the respondents are between the ages 45 and 54 which belong to the middle age group. Only 1.8% of the respondents are above the age 55, which is a very small group. As a conclusion, the sample group is composed of mostly the young people with 59.6%

3.5.3.1.2 The Marital Status of the Respondents

Table 3.2 Sample Marital Status Frequency

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	150	45.2
Single	182	54.8
Total	**332**	**100.0**

Among the 332 respondents, 150 of them are married with 45.2%. Single respondents make up the 54.8 % of the sample group with 182 people.

3.5.3.1.3 The Education Level of the Respondents

Table 3.3 Sample Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary School	4	1.2
High School	59	17.9
University	199	60.3
Graduate	54	16.4
Phd	14	4.2
Total	**330**	**100.0**

The sample group has different levels of education as clearly demonstrated in Table 3.3. 4 people are graduated from primary school with 1.2%. 59 of the respondents are from high school with 17.9%. University graduates are making up the 60.3% of the sample with 199 people. 54 of the respondents have a graduate degree and 14 of them have a Phd. The results show that, the sample in this research is a highly educated group.

3.5.3.1.4 The Occupation of the Respondents

Table 3.4 Sample Occupation Profile

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Officer	17	5.61	Technical Staff	39	12.87
Education Staff	31	10.23	Medical Staff	16	5.28
Student	18	5.94	Retired	3	0.99
Housewife	19	6.27	Other	10	3.3
Business Owner	8	2.64	Total	300	100
Professionals	139	45.87			

The education level in Table 3.4 showed that, the sample is composed of well educated people. This also supports the fact that, the sample has a good career level. Professionals including job positions such as, managers, bankers, lawyers, finance and marketing professionals and some others, make up the largest portion of the

sample with 139 people. The technical staff including, mostly engineers and technicians follows the professional with 12.87%. There are 31 people working in the education sector, 16 in the medical area, 17 working for the government as officers. 2.64% of the sample, run their own business ad ten other people work in the other category like, artists, directors and many other jobs. 5.94% is made of students with 18 people. Among 300 people who responded this question, only 21 people are not working, 18 of as housewives and 3 of them are retired from their jobs.

3.5.3.1.5 The Household Monthly Income

Table 3.5 Household Monthly Income of Respondents

Personal Income (YTL)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.000 and below	23	7.2
1.001 – 2.000	99	30.8
2.001 – 4.000	99	30.8
4.001 and above	100	31.2
Total	**321**	**100**

The high education levels and the good career profile also support the income level of the respondents. 100 people with 31.2% of the sample have a monthly household income above 4001 YTL, and they make up the largest portion of the sample. 99 people with 30.8% have a household income between 2001 and 4000 YTL. Again 99 people have an income level of 1001-2000 YL. Only 23 earn very little and have a household income below 1000 YTL. 11 of the respondents had not answered the question regarding the income level.

3.5.3.2 Other Descriptive Analysis

One of the questions in the questionnaire was aiming to see the purchase frequency profile of the respondents for both product groups.

3.5.3.2.1 Frequency of Purchase for Swimsuit

Table 3.6 Purchasing Frequency of Swimsuit

Frequency of Purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once a year	151	45.5
Twice a year	83	25
More than one in a year	75	22.6
Other	23	6.6
Total	**332**	**100**

Table 3.6 shows that, respondents frequently buy swimsuits. 151 of the respondents that compose 45.5% of the sample buy a swimsuit each season. 75 of them with 22.6% buy more than once a year. However, 83 of the respondents prefer to buy swimsuits twice a year. And finally there is the group of 23 respondents who make random purchases of swimsuits.

3.5.3.2.2 Specifically Preferred Swimsuit

Table 3.7 Brand Preference in Swimsuits

Specifically Preferred Brand	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	24.8
No	248	75.2
Total	**330**	**100**

The table demonstrates that, 82 people who make up the 24.8% of the sample have a specific brand preference in their swimsuit purchases. Where as a very big portion of the sample with 248 do not specifically prefer a brand while buying a swimsuit. In other words, their brand preference for swimsuits may vary depending on various factors.

