

An Examination of the Brand Attitudes of Faculty of Sports Sciences Students Towards Sports Products

Bayram Kaya 

Abstract

Branding dates back to ancient times, with early civilizations like the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Chinese sealing items to signify ownership and quality. The modern concept of branding emerged after the Industrial Revolution, as increased population and consumption transformed markets, leading to more retailers. Manufacturers began naming products, securing patents, and using advertising to support their brands. Recently, sports have become crucial for a balanced and healthy lifestyle, preparing individuals psychologically and physiologically. As a global phenomenon, sports gain popularity based on societies' socio-economic conditions and contribute significantly to branding. This study examines the brand attitudes of Ardahan University Faculty of Sports Sciences students toward sports products, considering factors such as gender, age, academic year, licensed athlete status, family income, and annual spending on sports products. The descriptive survey model was employed, with 147 randomly selected students participating. The Brand Attitude Scale (BAS), developed by Polat et al., was used to assess students' attitudes. Results showed that brand preferences were influenced by advertisements, prices, product features, logos, and comfort needs. Local products were often favored, indicating conscious selection and habits shaped by advertising and logo preferences.

Keywords

Attitude, brand, sports products

Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Science, Ardahan University, Türkiye.

Corresponding Author: Bayram Kaya
Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Science, Ardahan University, Türkiye.
Email: bayramkaya@ardahan.edu.tr

Introduction

The concept of branding is an age-old phenomenon. Ancient civilizations such as the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Chinese initiated the first form of branding by sealing pottery and other items to signify ownership and quality (Perry & Wisnom, 2004). The modern notion of branding, however, emerged after the Industrial Revolution. The growing population during this period led to increased consumption, which transformed and expanded market structures, resulting in a rise in the number of retailers. Manufacturers began naming their products and securing patents, with advertising playing a supportive role.

The English word “brand” is derived from “branding”, a practice where farmers marked their livestock to distinguish them and prevent mixing in common pastures. This practice represents an early step toward differentiation. Well-known brands such as Levi's, Maxwell House, Budweiser and Coca-Cola which emerged during this period, continue to thrive today (Uztuğ, 2005; Jones, 2006).

In today's rapidly evolving conditions, the concept of branding encompasses registered names, abbreviations, and symbols that companies use to create a lasting impression in customers' minds and boost sales (TDK, 2024). According to Article 4 of Decree Law No. 556, a brand is defined as a sign that differentiates a company's goods and/or services from those of other businesses, often described as a trade or service mark (Mutluoğlu, 2010).

Various definitions of branding can be found in the literature. A brand generally refers to signs like letters, logos, or shapes used to distinguish a business's goods and services (Pınar, 2005). More broadly, a brand holds different meanings for customers and businesses, with many products on the market sold under distinct brands (Yükselen, 2003). It serves to mark a firm's goods and services and differentiate them from competitors (Eymen, 2007). Companies aim to increase brand value, recognition, market demand, and consumer loyalty to maintain their market presence (Kayalı et al., 2004).

Consumer preferences are often linked to their attitudes toward brands, which include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses based on experiences, knowledge, feelings, and motivations (İnceoğlu, 2011).

Factors such as brand perception, awareness, associations, satisfaction, and value influence brand attitudes, which are consumers' overall evaluations of a brand (Selvi, 2007). Sports have recently become vital for a quality and balanced lifestyle, playing a significant role in global branding influenced by societies' socio-economic conditions (Atasoy & Füsün, 2005; Ekmekçi et al., 2013; Ünver, 2023). Consequently, the desire for branded products in the sports sector has grown, reflecting its significant position in products and services (İslamoğlu & Fırat, 2011).

The aim of this study is to examine the brand attitudes of Ardahan University Faculty of Sports Sciences students towards sports products based on variables such as gender, age, academic year, licensed athlete status, family's monthly income, and average annual spending on sports products.

Method

Research Model

This study, which examines the brand attitudes of Ardahan University Faculty of Sports Sciences students, employed a descriptive survey model. The survey method, as known, involves describing situations as they are without any alteration (Karasar, 2007).

Population and Sample

The research population consists of students enrolled at the Ardahan University Faculty of Sports Sciences. The sample was composed of randomly selected volunteer students from this population.

Data Collection

Permission was obtained from the original scale owner to use the Brand Attitude Scale. Participants were informed about the research, and the survey was distributed via Google Forms to volunteers. The collected data was checked and recorded.

Data Analysis

The study focused on variables such as gender, age, academic year, licensed athlete status, family's monthly income, and average annual spending on sports products. To determine students' brand attitudes, the 20-item Brand

Attitude Scale (BAS) developed by Polat et al. (2008) was applied using a five-point Likert scale coded as: “1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree”. The scale consists of 5 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions; These are “brand and advertising”, “identification with the brand”, “caring about the brand”, “brand preference” and “brand origin”. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency value for the overall scale is 0.77, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency value for its subdimensions; “Brand and Advertisement” sub-dimension is 0.71, “identification with the brand” sub-dimension is 0.76, “caring about the brand” sub-dimension is 0.72, “brand preference” sub-dimension is 0.65 and the “brand origin” sub-dimension was found to be 0.63. Statistical software was used for data analysis, calculating standard deviation, percentage, and mean values. Data followed a normal distribution. For two-variable comparisons, an independent sample t-test was used; for multiple variables, ANOVA analysis was conducted. Where significant differences existed, the LSD Post-Hoc test identified the favorable group.

