# WHAT FACTORS MATTER TO BRAND RELEVANCE IN CATEGORY? AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN TURKEY[1]

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, antecedents of brand relevance in category are examined and the impact powers of these antecedents are analyzed. In this empirical research, data about brand relevance values in terms of mobile phone and casual clothes products are collected from undergraduate students studying in a public university in Turkey. Data of the study are collected through a face to face questionnaire and analyzed by using multi-linear regression method. According to the findings, the most powerful antecedent of brand relevance is risk reduction. Information gathering cost and social-identity are the following antecedents. While self-identity is the weakest antecedent for mobile phone, it doesn't affect brand relevance in terms of casual clothes. On the other hand, brand relevance value of mobile phone is higher than the casual clothes. This paper shows that social-identity and self-identity may affect brand relevance separately for specific product types in consumer market.

*Keywords: Brand relevance, brand functions, purchasing process.*

*JEL Codes: M30, M31*

# ÜRÜN BAZINDA MARKA BAĞINTISINI ETKİLEYEN ETMENLER NELERDİR? TÜRKİYE'DE GÖRGÜL BİR ÇALIŞMA

## ÖZ

Bu çalışmada ürün bazında marka bağıntısının öncülleri ve bu öncüllerin etki güçleri incelenmiştir. Yapılan ampirik araştırmada cep telefonu ve gündelik kıyafet ürünlerine ait marka bağıntısı değerleri için Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde okuyan öğrencilerden veri toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın verileri soru kağıdı ile yüzyüze toplanmış, çoklu doğrusal regresyon yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgulara göre marka bağıntısının en güçlü öncülü risk azaltmadır. Bunu sırasıyla bilgi sağlama maliyeti ve sosyal kimlik izlemektedir. Öz kimlik işlevi ise cep telefonu için en zayıf öncül iken gündelik kıyafet için marka bağıntısını etkilememektedir. Diğer yandan, cep telefonu için ölçülen marka bağıntısı değeri gündelik kıyafet için bulunan değere göre daha yüksektir. Bu çalışma, tüketici pazarındaki belirli ürünler için öz kimlik ve sosyal kimlik işlevlerinin marka bağıntısını ayrı ayrı etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka bağıntısı, marka işlevleri, satınalma süreci.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant difficulties encountered by brand management is explanation of investments to stakeholder and executives. As brand investments reached high amounts because of the increasing competition in global market, brand managers need to pursue stakeholders in terms of the fact that expenses in the field are profitable investments. Contribution of the brand is a quite efficient factor in the process of persuasion (Backhaus, Steiner & Lugger, 2011; Fischer, Volckner & Sattler, 2010). While buying a product, consumers take different factors into consideration such as customer services, quality, price, and brand. The significance of product's brand's role in this process is defined as brand relevance in category. According to this concept, there is an average brand relevance value for every product type and generally it is not expected to change in the short term (Fischer, Volckner & Sattler, 2010; Hammerschmidt, Donnevert & Bauer, 2008; Perrey, Freundt & Spillecke, 2015).

Having accurate knowledge about brand functions that are the antecedents of brand relevance and knowing the power of these functions help decision makers. Thus, it is possible to determine the brand functions that are effective through brand relevance in the purchasing process and the level of these effects. Upon this knowledge, marketing managers are able to direct the marketing communication tools towards the related function (Fischer et al., 2010; Perrey et al., 2015). It is observed that there is a limited number of research (e.g. Backhaus et al.,2011; Fischer et al., 2010; Perrey, Schroeder, & Backhaus, 2003) about the question of 'which brand functions affect brand relevance?' in the literature. In these researches, it is mentioned that variables such as risk reduction, social impact, avoiding research cost are the antecedents of brand relevance. But in these studies, it is emphasized that different brand functions may also affect brand relevance, so it is significant to determine these potential variables.