3.5.3.2.3 Frequency of Purchase for Sunglass

Table 3.8 Purchasing Frequency of Sunglasses

Frequency of Purchase	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once a year	95	29.2
Twice a year	110	33.8
More than one in a year	27	8.3
Other	93	28.6
Total	**325**	**100**

Table 3.8 shows that, respondents less frequently purchase sunglasses. 110 of the respondents buy sunglasses only twice a year, which makes up the largest portion of the sample with 33.8%. 95 of them buy sunglasses once a year, and 93 people make purchases randomly which means they do not buy sunglasses regularly. Only 27 of the sample make frequent purchases by purchasing more than one in a year, which is a small portion with 8.3%.

3.5.3.2.4 Specifically Preferred Sunglass Brand

Table 3.9 Brand Preference in Sunglasses

Specifically Preferred Brand	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	25.2
No	243	74.8
Total	**325**	**100**

Just like in the swimsuit case, a very large portion of the group does not prefer a certain sunglass brand. Those 243 people may prefer different sunglass brands in different conditions. The rest of the sample can be considered more loyal, by preferring a particular brand.

3.5.4 Hypotheses Testing

The second part of the analysis requires testing the hypotheses developed.

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is a positive relationship between the self image congruency and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

The hypothesis was testing the relationship between a dependent variable and an independent variable. Thus, a correlation analysis was used for figuring out the significance of this relationship. The results show that the relationship is significant with the confidence level 99%. Therefore, H1 is accepted. However, the correlation coefficient is 0,377 which means there is 37.7% relationship between the self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand. This relationship is not a very strong relationship when compared to previous studies in the literature. For example, the relationship between the self image congruence and the brand preference for Cartier branded precious jewelry was found out to be 0.79 (Jamal and Goode, 2001; 488) which is a very strong relationship.

Table 3.10 Correlation between Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko Brand

		Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	1 . 329	0.377* 0.000 327
Self Image Congruence	Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed) N	0.377* 0.000 327	1 . 329

 *. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As a result, the independent variable self image congruence was found to be in a positive relationship with the dependent variable brand preference. Though, a supplementary test was applied to the independent variable self image congruence to be able to understand how much the independent variable explains the dependent variable.

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According to the regression analysis, the independent variable self image congruence explain the dependent variable brand preference at p < 0.001 (see Table 3.12). However the self image congruence explain only the % 14.2 of the dependent variable as can be seen from the Table 3.11 (R^2 = 0.142). This means that, there are other factors explaining the formation of the brand preferences of consumers for Zeki Triko brand.

Table 3.11 Model Summary for Zeki Triko

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.377 [a]	0.142	0.139	1.06367

[a]. Predictors: (Constant), Self Image Congruence

Table 3.12 Anova [b] Zeki Triko

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1 Regression	60.881	1	60.881	53.811	0.000 [a]
Residual	367.705	325	1.131		
Total	428.586	326			

[a]. Predictors: (Constant), Self Image Congruence

[b]. Dependent Variable: Brand Preference

Table 3.13 Coefficients [a] of the Regression Model Zeki Triko

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.535	0.167		9.167	0.000
Self Image Congruence	0.454	0.062	0.377	7.336	0.000

[a]. Dependent Variable: Brand Preference

Hypothesis 2

H2: There is a positive relationship between the self image congruency and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

The second is hypothesis is the same with the first hypothesis, but this time, it is testing the positive relationship between the self image congruence and the brand preference for RayBan sunglasses. The results indicated a significant correlation coefficient 0.437 when $p < 0.001$. In other words, there is a 43.7% relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference and H2 is accepted. As clearly seen this relationship is stronger for RayBan sunglasses than Zeki Triko swimsuits.

Table 3.14 Correlation between the Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan Brand

		Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	Pearson Correlation	1	0.437*
	Sig (2-tailed)	.	0.000
	N	329	329
Self Image Congruence	Pearson Correlation	0.437*	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	.
	N	329	329

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Just as it is done before, for the first hypothesis, a regression is developed for the second hypothesis to supplement the correlation findings and see how much of the independent variable explains the dependent variable.

