

Analysing the consumer behaviour and the influence of brand loyalty in purchasing sportswear products

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Abstract. Brand loyalty is an important term that defines the relationship between customer and it is important for the retailers to have a large loyal customer base. Specifically, sportswear products seem to be one of the most convenient apparel product categories to develop loyalty for the consumers. In this study, it was aimed to analyse the profile of sportswear consumers and their loyalty towards the leading sportswear retailers in Turkey. For this aim, a survey was conducted among 190 participants aged between 18 and 40, and the socio-demographic characteristics of the consumers were explored. The results revealed that more than half of the participants (54.74%) identified themselves as loyal customers in terms of sportswear products. The loyal consumers stated that they would continue to buy from these brands in the future and recommend to others. Expressing the reason for loyalty, the majority of the participant related their loyalty to the satisfying products offered by this brand. However, the participants seem likely to switch to the other brands if the other brands offer attractive promotions.

1. Introduction

Brand loyalty is an important term that defines the relationship between customer and brand and expresses the extent to which customers feel that they are in synchronization with the brand [1]. Aaker defines [2] brand loyalty as a situation which reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features. Defined as above, brand loyalty was analysed as one of the major component of brand equity by several researchers [3-6].

It is important for the retailers to have a large loyal consumer base. The loyalty enables the consumers to develop habits such as making purchases from the same brand or same retailer and as consumers become more loyal, they do not prefer to assess the other alternatives such as lower price, attractive promotions and they are less likely to switch to other rivals. On the other hand, some product categories are more convenient for the consumers to develop loyalty. For instance being highly functional and technology intensive products, sportswear is one category of apparel products for which the consumers usually make their decision considering the brands.

However, studies exploring the brand loyalty of consumers to apparel products particularly sportswear products are quite limited. Competing in a harsh environment, the sportswear brands and retailers should find out level of loyalty of their consumers and the approaches of consumers towards sportswear products.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the profile of sportswear consumers and their loyalty towards the leading sportswear retailers in Turkey. For this aim, the socio-demographic characteristics of the consumers including gender, age, education level, income level, sportswear purchasing frequency, ratio of monthly income shared to sportswear purchasing and ratio of sportswear purchases in whole apparel purchases were explored and their distribution based on the consumers' loyalty was analysed.



2. Method

A survey was prepared including questions about socio-demographic characteristics and brand loyalty of the consumers. The most frequently purchased sportswear brands of the consumers were questioned and their thoughts about loyalty towards these brands were analysed. The questions measuring consumers' brand loyalty were adopted from the previous studies [4-6]. The survey was conducted among 190 participants aged between 18 and 40 and the results were analysed statistically.

3. Result

A total of 190 responses were analysed and Table 1 below demonstrates the number of participants and their percentages in terms of gender, age, education level and monthly income level.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

		No. of participant	% of participant
Gender	Female	86	54.7
	Male	104	45.3
Age	18-23	125	65.8
	24-29	54	28.4
	30-35	9	4.7
	36 and above	2	1.1
Education level	Secondary school	1	0.5
	High school	15	7.9
	Undergraduate student	123	64.7
	Undergraduate	38	20.0
	Graduate student	8	4.2
	Graduate	5	2.6
Monthly income	1000 TL and below	37	19.5
	1000-2500 TL	43	22.6
	2500-4000 TL	49	25.8
	4000 TL and above	61	32.1

The results revealed that 54.7% of the participants are male while 45.3% of the participants are female. Most of the participants (65.8%) are between the ages of 18-23 and 64.7% of them are attending undergraduate.

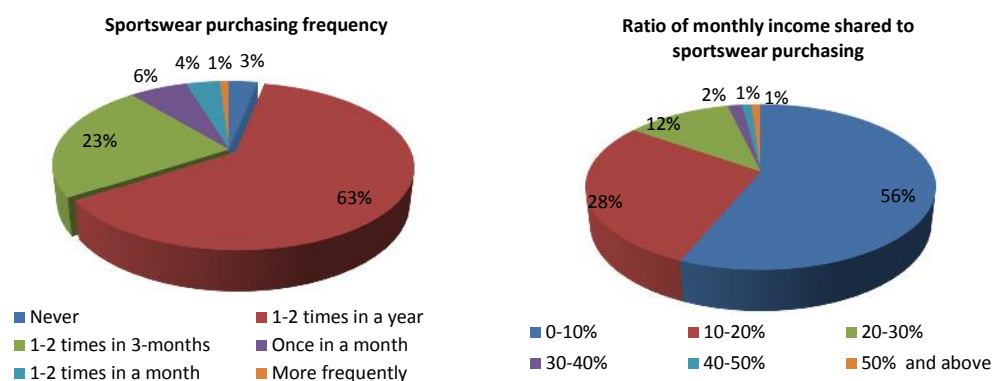


Figure 1. Sportswear purchasing frequency and ratio of monthly income shared to sportswear purchasing

Regarding the Figure 1, it can be stated that 56.3% of the participants spent 0-10% of their monthly income for sportswear which was followed by 28.4% of the participants that spent 10-20% of that amount. Moreover, the shopping frequency was expressed to be once-twice in a year by 62.6% and once-twice in three-month time by 23.2% of the participants. As shown in Figure 2, most of the participants share only 0-10% of their whole apparel purchases to the sportswear purchases.