Findings

Table 1. Personal information

	Variables	Frekans (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	78	53,1
	Female	69	46,9
Class	1st Year	43	29,3
	2nd Year	29	19,7
	3rd Year	34	23,1
	4th Year	41	27,9
Licensed Athlete Status	Yes	57	38,5
	No	90	60,8
Average Annual Sports Product Purchases	1-5 times	78	52,7
	6-10 times	44	29,7
	11 or more times	25	17,6

According to the data, 53.1% of the participants are male, 46.9% are women, 29.3% are first-year students, 19.7% are 2nd Class, 23.1% are 3rd Class and 27.9% of them were 4th grade students; 38.5% engage in licensed sports, 60.8% do not do sports with a license; 52.7% of the year have 1-5 sports products, 29.7% have 6-10 sports products and 17.6% have 11 or more sports products; and 52.7% purchase between 1 and 5 sports products annually. 29.7% purchase 6 and 10 sports products and 17.6% purchase 11 or more sports products.

Table 2. Normality test

Factors	Skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnow
Brand Attitude Scale	,257	,337	,706

According to Table 2, since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov values were found to be $p > 0.05$, it was determined that parametric tests would be conducted (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

Table 3. Cronbach alpha test

Factors	(Cronbach Alpha)
Brand Attitude Scale	,842
Brand and Advertising	,865
Brand Identification	,883
Brand Importance	,873
Brand Preference	,887
Brand Origin	,855
Brand and Social Relationships	,876

According to the table 3, it can be observed that the overall scale and all sub-dimensions fall within a reliable range.

Table 4. Gender variable t-test

	Gender	N	X	SD	T	P
Brand Attitude Scale	Male	81	2,6155	,71749	-,687	,493
	Female	66	2,6906	,57631		
Brand and Advertising	Male	81	2,6122	,91048	,629	,531
	Female	66	2,5282	,66853		
Brand Identification	Male	81	3,0751	1,07230	,101	,920
	Female	66	3,0566	,96018		
Brand Importance	Male	81	2,3269	,92697	-1,111	,269
	Female	66	2,4960	,86779		
Brand Preference	Male	81	2,0822	,80144	-2,166	,032
	Female	66	2,3508	,65515		
Brand Origin	Male	81	3,0798	,94149	,185	,854
	Female	66	3,0503	,82792		
Brand and Social Relationships	Male	81	3,0132	1,21099	-1,429	,155
	Female	66	3,2903	1,06567		

According to Table 4, it was found that there is no statistically significant difference between Brand Attitude and its sub-dimensions and the gender variable, except for the Brand Preference sub-dimension. A statistically significant difference was observed between the Gender variable and the Brand Preference sub-dimension. It was found that the average brand preference is higher among female participants compared to male participants.

Table 5. Class variable anova test

	Class	N	X	SD	F	P	Tukey
Brand Attitude Scale	1st	43	2,8916	,55153	4,656	,004	1,2
	2nd	30	2,3282	,68925			
	3rd	33	2,6747	,42445			
	4th	41	2,6228	,78584			
Brand and Advertising	1st	43	2,8605	,67326	3,933	,010	1,2
	2nd	30	2,2414	,78911			
	3rd	33	2,4621	,59003			
	4th	41	2,5488	,97983			
Brand Identification	1st	43	3,2460	,82001	1,582	,197	-
	2nd	30	2,6667	,1,15470			
	3rd	33	3,1458	,95015			
	4th	41	3,0000	1,21296			
Brand Importance	1st	43	2,5930	,86950	1,583	,196	-
	2nd	30	2,2155	,81483			
	3rd	33	2,2500	,76547			
	4th	41	2,5183	1,07295			
Brand Preference	1st	43	2,2561	,54339	,160	,923	-
	2nd	30	2,1724	,85069			
	3rd	33	2,2576	,67744			
	4th	41	2,3049	1,01012			
Brand Origin	1st	43	3,4048	,78012	4,901	,003	1,3
	2nd	30	2,6333	1,00815			
	3rd	33	3,1354	,71772			2,4
	4th	41	2,8111	,96165			
Brand and Social Relationships	1st	43	3,5854	,99939	7,261	,000	1,3
	2nd	30	2,5517	1,04663			
	3rd	33	3,4242	1,09773			2,4
	4th	41	2,8171	1,13884			

No statistically significant difference was found between the Class variable and the Brand Identification, Brand Importance and Brand Preference sub-dimensions. However, a significant difference was observed between the Class variable and the Brand Attitude dimension, as well as the Brand and Advertising sub-dimensions. According to the Tukey test conducted to determine which groups favored the differences, it was found that the difference is significant in favor of the first-year students compared to the second-year students. Additionally, a statistically significant difference was observed between the Class variable and the Brand Origin and Brand and Social Relationships sub-dimensions. The Tukey test indicated that there is a significant difference in favor of the first and third-year students compared to the second and fourth-year students.