Table 3.15 Model Summary RayBan

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.437 [a]	0.191	0.188	0.97426

[a]. Predictors: (Constant), Self Image Congruence

Table 3.16 Anova [b] RayBan

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1 Regression	73.194	1	73.194	77.112	0.000 [a]
Residual	310.385	327	0.949		
Total	383.579	328			

[a]. Predictors: (Constant), Self Image Congruence

[b]. Dependent Variable: Brand Preference

Table 3.17 Coefficients [a] of the Regression Model RayBan

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.293	0.150		8.627	0.000
Self Image Congruence	0.510	0.058	0.437	8.781	0.000

[a.] Dependent Variable: Brand Preference

The regression analysis demonstrates that, the independent variable self image congruence can explain the dependent variable brand preference at $p < 0.001$ (see Table 3.16). However the self image congruence explain only the % 19.1 of the dependent variable as can be seen from the Table 3.15 ($R^2 = 0.191$). This value is greater than it was for Zeki Triko, yet it is still not very high and this means that, there are other factors explaining the formation of the brand preferences of consumers for RayBan brand.

The two hypotheses were tested both by the correlation methods and then supported by the regression analysis. They are both accepted, which approved that there is a positive relationship between the self image congruence and the brand

preferences for both brands. The findings also confirm with the findings in the studies conducted by Sirgy et.al (1997) and Jamal and Goode (2001).

Hypothesis 3

H3: Individuals with different levels of self image congruency will exhibit different behaviors in term of their brand preferences for Zeki Triko swim suits.

To be able to test this hypothesis, the first step to take is to divide the data sets by using a measure of central tendency like the mean. By doing so, the data set is divided into two equal portions, therefore respondents with higher levels of self image congruence will show congruency above the mean, and where as people with lower levels of self image congruence will be below the mean. Then the hypothesis can be tested using the independent t test (Jamal and Goode, 2001; 487).

In the scale used in this research study, there are four questions measuring the brand preferences and five questions for measuring the self image congruence. First thing done in the analysis was to take the means of those questions as mentioned before. Then for finding the central tendency, the mean of that mean was computed both for self image congruence and brand preference.

Table 3.18 Mean Values of Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Brand Preference	329	2.6877	1.14544
Self image Congruence	329	2.5319	0.94970
Valid	**327**		

The means are the center point. The respondents above the mean for self image congruence indicate that, they have higher self image congruence with the brand. The ones below have lower levels of self image congruence. The same is true for brand preferences. The respondents above the mean value prefer the brand more

than the respondents below mean value. The numbers of respondents above and below the mean values are demonstrated in the cross tabulation table3.19.

Table 3.19 Cross Tabulation of Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko		Brand Preference		Total
		High	Low	
Self Image Congruence	High	82	70	175
	Low	50	125	152
Total		195	132	327

According to Table 3.19, 82 people are considered both having higher self image congruence and brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand. 70 respondents have higher self image congruence with lower brand preferences. 50 of the respondents have lower self image congruence with higher brand preferences. And finally, 125 of the respondents have lower self image congruence and brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

After finding the mean values as measure of central tendency, it is required to apply the independent t test for testing the hypothesis.

In the t test analysis, the mean is of self image congruence is used as the central tendency to divide the distribution into two parts. Respondents displaying a level below 2.5319 which is the mean of the self image congruence are categorized as people with low congruence. Respondents above the central tendency point are categorized as people with high self image congruence. Then the t test is conducted. The results in the t-test table 3.20 are significant with the confidence interval 99%. This means that, different levels of self image congruence may result in different levels of brand preferences. The results enable to state that individuals with different levels of self image congruence exhibit different behaviors in terms of their brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand. Therefore, it becomes possible to state that, H3 is accepted.

Table 3.20 Independent T-Test Analysis for Zeki Triko

Model	t-test for Equality of Means					99%Cofidence Interval for Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Brand Preference Equal Variances Assumed	5.947	325	0.000	0.7191	0.12091	0.40578	1.03237
Brand Preference Equal Variances Not Assumed	5.875	296.064	0.000	0.7191	0.12241	0.40174	1.03642

Hypothesis 4

H4: Individuals with different levels of self image congruency will exhibit different behaviors in term of their brand preferences for RayBan sunglasses.