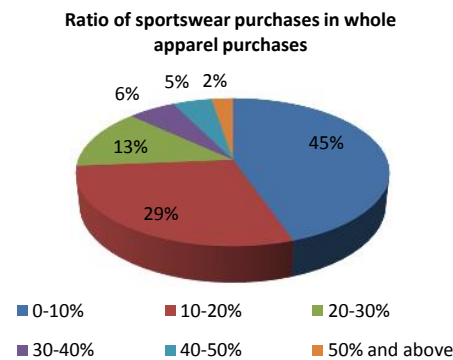


Figure 2. Ratio of sportswear purchases in whole apparel purchases

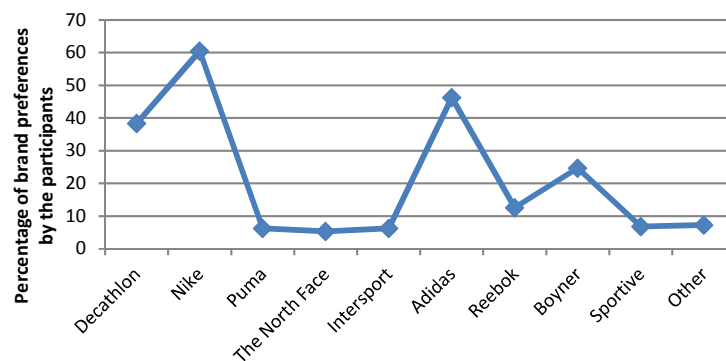


Figure 3. Brand preferences of the participants

The brand preferences of the participants were shown in Figure 3. The loyalty of the participants towards the brands they prefer was inquired with 9 questions and 7 point Likert scale; and the responses of the participants to these questions were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses of the participants to the brand loyalty items.

Brand loyalty item	Average	Standard deviation
I consider myself to be loyal to X.	3.33	1.72
X would be my first choice.	4.14	1.77
I will not visit other stores if X is available nearby.	3.36	1.79
I will keep on visiting X as long as it provides me satisfied products.	5.17	1.56
I am still willing to visit X even if product prices are a little higher than that of its competitors.	3.48	1.74
I would not switch to another store even if the other store offers promotions.	2.34	1.37
I would recommend X to others.	5.07	1.45
I regularly visit X.	3.72	1.62
I intend to visit X again.	4.97	1.48

The average of the nine responses given by each participant was calculated and the scores of four and above were accepted to indicate the loyalty to the brand. According to the results, it was revealed that more than half of the participants (54.74%) identified themselves as loyal customers in terms of sportswear products.

The loyal consumers stated that they would continue to buy from these brands in the future and recommend to others. Expressing the reason for loyalty, the majority of the participant related their loyalty to the satisfying products offered by this brand. However, the participants seem likely to switch to the other brands if the other brands offer attractive promotions.

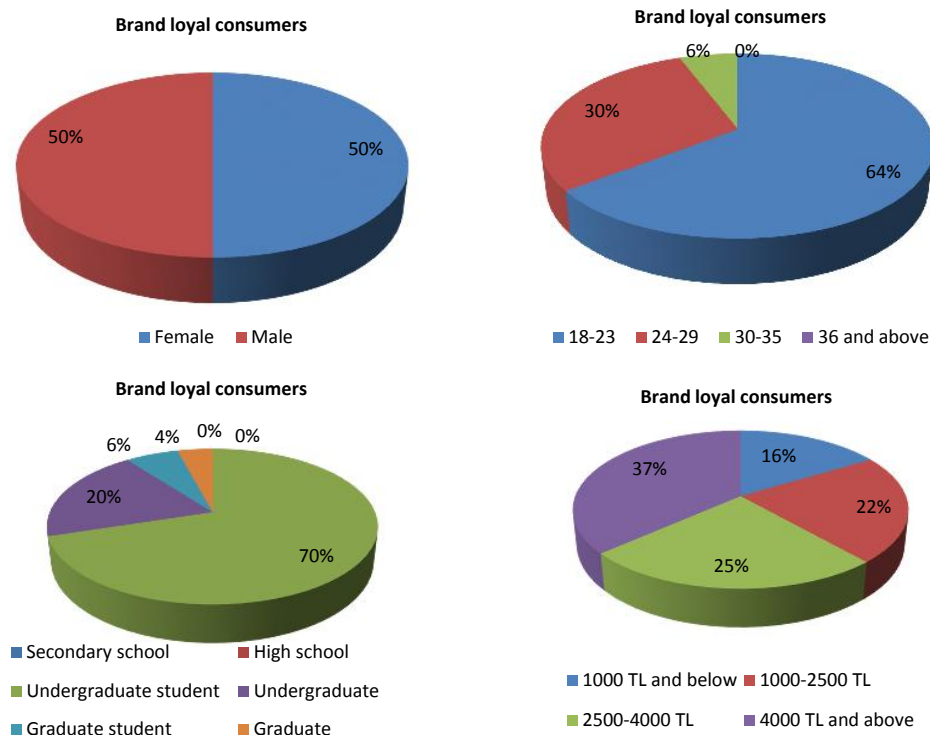


Figure 4. Distribution of brand loyal consumers with regard to gender, age, education and monthly income respectively