In the studies analyzing brand relevance and its antecedents, data are obtained from U.S.A., UK, France, Spain, Japan (Fischer et al., 2010), Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden markets (Perrey et al., 2015). While some of these countries are similar in terms of culture (France and Spain) some are quite different from one another (Japan and U.S.A.). It is determined that, brand relevance values and antecedents are similar in similar countries while they are different in countries with different cultural structures (see Fischer et al., 2010). Customer behaviors and brand choices may change according to cultural features (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006) and income level (Kalyanam & Putler, 1997). So, brand relevance

values and antecedents in Turkey, which has a unique cultural structure and mid-income social group, researching brand relevance values and antecedents will make important contribution to the literature in terms of understanding the effect of economic factors on brand relevance values. On the other hand, it is believed that knowing the level of brand functions' impact on brand relevance is important; this information can guide decision makers in making decisions about focusing on brand function (Perrey et al., 2015). Therefore, another contribution of the study is that it presents a relative comparison among the effects of brand functions for Turkish market.

Based on this point, brand functions that are antecedents of the brand relevance for specific product types in consumer market and their power of effects are determined in this study.

In this context, key concepts are explained and the literature is summarized in the following sections. Then, the relation between brand function and brand relevance is discussed. In the following section, empirical research is carried out in order to test the relations obtained in the study and related data is analyzed. In the last section, the obtained results are interpreted, limitations are determined and suggestions are made.

## 2. KEY CONCEPTS

### 2.1. Brand Relevance in Product Category

The concept of brand relevance is reflected in different definitions in the literature. According to Aaker (2011), in the purchasing process customers firstly decide the product/sub-product class, and then evaluate the brands that they recall in the product/sub-product class. According to the writer, in order to be able to say that a specific brand is relevant, a customer should choose the product/sub-product groups in which that brand functions and the brand should be one of the brands that is recalled by that customer. According to another approach, if a brand can reflect identities and personalities of customers, that brand is relevant (Goldsmith, Flynn & Stacey, 2009; Keller, 2000). Perrey et al. define that brand relevance is the importance of the role of a product's brand in the process of decision-making. The writers mention that, brand becomes more relevant when its role increases (Fischer et al., 2010; Hammerschmidt et al., 2008). In the current research, the approach of Perrey et al. is adopted and conceptual frame is established and analyzed in this respect.

## 2.2. Customer Needs and Brand Functions

Brand functions are the antecedents of brand relevance, and consumer demands have determinant roles in the formation of brand functions (Fischer et al., 2010). Keller (2003) explains that, consumer demands are separated into three as functional, experiential and symbolic. Functional demands are generally instinctual requirements of consumers. Experiential demands include sensory, pleasure and cognitive stimulation. Symbolic demands are self-expression and social acceptance requirements. Mittal, Ratchford and Prabhakar (1990) combined experiential and symbolic demands and analyzed them under the dimension of expressive, and categorized consumer demands in two classes as expressive and functional. According to this definition, functional demands involve factors that are necessary in order to live in harmony with physical environment. On the other hand, expressive demands contain consumer needs in terms of self-expression and social interaction. Brand functions are the factors that enable consumers meet their demands (Guo, Wei Hao & Shang, 2011). Antecedents of brand relevance, the importance attributed to a brand in the purchasing process, are brand functions used for meeting the demands of customers in terms of the brand (Backhaus et al., 2011).

There are various studies about defining brand functions or about classification of them in the literature, but there is not a consensus on the issue. Ambler (1997) made a detailed analysis by taking indirect effects of brand functions into consideration. According to this analysis, brand functions are divided into three as: Economic, psychological and beneficial. Economic functions mean `getting one's money's worth`. Psychological functions are the contributions of a brand in terms of psychological well being of a customer while beneficial function is based on the quality of a product that is promised by its brand. According to the writer, brands can fulfill some of these functions in different periods for different consumers; but it may be impossible to ensure all these functions by one brand under all circumstances. According to another viewpoint, brand functions are perceived as guarantee, self-identity, social-identity and status and these factors positively support behavioral loyalty dimensions (Rio, Vasquez & Iglesias, 2001). Kapferer and Lauren list brand functions under 6 articles: Simplification is used for enabling consumer define purchasing process easily and spend less time. Guarantee aims at directing towards familiar brands because of perceived risk and cognitive insufficiency. Originality stands for the process of perceiving specific brands with some specific features. Personalization ensures customers reflect personality through the brand and gives a sense of social relation. Affective component stands for the excitement and joy of

consumers. Finally, the function of distinguishing includes the meaning of service quality of a brand, which distinguishes a brand from the others (Guo et al., 2011).