Since, the hypothesis is same with the previous one. The only difference is that, it is tested for RayBan brand. Therefore, same method will be applied for testing the hypothesis.

Table 3.21 demonstrates the mean values of the brand preferences and self image congruence. The mean value that is going to be used as the central tendency is 2.4085 for self image congruence. The respondents above this value have higher level of self image congruence; where as the ones below this mean value have lower self image congruence. The mean value for brand preference is 2.5228. The respondents staying above this value have higher brand preferences for RayBan sunglasses where as, the ones below the mean have lower levels of brand preferences.

Table 3.21 Mean Values of Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Rayban

RayBan	N	Mean	St. Deviation
Brand Preference	329	2.5228	1.08141
Self image Congruence	330	2.4085	0.92486
Valid	**330**		

A crosstab showing the respondents with high and low levels of brand preference and self image congruence are developed.

Table 3.22 Cross Tabulation of Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan

RayBan		Brand Preference		Total
		High	Low	
Self Image Congruence	**High**	71	59	199
	Low	52	147	130
Total		123	206	329

According to Table 3.22, 71 of the respondents have both higher levels of self image congruence and brand preference for RayBan sunglasses. 59 of them have lower brand preferences while having higher levels of self image congruence. 52 of the respondents have higher degrees of brand preferences while having lower levels of self image congruence. Finally, almost half of the sample with 147 people has low self image congruence and brand preferences for RayBan sunglasses.

After computing the mean value of self image congruence as a central tendency, a t test is applied for testing H4.

The results in the t test Table 3.23 are significant at the confidence in 99% confidence interval. The results provide the conclusion that individuals with different levels of self image congruence exhibit different behaviors in terms of their brand preferences for RayBan brand. Therefore, the H4 is accepted.

Table 3.23 Independent T-Test Analysis for RayBan

Model	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	99% Confidence Interval for Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Brand Preference Equal Variances Assumed	5.679	327	0.000	0.6618	0.11653	0.35985	0.96369
Brand Preference Equal Variances Not Assumed	5.571	257.848	0.000	0.6618	0.11878	0.35353	0.97002

Hypothesis 5

H5: Age of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

Table 3.24 Effect of Age on the Relationship between Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.3786 0.000 324
Self Image Congruence	0.3786 0.000 324	1 . 0

The correlation between self image congruence and brand preference is significant when age is tested as a moderator variable affecting the relationship between self image and brand preference. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted. However,

the correlation is not very strong between the dependent and the independent variable with the influence of age.

Hypothesis 6

H6: Age of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

Table 3.25 Effect of Age on the Relationship between Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan

RayBan	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.4381 0.000 326
Self Image Congruence	0.4381 0.000 326	1 . 0

The correlation between self image congruence and brand preference is significant when age is tested as a moderator variable affecting the relationship between self image and brand preference for RayBan. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. The correlation is still not very strong between the dependent and the independent variable with the influence of age, however when compared to Zeki Triko, the relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference is stronger for Ray Ban when controlled for age.

Hypothesis 7

H7: Marital status of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

Table 3.26 Effect of Marital Status on the Relationship between Self Image
Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.3837 0.000 324
Self Image Congruence	0.3837 0.000 324	1 . 0

The relationship between self image congruence and brand preference is significant when marital status is tested as a moderator variable affecting the relationship between self image and brand preference for Zeki Triko. Accordingly, the hypothesis is accepted. Although, the relation is significant, it is not very strong between the dependent and the independent variable under the effect of marital status.

Hypothesis 8

H8: Marital status of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

Table 3.27 Effect of Marital Status on the Relationship between Self Image
Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan

RayBan	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.4382 0.000 326
Self Image Congruence	0.4382 0.000 326	1 . 0

The relationship between self image congruence and brand preference is significant when marital status is tested as a moderator variable affecting the

relationship between self image and brand preference for Rayban therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 9

H9: Education level of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

Table 3.28 Effect of Education Level on the Relationship between Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.3797 0.000 322
Self Image Congruence	0.3797 0.000 322	1 . 0

The correlation is significant for the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference for Zeki Triko when education is a moderator variable. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 10

H10: Education of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

Table 3.29 Effect of Education Level on the Relationship between Self Image
Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan

RayBan	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.4383 0.000 324
Self Image Congruence	0.4383 0.000 324	1 . 0

Education level has an effect on the relationship between the self image congruence
and brand preferences for RayBan which is proved by the significant correlation
under 99% confidence interval. Hence, H10 is accepted.