Table 6. Licensed athlete t-test

	Licensed athlete	N	X	SD	T	P
Brand Attitude Scale	Yes	65	2,5838	,52177	-1,111	,268
	No	82	2,7079	,75462		
Brand and Advertising	Yes	65	2,5263	,70026	,865	,389
	No	82	2,6453	,87292		
Brand Identification	Yes	65	2,9198	,95592	-1,437	,153
	No	82	3,1810	1,06274		
Brand Importance	Yes	65	2,2588	,78485	-1,723	,087
	No	82	2,5270	,99706		
Brand Preference	Yes	65	2,1364	,67326	-,205	,838
	No	82	2,1622	,74992		
Brand Origin	Yes	65	3,0741	,81242	,077	,939
	No	82	3,0619	,95350		
Brand and Social Relationships	Yes	65	3,1000	1,11139	-,599	,550
	No	82	3,2230	1,20542		

No statistically significant difference was found between the Licensed Athlete variable and the Average Brand Attitude, as well as all its sub-dimensions. However, it was observed that the averages of licensed athletes are lower compared to those of non-licensed athletes.

Table 7. Anova test for average sports products purchased in one year

	Number of Sports Products Purchased in a Year	N	X	SD	F	P
Average Brand Attitude	1-5 times	77	2,6445	,58796	,072	,930
	6-10 times	44	2,6481	,75853		
	11 or more times	26	2,7007	,67792		
Brand and Advertising	1-5 times	77	2,4903	,75920	,515	,515
	6-10 times	44	2,6136	,91730		
	11 or more times	26	2,6800	,71633		
Brand Identification	1-5 times	77	3,1741	1,01397	1,721	,183
	6-10 times	44	3,0857	1,07358		
	11 or more times	26	2,7121	,92178		
Brand Importance	1-5 times	77	2,4643	,86860	,314	,731
	6-10 times	44	2,3295	,99967		
	11 or more times	26	2,4400	,86987		
Brand Preference	1-5 times	77	2,1700	,68547	1,486	,230
	6-10 times	44	2,2670	,79679		
	11 or more times	26	2,4800	,99979		
Brand Origin	1-5 times	77	3,0597	,82199	,087	,916
	6-10 times	44	3,1143	1,01280		
	11 or more times	26	3,0152	,92854		
Brand and Social Relationships	1-5 times	77	3,0800	,1,11513	,272	,762
	6-10 times	44	3,2273	1,16865		
	11 or more times	26	3,0600	1,20173		

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable “How many times do you purchase sports products on average in a year?” and the Average Brand Attitude, as well as its sub-dimensions. It was observed that the average Brand Attitude for the variable of purchasing 1-5 or more products is lower compared to the other variables.

Discussion and Results

In this section, the findings will be compared with similar studies in the literature, and conclusions will be drawn through discussion. It has been concluded that participants believe that advertisements influence brand preference, prices and features affect preferences, logos are decisive, domestic products are preferred, and the use of branded sports products meets the need for comfort. The emergence of such results suggests that participants not only consciously choose sports products but also have habits based on advertisements and logos.

Although there is no significant difference in brand attitude averages between genders, it is observed that female participants have higher brand attitude averages. It can be stated that male participants tend to have a specific brand preference when purchasing sports products compared to female participants. This situation may be related to the higher competitive drive among men in sports activities compared to women. Güngörür (2017) found no significant difference between the gender variable and the brand personality dimension and its sub-dimensions. Similarly, Deniz (2019) did not find a significant difference in brand attitude averages between genders in his study conducted on secondary school students.

A significant difference was found between the class variable and the brand attitude dimension, as well as the brand and advertising, brand origin, and brand and social relationships sub-dimensions. The lowest average was observed among second-year students. The averages of first and fourth-year students were found to be higher. The high averages of fourth-year students may be due to upperclassmen having limited time and money to engage with brands due to activities like exams and internships that significantly impact their lives.

No statistically significant difference was found between the licensed athlete variable and the average brand attitude, as well as all its sub-dimensions. However, it was observed that the averages of licensed athletes are lower compared to those of non-licensed athletes. This result may be influenced by the belief that students who participate in licensed sports are more conscious and recognize the importance of brands for performance. Studies conducted by Dervent et al. (2010) and Deniz (2019) support this finding, as they showed that non-licensed athletes had higher averages compared to licensed athletes.

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable “How many times do you purchase sports products on average in a year?” and the Average Brand Attitude, as well as its sub-dimensions. The average Brand Attitude for the variable of purchasing 1-5 or more products was lower compared to other variables. This result may stem from the fact that the participants come from families with limited financial means.

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Author contributions

The author contributed to the manuscript's conceptualization, analyzed, editing, and finalization.

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Ethical statement

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of University Ardahan (25.10.2024/No. E-67796128-819-2400036080).

ORCID

Bayram Kaya 

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