In Figure 4, brand loyal consumers were analyzed with regard to socio-demographic characteristics including gender, age, education and monthly income respectively. According to the graphs, it is seen that percentage of brand loyal female and male consumers are equal. With regard to age group of the brand loyal consumers, it was revealed the brand loyal consumers are concentrated within the age group of 18-23, which was followed by the age group of 24-29. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the participants included in the survey were undergraduate students. When the education level of brand loyal consumers was examined, it was also observed that most of the brand loyal consumers (70%) are undergraduate students.

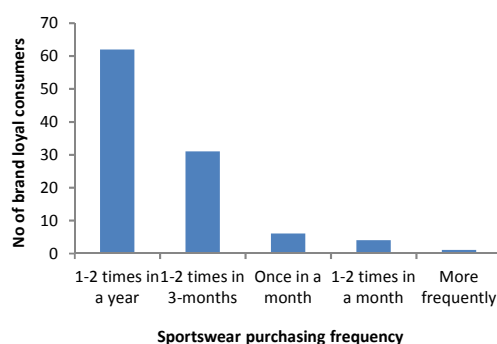


Figure 5. Sportswear purchasing frequency of brand loyal consumers

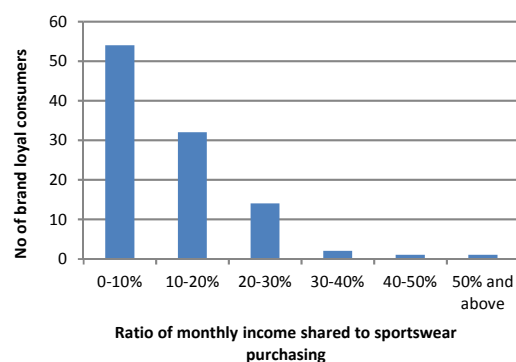


Figure 6. Ratio of monthly income shared to sportswear purchasing of brand loyal consumers

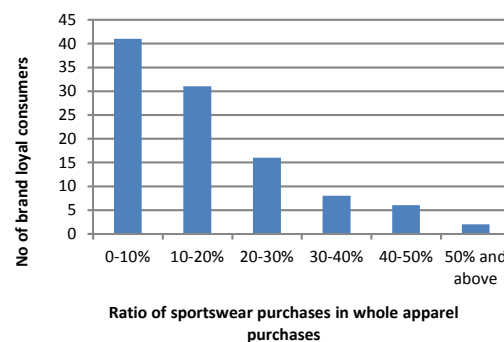


Figure 7. Ratio of sportswear purchases in whole apparel purchases of brand loyal consumers

Figure 5 demonstrates the distribution of the sportswear purchasing frequency of brand loyal consumers. The number of the brand loyal consumers decreases as the sportswear purchasing frequency increases. This trend was also realized with regard to ratio of monthly income shared to sportswear purchasing and ratio of sportswear purchases in whole apparel purchases of brand loyal consumers. Accordingly, number of brand loyal consumers decrease as the ratio of monthly income shared to sportswear purchases and the ratio of sportswear purchases in whole apparel purchases; as shown in Figures 6 and 7, respectively.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the socio-demographic profile of sportswear consumers in Turkey through and analysed their loyalty towards the leading sportswear brands they mostly prefer. The results indicated that 54.7% of the participants are male while 45.3% of the participants are female. Most of the participants (65.8%) are between the ages of 18-23 and 64.7% of them are attending undergraduate. It can also be stated that 56.3% of the participants spent only 0-10% of their monthly income for sportswear. Moreover, the shopping frequency was expressed to be once-twice in a year by 62.6% and once-twice in three-month time by 23.2% of the participants. Besides, most of the participants share only 0-10% of their whole apparel purchases to the sportswear purchases.

With respect to the brand loyalty, more than half of the participants (54.74%) identified themselves as loyal customers in terms of sportswear products. The analysis of the brand loyal consumers with regard to socio-demographic characteristics revealed parallel trends with the profile of the whole participants included in the survey.

In conclusion, it was found out that the sportswear consumers in Turkey are medium to high level loyal to the sportswear brands, which means that the retailers should concentrate on the activities, which increase the loyalty of consumers. However, these activities should particularly underline the outstanding features of the products rather than the other components of marketing mix, which are promotion, price and place.

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