Hypothesis 11

H11: Household monthly of consumers has an effect on the relationship
between self image congruence and the brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand.

Table 3.30 Effect of Income on the Relationship between Self Image Congruence and
Brand Preference for Zeki Triko

Zeki Triko	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.3736 0.000 314
Self Image Congruence	0.3736 0.000 314	1 . 0

The impact of income on the correlation between self image congruence and brand
preferences for Zeki Triko is significant which means that the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 12

H12: Household monthly income of consumers has an effect on the relationship between self image congruence and the brand preferences for RayBan brand.

Table 3.31 Effect of Income on the Relationship between Self Image Congruence and Brand Preference for RayBan

RayBan	Brand Preference	Self Image Congruence
Brand Preference	1 . 0	0.4254 0.000 316
Self Image Congruence	0.4254 0.000 316	1 . 0

The effect of income on the correlation between self image congruence and brand preferences for RayBan is significant which means that the hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION

The market is getting crowded with the entrances of new products and brands each day. Consumers are faced with a lot of options which they need to make a choice from. Understanding consumers' brand preferences and the reasons underlying them have been vitally important for both marketing managers and for consumer researchers. As previously mentioned in the literature review of this study, there are many factors influencing consumers' brand preferences. Self image congruence is one of those factors that carry a significant importance.

Self image congruence is studied by a lot of researchers in the literature. Some of those researchers studied the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference and they have found significant relationships in between them. Many different products have been tested for finding out this relationship. For example, Sirgy et.al. (1997), tested eight different products in their study which were automobile, camera, tires, watch, beer, soft drinks, TV and headache remedy. The result of their study indicated a significant relationship between the self image congruence and brand preference for these products. Jamal and Goode (2001) measured the effect of self image congruence on the brand preferences for Cartier branded precious jewelry. The correlation was significant and very strong.

In this study, the effect of self image congruence on the brand preference is measured for two different brands from two different product groups. One of the brands is Zeki Triko swimsuits and the other is RayBan sunglasses. Han (2001) studied the effect of self image congruence on the brand preference for a sunglass brand Oakley before, but the two brands in this study was never used before in finding out the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference.

The scale used in the measurement is a valid scale adopted from the previous work of Sirgy et.al (1997), as explained in detail in section 3.5.1. The reliability of the scale is very high according to the reliability analysis applied both for each separate section and for the total of the questionnaire.

The study was applied to a sample group of 332 people. The descriptive analysis indicates that, the sample group is composed mostly of young people. 59.6% of the sample is between the ages 25 and 34. The analysis shows that, the majority of the sample is single. The respondents of this study is well educated because, the 60.3% of the sample with 199 people are university graduates. There are also respondents with graduate and Phd degrees that makes up the 20.6% of the sample. The income level of the sample is high because, 62% of the respondents have a household income above 2000 YTL. As a result the sample can be considered as a young, high educated group with relatively high income levels.

The effect of self image congruence was found out to be significant on the brand preferences for both Zeki Triko and RayBan brands in this study. However, those relationships were not very strong for both brands. The correlation between self image congruence and the brand preference for Zeki Triko brand was 37.7%. Hence, it is possible to say that, there might be other factors influencing the brand preferences for Zeki Triko consumers. The regression analysis shows that, the independent variable self image congruence can explain only the 14.2% of the dependent variable brand preference for Zeki Triko which is a very low percentage. The correlation between self image congruence and the brand preference for RayBan brand was 43.7%. It is a closer relationship when compared to Zeki Triko, but still it is not very strong. The regression analysis demonstrates that, self image congruence can explain only the 19.1% of the brand preference for RayBan.