Functions that are defined in many different studies focusing on analyzing brand functions and presenting different results can be grouped under the headings of utilitarian and expressive (Guo et al., 2011). According to this classification, it is possible to say that, factors such as the pledge of quality, risk reduction (Kapferer, 2008; Mitchell & McGoldrick, 1996) are utilitarian while personal expression, belonging to a group and status are (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) under the dimension of expressive.

## 3. BRAND FUNCTIONS DRIVING BRAND RELEVANCE

Brand relevance researches are started by McKinsey research group in cooperation with the marketing academics (Perrey et al., 2003). Some of the researchers in this group contributed to academic literature through their studies published in the period starting from the early 2000s. Firstly, Fischer et al. analyzed 48 different product categories in 2002 in German consumer market and they obtained data from a sampling group made of more than 2500 people. In this research, it is found that image benefits has 40% effect on brand relevance while cost reduction has 37% effect and risk reduction function has 23% effect on brand relevance (Backhaus et al., 2011). McKinsey research group made various studies in B2C and B2B markets of different countries such as U.S.A., UK, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Poland, Japan, Germany, France and measured the change of brand relevance in time. In these evaluations, information processing, risk reduction and image effect are accepted as functions that determine brand relevance. These functions affect the entire processes of evaluation, purchase and consumption. While information processing is effective before the period of purchase, risk reduction contributes during decision-making while image effect serves consumers during consumption (Perrey et al., 2015). Fischer et al. (2010) analyzed 20 product categories in different markets (U.S.A., UK, Spain, Japan, France) and determined that risk reduction and social impact are the antecedents of brand relevance. The former factor had relatively bigger effect on brand relevance in all of the countries. Backhaus et al. (2011), who state that researches on brand relevance mostly focus on B2C markets, found in their research that, brand relevance is affected by the factors of risk and information cost reduction in B2B markets.

In few of the above mentioned studies (Backhaus et al., 2011; Fischer et al., 2010, Perrey et al., 2015) on the antecedents of brand relevance, it is determined that brand functions such as risk reduction, social impact, image effect, information gathering, reduction of search cost affect the significance of a brand in the purchasing process. It is observed that these functions

are analyzed under different headings, for instance social impact and image effect share a common conceptual substructure. Therefore, as a result of the literature review, it is seen that basic functions that may affect the role of a brand in the purchasing process are risk reduction, information gathering cost and social effect. Thus, in the following section of the study, conceptual contents of the mentioned functions and their effects on brand relevance are highlighted.

### 3.1. Risk Reduction

For more than fifty years, consumer behavior researchers and marketing practitioners have been studying on the perceived risk and elimination of it by customers. Brand is the main instrument used by customers while decreasing perceived risk. When consumers prefer popular brands, they feel secure about the problems that may occur after sale (Mitchell & McGoldrick, 1996). As brand owners want to sustain positive relations with consumers in the long term, they aim at creating a perception that they will protect consumer interests. Thus, brands make promises based on the duration they have; these promises may involve different issues such as consumer health and security, number and quantity of the product in a package. Experiencing a brand previously also creates a sense of trust and reduces the risk perceived by consumers (Ambler, 1997). Another effect of a brand that reduces risk is about the perception of quality. When brands are types of significant indicators about quality during purchase, they decrease perceived risk (Agarwal & Teas, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 1998; Guo et al., 2011; Mitchell & McGoldrick, 1996). On the other hand, the belief that popular brands are preferred by many people, -which means mass consumption- decreases perceived psychological risk (Mitchell & McGoldrick, 1996). In different studies carried out on different cultures on the basis of these approaches, it is determined that (Fischer et al., 2010; Perrey et al., 2015) risk reduction function affects brand relevance. It is believed that this effect is bigger in relatively expensive products (Perrey et al., 2003).

### 3.2. Information Gathering Cost

Consumers usually face quite complicated situations during purchase. The reason of this complication is that there is limited time while there are many variations of single product. These conditions created the basis of motivation for analyzing customers' information processing processes (see, Erdem & Swait, 1998; Jacoby, Speller & Kohn, 1974) and factors that decrease complications are attempted to be understood. Brand is one of these factors and it ensures consumers obtain information about a product quickly. Consumers get rid of the chaos of information by accessing information about the producer, content and source of a product

easily. Moreover, popular brands ensure consumers make easy and quick decisions by forming a safe basis (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Perrey et al., 2003). Having a previous experience about a brand is also another factor that decrease search costs by creating a sense of familiarity (Ambler, 1997). There are researches suggesting that data of past experiences about a brand is one of the most significant information resource used in the purchasing process (Mitchell & McGoldrick, 1996).

According to McKinsey's researches on different product types in different markets, the impact of a brand on easing information processing increases the positive effect of it on purchasing process (Perrey et al., 2015). Brands that have a place in consumers' minds stand out among the various alternatives in the market and decrease search cost. As people want to use resources efficiently during purchase process, they will prefer specific brands and cause brand relevance become higher (Backhaus et al., 2011; Mudambi, 2002).

### 3.3. Symbolic Impact Function

Symbolic impacts of brands play role in the creation of individuals' self-concepts and development of self-images (Fischer et al., 2010; Levy, 1959). Having the product of a popular brand has two impacts on consumers as inward and outward (Fischer et al., 2010; Perrey et al., 2015). This inward and outward approach is generally analyzed on the basis of personal or group level connections with the brand in marketing literature (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Swaminathan, Page & Gurhan-Canli, 2007)

Inward effect aims at explaining the contribution of brand use to self-expression of an individual or creation of self-identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Consumers have strong relations with the brands that have values in parallel with their self-concept and the ones with personality characteristics. Thus, brand relations become an instrument through which consumers can express their identities (Richins 1994; Swaminathan et al., 2007). Consumers buy specific products in order to protect and develop self-concepts (Shrauger, 1975) which cause personalization of a product through brand preferences and creation of a connection with self-identity (Fischer et al., 2010). This is why, it is thought that self-identity function has significant impact on brand relevance.

Outward effect emphasizes that brand use serves as an instrument through which an individual gives message to his/her social environment or society. While consumers construct self-identity through the brands they buy on one hand, they express themselves to society through them on the other (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Perrey et al., 2015). Regardless of income

level or social class level, consumers give importance to the factor of prestige in the purchasing process. They desire forming social relations through the status they obtain with the products they use and brands they have (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999). Consumers form a brand community with the other people that admire a common brand. This social connection formed through brands has significant place in developing consumers' social-identity (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). So, it is thought that the function of social-identity affect the role of brand during purchase process.

Symbolic impact has been analyzed in a one-dimensional way in very few studies researching the antecedents of brand relevance. In McKinsey researches, symbolic impact is expressed by the concept of image benefit. They analyzed self-fulfillment, image developing and identification's effects on brand relevance under the dimension of image benefit. In these researches, it is accepted that image benefit variable consists inward and outward sub-dimensions, which is similar with the assumption in similar studies in the literature (Perrey et al., 2015). In their evaluation on student sample, Fischer et al. (2010) determined that self-identity and group identity dimensions aren't dissociated and they used one single variable for these dimensions: Social impact. While measuring social impact variable, social-identity is taken into consideration more than self-identity in terms of conception. Thus, it can be said that self-identity variable isn't taken into consideration sufficiently.

According to Erdem et al., (2006) perceptions and meanings attributed to brands by consumers vary by collectivism score. Collectivist culture score of Turkey (Hofstede, 2017) is higher than all of the countries (France, Japan, Spain, US, UK) analyzed in the research by Fischer et al. (2010). So, in a new research on Turkish consumers, it can be assumed that the effect of social-identity on brand relevance can be different from the results obtained in previous studies. Thus, Fischer et al. (2010) defended that brand relevance value can change in time in the countries with different cultural norms and traditions. There are studies showing that self-identity and social-identity are the two different functions of brands (Rio et al., 2001), and each of them shapes consumer behaviors differently (Richins 1994; Swaminathan et al., 2007). According to these studies, relation between customers and brands on the basis of identity are bilateral; personal and social based relation.

As a result, it is believed that symbolic impact function of brands is the antecedent of brand relevance in the shape of two different dimensions: Self-identity and social-identity. This situation is tested in the empirical research within the scope of current paper.

### 3.4. Hypotheses

These hypotheses are developed in order to explain the relation between brand functions and brand relevance on the basis of the conceptual frame explained above:

H1: Risk reduction function positively affects brand relevance.

H2: Information gathering cost positively affects brand relevance.

H3: Self-identity function positively affects brand relevance.

H4: Social-identity function positively affects brand relevance.

## 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

### 4.1. Design, Questionnaire and Sample

Current research is designed as an empirical and descriptive structure in order to present the antecedents of brand relevance and determine the impact power of them. As brand relevance is evaluated on the basis of product, special attention is given in order to choose product types that are popular in the market, the ones with which respondents are familiar and purchased before. In order to decrease product type effect on results, two different products in different industries are used: Mobile phone and casual clothes. These products were also included in previous research (Fischer et al., 2010; Perrey et al., 2015) in the field. In these studies, while mobile phone brand relevance values were determined to be high in most of the countries, casual clothes brand relevance values were low. So, this data was taken into consideration while choosing product types for the current study.

Primary data was collected by using questionnaire involving structured questions and face-to-face interview technique. There are items, which were collected from the previous studies, measuring dependent and independent variables in the first section of questionnaire. Firstly, respondents were required to assume that they are in decision making process while purchasing mobile phone/casual clothes and scales in the literature were used. Brand relevance was measured by 3 items (Fischer et al., 2010), risk reduction was measured by 4 items (Fischer et al., 2010), social-identity was measured by 3 items (Fischer et al., 2010), self-identity was measured by 3 items (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) and information gathering cost was measured by 3 items (Backhaus et al., 2011). The expressions used in the process were checked by translating them from English to Turkish, then from Turkish to English. 5 points likert type scale was used for all of the variables in the first section. Age and gender of respondents were asked in the second section.

Although household living in Turkey was the target group of this study, because of limited time and financial resources, data was collected through convenience sampling method from the students of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Muğla S.K. University. Data collection process continued for one week on March, 2015. A total of 169 questionnaires were collected for mobile phone while a total of 167 questionnaires were collected for casual clothes. After eliminating non-convenient questionnaires, 164 mobile phone and 160 casual clothes questionnaires were used in the analysis section.

### 4.2. Data Control and Analyses

Demographic features of the sampling were measured through two variables: Gender and age. Participants' ages varied between 18 and 26 and the average age was 21,74. Gender of participants were distributed almost equally (50,9% female, 49,1% male).

In order to reveal the factor structures formed by items representing variables in the model, it was decided to conduct explorative factor analysis. Firstly, convenience of Barlett test and correlation matrix was determined. After this step, it was determined that KMO values were higher than 0,80 and it was found (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014) that values collected for both product types were convenient for factor analysis. Varimax rotation method was practiced in factor analysis and factors whose eigen value was higher than 1 were taken into consideration. Four factors obtained through this process (information gathering, risk reduction, social-identity, self-identity) explained 62.3% of total variance. It was determined that factor load of each item used in the questionnaire was higher than 0,4; thus, none of the items were excluded (Hair et al., 2014). Correlation values among these items were determined to be between 0.46-0.82 for information gathering cost, 0.75-0.88 for risk reduction, 0.59-0.66 was for social-identity and 0.60-0.81 for self-identity.

Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated for scale reliability test. It was determined that alpha value of all of the variables for both product types were higher than 0, 70, so internal consistency was sufficient (Hair et al., 2014). Relations suggested in the model were tested by regression analysis. Before the analysis, normality control of the data was carried out in order to see if it is proper for a parametric test. In order to ensure this, kurtosis and skewness values of all items in the data sets of both products were calculated. As the values were determined to be between -3 and +3, it is accepted that the analyzed data is distributed near-normally. So, it was determined that it was proper to practice parametric tests on the data we obtained (Akgul & Cevik, 2003).

There are significant issues to be checked before regression analysis; the first of these points is multi-collinearity. Instruments that were used in this process were correlation coefficients, tolerance values and variance inflation factors (VIF) (Akgul & Cevik, 2003; Kavak, 2013). As it was determined that all of the Pearson correlation values among independent variables were below 0,5 (Garson, 2012), it was seen that there was no problem in terms of intercorrelation. On the other hand, tolerance values for the independent variables of both product types were calculated and it was observed that all of them were higher than 0,8 (Garson, 2012). Finally, it was found that VIF values were below 2 (Garson, 2012). Therefore, correlation coefficients show that there isn't a collinearity problem in tolerance values and VIF values data set.

The second point that should be observed and checked is the condition of independent observations. Durbin-Watson coefficients were calculated and it was determined that the values were between 1,5 and 2,5; according to this result, there were independent observations (Garson, 2012).

After the controls, it was decided that the data set was proper for regression analysis and analysis section started in order to test the hypotheses of the study.

## 5. FINDINGS

In scope of the model of the study, independent variables were risk reduction, information gathering cost, self-identity and social-identity while brand relevance was dependent. Linear multiple regression was used for the data collected for these variables. Mobile phone regression analysis results are presented in Table-1.

**Table-1**: Mobile Phone Regression Analysis Results

|                | $R^2$ | Adj. $R^2$ | F(t)     | Beta  | p       |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------|---------|
| Model          | 0,631 | 0,622      | 68,010   |       |         |
| Constant       |       |            | (-0,416) |       | 0,678   |
| **Risk reduction** |   |            |          | 0,400 | 0,000*  |
| **Info. gat. cost** |  |            |          | 0,281 | 0,000*  |
| **Self-identity** |    |            |          | 0,133 | 0,023** |
| **Social-identity** |  |            |          | 0,201 | 0,001** |

\* $p<0,001$, \*\* $p<0,05$, Dependent variable: Brand relevance

According to the findings, risk reduction ($\beta=0,400$, $p<0,001$), information gathering cost ($\beta=0,281$, $p<0,001$), self-identity ($\beta=0,133$, $p<0,05$) and group identity ($\beta=0,201$, $p<0,05$) which are the brand functions evaluated for mobile phone, have positive effect on brand

relevance in terms of mobile phone. So, H1, H2, H3 and H4 hypotheses were supported for mobile phone. Casual clothes regression analysis results are presented in Table-2.

**Table-2**: Casual Clothes Regression Analysis Results

|  | $R^2$ | <u>Adj</u>. $R^2$ | F(t) | Beta | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | 0,534 | 0,522 | 44,354 |  |  |
| Constant |  |  | (3,596) |  | 0,000 |
| **Risk reduction** |  |  |  | 0,389 | 0,000* |
| **Info. gat. cost** |  |  |  | 0,297 | 0,000* |
| **Self-identity** |  |  |  | 0,031 | 0,681 |
| **Social-identity** |  |  |  | 0,148 | 0,036** |

* p<0,001,   ** p<0,05,  dependent variable: Brand relevance

It was determined that, functions of risk reduction (β=0,389, p<0,001), information gathering cost (β=0,297, p<0,001), group identity (β=0,148, p<0,05) have positive effect on brand relevance in terms of casual clothes. On the other hand, it was seen that self-identity function doesn't have an effect. Thus, H1, H2 and H4 hypotheses were supported for casual clothes, H3 hypothesis wasn't supported. When brand functions' impact power on brand relevance was analyzed, it was seen that risk reduction was the most efficient function for both product types. Information gathering cost and social-identity were the following functions.

On the other hand, brand relevance value measured for mobile phone (3, 52) was higher than the value measured for casual clothes (3,07). So, it can be said that participants give more importance to brand when they buy mobile phone. Besides, it was identified that brand relevance values of both product types didn't vary in terms of gender.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the current study, the concept of brand relevance is attempted to be explained in details by determining different antecedents that affect it. Obtained results show that, instead of using single dimension, social impact variable can be represented through a dual-dimension as self-identity and social-identity.

It is attempted to determine various brand functions that affect brand relevance and enable decision makers in brand investment area have higher foresight by using impact powers of these functions. These data will help marketing executives in planning brand budgets besides giving significant information about the impact of different brand functions; through analyzing these functions, executives know which one to choose and focus on. On the other hand, as mobile phone brand relevance value was higher than casual clothes value, it is possible to say that decision makers shall make higher brand investments for mobile phone.

It is found that risk reduction antecedent strongly affects brand relevance; this result is in line with the previous results in the field (Fischer et al., 2010) The view that risk reduction function is more important in relatively expensive products is also supported (Perrey et al., 2003); it can be said that mobile phones and casual clothes aren't in the category of affordable products for most of the university students. The second most effective driver of brand relevance is information gathering cost according to the findings. Existence of this antecedent was confirmed by Perrey et al., (2003) in previous B2C market studies; but this variable wasn't addressed in the study of Fischer et al. (2010). Obtained result supports the idea that function of information gathering increases the importance of brand role in the purchasing process. Impact powers of the first two antecedents are similar for both product types; the third most effective antecedent, social-identity, is higher for mobile phones. It is believed that intended use of casual clothes and its place caused that result. While self-identity is the antecedent with the relatively lowest impact power for mobile phone, there isn't found to be a meaningful relation between self-identity and brand relevance in terms of casual clothes. As very few products were analyzed, it is difficult to have a general opinion about the issue. Thus, it is suggested to test self-identity as an antecedent and in terms of its impact on different products in future studies. Besides, it is observed that sub-dimensions of social impact concept are the antecedents with generally the weakest impacts.

Mobile phone has a high brand relevance value (3,52) in the current research, which is in line with the past research (Fischer et al., 2010, Perrey et al., 2015). According to the evaluations of Fischer et al. (2010), brand relevance value obtained in USA (3,61) is higher than the value of our study while the values in other countries are lower. In other words, the closest brand relevance value to USA market is the value obtained in Turkish market. Although casual clothes brand relevance value is slightly lower (3,07) than mobile phone, it is significantly higher than the results obtained by Fischer et al. (2010) in 5 different countries. This may be resulted from cultural variables, but explaining the reasons of this situation is beyond the scope of current study. The closest value to Turkish market for casual clothes is obtained in Japan market (2,73). Comparisons with other countries on the basis of product types are made, but it seems impossible to reach a general result about similarities or differences on the basis of the data on only two products.

Data of the study is obtained through a limited sampling group involving university students in Muğla S.K. University, so it is not possible to generalize the findings for Turkish market. It is suggested for future studies to research brand relevance values and antecedents in

Turkish market with product types from different industries (fmcg, finance, retailing etc.) with a broader participation. On the other hand, in some previous research about brand relevance, data were collected from consumers in some European countries, in U.S. and Japan. The effects of cultural understandings on the concept can be researched and observed by making studies in different countries such as China, India, South America and Africa.

In the current research, brand functions that were presented in the related literature previously are discussed. It is determined that there are new brand functions (e.g. recall of past experiences) in different countries such as China (Guo et al., 2011). It is believed that, finding country-specific brand functions by carrying out qualitative and/or quantitative preliminary surveys and analyzing these new functions' effects on brand relevance will make significant contribution to the field.

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