The mean values computed for the self image congruence and brand preference for both brands are low. In other words, the respondents of the study do not perceive the Zeki Triko and RayBan brand as reflecting their own self images. The consistency between their self images and the perceived image of the brand and the typical user of the brand is not high because, mean values of self image congruence for both brands are 2.5319 and 2.4085 respectively. The respondents do not have a high tendency of preferring both brands because the mean values of brand preference are 2.6877 for Zeki Triko and 2.5228 for RayBan. In other words, neither of the brands is very popular among the respondents. The low self image congruency

and brand preference levels actually show that there is not a satisfactory bond between the respondents and both of the brands

As previously noted in the literature review, consumers with different levels of self image congruence can show differences in their purchase behaviors such as brand preferences (Mehta, 1999; 87, 88). The result of this study was in correspondence with previous literature. A greater majority of the sample who had low self image congruence for RayBan brand also had lower brand preferences. The same result was valid for Zeki Triko brand, because a greater majority of the respondents who had relatively low self images also had lower brand preferences for Zeki Triko brand. The results were significant according to the independent t tests.

The effects of demographic variables were found out to be significant on the relationship between self image congruence and brand preference for both Zeki Triko swimsuits and Rayban sunglasses. In other words, age, marital status, education level and household income have moderating effect on the linear relationship between self image congruence and brand preference for both brands.

As a conclusion, by this study, it is proved that, there is an effect of self image congruence on the brand preference for Zeki Triko swimsuits and Rayban sunglasses. However, the relationships between the self image congruence and brand preference are not very strong for both brands. Therefore, it can be concluded that, there are other factors that might affect the brand preferences of Zeki Triko and RayBan. As previously mentioned in chapter two there are many factor that influence consumers' brand preferences. A further research regarding the other factors that might influence consumers' brand preferences for both brands can be done. Also a further research can be done to see the effects of self image congruence on brand preference, purchase intentions and brand evaluations for other product groups and brands in Turkey.

Another conclusion derived from the results is that, Zeki Triko swimsuits and RayBan sunglasses have weak self image congruity. Brand managers of both brands can focus on improving the perceived image of the brand which is a very important

component of the brand equity. They may need to develop marketing strategies that can satisfy the symbolic needs of the consumers more effectively. As well as having low self image congruity, the results of the analysis show that both brands have low brand preference values. Marketing managers of both brands should also determine the other factors that can influence the preference of their brands and concentrate on strengthening them. They need to create strategies that will increase the brand preference for Zeki Triko and RayBan.

Finally, it is necessary to conclude that, there are numerous studies done for measuring the effect of self image congruence on brand preferences. There is an extensive literature proposing the view that self image congruence and brand preference have a positive relationship. The results of this study support the previous literature and give an insight about this relationship for different product groups.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE STUDY

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu anket, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İngilizce İşletme Yönetimi yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hande Ayvalı tarafından yürütülen bitirme tezi için yapılmaktadır. İlişikteki anket formu yalnızca birkaç dakikalık zamanınızı alacaktır. Bize yapacağınız yardımların çok değerli olacağını düşünüyor ve bu yüzden bize biraz vakit ayırmanızı rica ediyoruz.

Verilen cevaplar sadece akademik amaçlı kullanılacak olup, herhangi bir kişisel bilgiye yer verilmeyecektir. Bu önemli çalışmaya gösterdiğiniz yardım ve katılım için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Saygılarımızla,

Lütfen siz en uygun olan cevabın yanında yer alan parantezlerin içine X yazınız.

Yaşınız:
a. 15–24 (   )   b. 25–34 (   )   c. 35–44 (   )   d. 45–54 (   )   e. 55 ve üzeri (   )

 Medeni Haliniz:
a. Evli (   )   b. Bekar (   )

Eğitim Durumunuz:
a. İlköğretim (   ) b. Lise (   ) c. Üniversite (   ) d. Yüksek Lisans (   ) e. Doktora (   )

Mesleğiniz: (Lütfen belirtir misiniz?)………………………….

Hane Aylık Geliriniz:
a. 1000 YTL ve altı (   )   b. 1001-2000 YTL (   )
c. 2001- 4000 YTL (   )   d. 4001 YTL ve üzeri (   )

Mayo satınalma sıklığınız genellikle………………
a. Her yıl birden fazla (   )   b. Her yıl bir kere (   )
c. İki senede bir (   )   d. Diğer (   )

Özellikle tercih ettiğiniz bir mayo markası var mı?
a. Evet (   )   b. Hayır (   )

Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara, Kesinlikle Katılıyorum'dan, Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum'a kadar olan kutucuklardan size en uygun olanını X ile işaretleyerek cevap veriniz.

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Fikrim Yok	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
a)	Zeki Triko markalı mayoları, diğer tüm mayo markalarından daha fazla severim.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b)	Zeki Triko markalı mayoları, diğer tüm mayo markalarından daha fazla kullanırım.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c)	Zeki Triko markalı mayolar, diğer tüm mayo markalarına tercih ettiğim bir markadır.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d)	Tüm mayo markaları arasından, Zeki Triko markasını satın almaya eğilimliyimdir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Lütfen **Zeki Triko marka mayoları** ve bu mayo markasını kullanan tipik bir tüketiciyi düşünün. Bu kişiyi zihninizde hayal edin ve bazı kişisel sıfatlar kullanarak tanımlayın. (Ör: Stil sahibi, modern, sofistike, zevk sahibi, modaya uygun, zengin, vb.)

Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara cevap verirken, zihninizde oluşturduğunuz tipik bir Zeki marka mayo kullanıcısının özelliklerini dikkate alınız ve Kesinlikle Katılıyorum'dan, Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum'a kadar olan kutucuklardan size en uygun olanını X ile işaretleyerek cevap veriniz.

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Fikrim Yok	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
a)	Zeki marka mayo kullanmak, çoğu zaman sahip olduğum imaj ile uyumludur.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b)	Zeki marka mayo kullanan insanların imajları benim imajım ile benzer özellikler gösterir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c)	Zeki marka mayo giymek, çoğu zaman benim kim olduğum hakkında fikir verir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d)	Zeki marka mayo giymek, benim kim olduğumu birebir yansıtır.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e	Tipik bir Zeki marka mayo kullanıcısı bana çok benzer.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Güneş gözlüğü satınalma sıklığınız genellikle……………

a. Her yıl birden fazla (   )   b. Her yıl bir kere (   )

c. İki senede bir (   )   d. Diğer (   )

Özellikle tercih ettiğiniz bir güneş gözlüğü markası var mı?

a. Evet (   )   b. Hayır (   )

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Fikrim Yok	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
a)	Ray Ban markalı güneş gözlüklerini, diğer tüm güneş gözlüğü markalarından daha fazla severim.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b)	Ray Ban markalı güneş gözlüklerini, diğer tüm güneş gözlüğü markalarından daha fazla kullanırım.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c)	Ray Ban markalı güneş gözlükleri, diğer tüm güneş gözlüğü markalarına tercih ettiğim bir markadır.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d)	Tüm güneş gözlüğü markaları arasından, Ray Ban markasını satın almaya eğilimliyimdir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Lütfen **Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüklerini** ve bu güneş gözlüğü markasını kullanan tipik bir tüketiciyi düşünün. Bu kişiyi zihninizde hayal edin ve bazı kişisel sıfatlar kullanarak tanımlayın. (Ör: Stil sahibi, modern, sofistike, spor, aktif, modaya uygun, zengin, vb.)

Lütfen aşağıdaki sorulara cevap verirken, zihninizde oluşturduğunuz tipik bir Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü kullanıcısının özelliklerini dikkate alınız ve Kesinlikle Katılıyorum'dan, Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum'a kadar olan kutucuklardan size en uygun olanını işaretleyerek cevap veriniz.

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Fikrim Yok	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
a)	Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü kullanmak, çoğu zaman sahip olduğum imaj ile uyumludur.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
b)	Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü kullanan insanların imajları benim imajım ile benzer özellikler gösterir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
c)	Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü takmak, çoğu zaman benim kim olduğum hakkında fikir verir.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
d)	Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü takmak, benim kim olduğumu birebir yansıtır.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
e)	Tipik bir Ray Ban marka güneş gözlüğü kullanıcısı bana çok benzer.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )