

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND
EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SELF-BRAND
CONNECTION

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| AVE | Average Variance Extracted |
| BT | Brand Trust |
| CE | Customer Engagement |
| CBR | Customer-Based Corporate Reputation |
| CR | Corporate Reputation |
| CFA | Confirmatory Factor Analysis |
| CFI | Comparative Fit Index |
| EA | Emotional Attachment |
| EE | Emotional Engagement |
| EFA | Exploratory Factor Analysis |
| GOF | Goodness-of-Fit |
| H | Hypothesis |
| MLE | Maximum Likelihood Estimation |
| NFI | Normed Fit Index |
| PSQ | Perceived Service Quality |
| RMR | Root Mean Square Residual |
| RMSEA | Root Mean Square Error of Approximation |
| SBC | Self-Brand Connection |
| SEM | Structural Equation Modeling |
| SERVQUAL | Service Quality Scale |
| TLI | Tucker-Lewis Index |
| VS | Versus |
| WOM | Word-of-Mouth |
| YÖK | Turkish Higher Education Institution (Yükseköğretim Kurulu) |

LIST OF SYMBOLS

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| α | Cronbach's coefficient alpha |
| n | Sample size |
| p | Significance level |
| χ^2 | Chi-square statistic |
| γ_i | Standardized parameter estimate |

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

“Antecedents and Consequences of Customer Engagement and Emotional Attachment: An Examination of the Self-Brand Connection”

This study is designed to provide insights into the processes through which individuals develop self-connection to the brands around them. With this aim, a conceptual model that proposes perceived service quality, brand trust, and customer-based corporate reputation as the antecedents of customers’ engagement with and emotional attachment to brands; while depicts self-brand connection as the consequence of these two constructs is developed. The model also expects the university type (state vs. private) to play a moderator role that will create significant differences in the hypothesized relationships.

The significance of this study is that it is the first attempt that integrates all these concepts into a comprehensive body and tests this model based on data collected from the higher education industry in Turkey. A total of 395 respondents participated in the study through answering structured questionnaires distributed via Internet.

The results support that perceived service quality positively influences customer-based corporate reputation and brand trust, which leads to a positive effect on emotional attachment. Customer-based corporate reputation also has a positive influence on customer engagement, whereas brand trust does not. As a result, these two concepts (customer engagement and emotional attachment) affect self-brand connection. However, no significant differences are found between state and private universities as to the relationships of interest.

TEZ ÖZETİ

“Müşteri Angajmanı ve Duygusal Bağın Sebep ve Sonuçları: Kişi-Marka Bağıntısı Üzerine Bir Araştırma ”

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bireylerin çevrelerindeki markalarla kurdukları kişisel bağların nasıl geliştiğini açıklamaktır. Bu sebeple, hizmet kalitesi algısının, markaya duyulan güvenin ve müşteri odaklı kurumsal itibarın tüketicilerin marka angajmanına ve markayla kurdukları duygusal bağa öncülük eden ve tüketici angajmanı ve bağının sonucu olarak kişi-marka bağıntısını öneren bir kavramsal model geliştirilmiştir. Modelde aynı zamanda üniversite türünün (devlet veya özel) önerilen ilişkilerde anlamlı derecede farklılıklar yaratacak bir düzenleyici değişken rolü olacağı beklenmektedir.

Çalışmanın önemi, tüm bu kavramları anlamlı bir bütün içerisinde birbirine entegre eden ilk araştırma olması ve Türkiye’deki üniversitelerden toplanan verilere dayanarak bu modeli test etmesidir. 395 üniversite öğrencisi, tamamı internet yoluyla dağıtılan yapılandırılmış anketleri cevaplayarak bu çalışmaya katılmıştır.

Sonuçlar, hizmet kalitesi algısının müşteri odaklı kurumsal itibarı ve markaya olan güveni olumlu yönde etkilediğini desteklemektedir. Bu durum da duygusal bağ kurmada olumlu bir etkiye neden olmaktadır. Markaya olan güvenin, müşteri angajmanı kurmada bir etkisi yok iken, müşteri odaklı kurumsal itibarın olumlu bir etkisi bulunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu iki kavramın (müşteri angajmanı ve duygusal bağın) kişi-marka bağıntısı üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ancak, ilişki bağlamında, devlet üniversiteleri ve özel üniversiteler arasında öngörülen ilişkiler bazında anlamlı derecede farklılıklar bulunmamıştır.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Universities, higher education institutions, have a moral and profound responsibility to increase the knowledge, values, skills, and awareness for creating the sustainability of the future (Cortese, 2003).

A university as a brand manifests its institutional features by distinguishing itself from other universities, builds trust by delivering a certain level and type of higher education, reflects its sufficiency to meet students' needs, and helps potential applicants to make their decision wisely (Bick, Jacobson, and Abratt, 2003). In light of this statement, it can be said that, choosing a university is similar to choosing a product's brand that you can trust in and be satisfied with the service quality at first. University choice, sure, plays a very important role in life, as it has to do with education, which shapes people's lives. Supporting this understanding, Bourdieu's (1996) notion as a "*field of a power*" can be recalled by the higher education's complex, fragmented, argumentative, productive, subject-forming world-wide arrangement and its specific rules and exchanges (Marginson, 2006).

Perceived service quality has been an interesting subject for academicians over the decades. Significance of this concept has been emphasized in different contexts. Its effects on brand trust (Chen, Chang, and Lan, 2013), customer satisfaction (Brady and Robertson, 2001; Winsted, 2000; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996; Cronin and Taylor, 1992), loyalty (Pollack, 2009) and customer-based corporate reputation (Schwaiger, 2004; Podolny and Phillips, 1996; Fryxell and Wang, 1994) are already studied in the previous works. In addition to these effects, perceived

service quality plays an important role in the engagement of customers to the brands they are using. Consumers need to trust the brands to develop brand connection (Chen, Chang, and Lan, 2013). In other words, brand trust and perceived service quality help brands to establish successful consumer relationships in the long-term (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004; Doney and Cannon, 1997). Corporate reputation, defined as a social identity and an intangible resource contributing to the institution's performance and survival significantly (Hall, 1993; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990), has been found to influence consumer behavior as well (e.g., Hansen, Samuelsen, and Silseth, 2008; Walsh and Beatty, 2007; Walsh, Dinnie, and Wiedmann, 2006; Davies et al., 2002; Groenland, 2002).

In light of the past research about the perceived service quality, corporate reputation, and brand trust, as aforementioned, it can be said that there is a strong relationship between these concepts in the context of higher education institutions. The universities with good reputation, like brands, are perceived by students as reliable and highly qualified. Consequently, students choose these universities and recommend them to the people around them by positive word-of-mouth (WOM). In the long run, if the university (brand) establishes a bond with its students (customers), emotional attachment is created. Students engage with their universities with their motivation, psychological connection, feeling of belonging, commitment, and their academic investment (London, Downey, and Mace, 2007). To be satisfied, the students use these universities like brands and expressing their self-concepts over them (Richins, 1994; Ball and Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998). Hence, self-brand connections are formed (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). Accordingly, universities become a representative of the self-identity. Even after the graduation,

students still support their universities and their values.

The aim of this study is to present the importance of the perceived service quality, customer-based corporate reputation, and brand trust concepts in building self-brand connections through the emotional attachment and customer (student) engagement. More importantly, although the relationships between the concepts mentioned in the above are widely accepted in literature, their influence on emotional attachment and customer engagement leading to self-brand connection have not been studied in the higher education literature so far.

The study's significance is that all these concepts including perceived service quality, brand trust, and customer-based corporate reputation have not been integrated into in to an exhaustive model so far, especially in the higher education literature. Correspondingly, the significance in this study is to fill the gap, which stands for the compound effects of PSQ, BT, CBR, CE, and EA causing self-brand connection.

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, literature on self-brand connection and its antecedents is reviewed. In Chapter 3, the proposed self-brand connection model is explained and all the related hypotheses are stated. In Chapter 4, main research questions are listed, and data collection and measure development processes are explicated. Details of data analyses procedures and results of hypotheses tests are provided in Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, main findings of the study and their theoretical and practical implications are discussed, basic limitations of the research are mentioned, and future research areas are suggested.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. SERVICE QUALITY

As a result of the increasing competition in business environment, companies (including those that sell tangible products) start to focus more on improving their services (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996). Delivering high quality service has become a critical factor for success and survival (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985). The early writings on the topic are mostly related to defining service quality from consumers' point of view and identifying its dimensions (e.g., Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988, 1985). Later on, the consequences of quality perceptions have started to be discussed (e.g., Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985) and service quality measurement has gained increasing importance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988).

2.1.1. Definition and Dimensions of Service Quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) define service quality as “*the degree and direction of discrepancy between customers' service perceptions and expectations*” (p. 48). In addition, several attempts have been made to conceptualize its dimensions (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Sasser, Olsen, and Wyckoff (1978) state the three dimensions of service performance: level of material, facilities, and personnel. Grönroos (1982) talks about two different types of service quality: technical and functional. Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) differentiate between

physical quality, corporate quality, and interactive quality. The common point in all of the studies is that perceived service quality (hereafter, PSQ) is affected not just from the actual service performance, but also from the delivery process and the peripherals associated with the service (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003).

A comprehensive study from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) identifies ten dimensions that are related to how consumers form their service quality perceptions. These dimensions are *tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *competence*, *courtesy*, *credibility*, *security*, *access*, *communication*, and *understanding the customer*. Then the authors combine competence, courtesy, credibility, and security under the name “assurance”; and access, communication, and understanding the customer under the name “empathy”. As a result, the following five dimensions representing service quality are offered (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003):

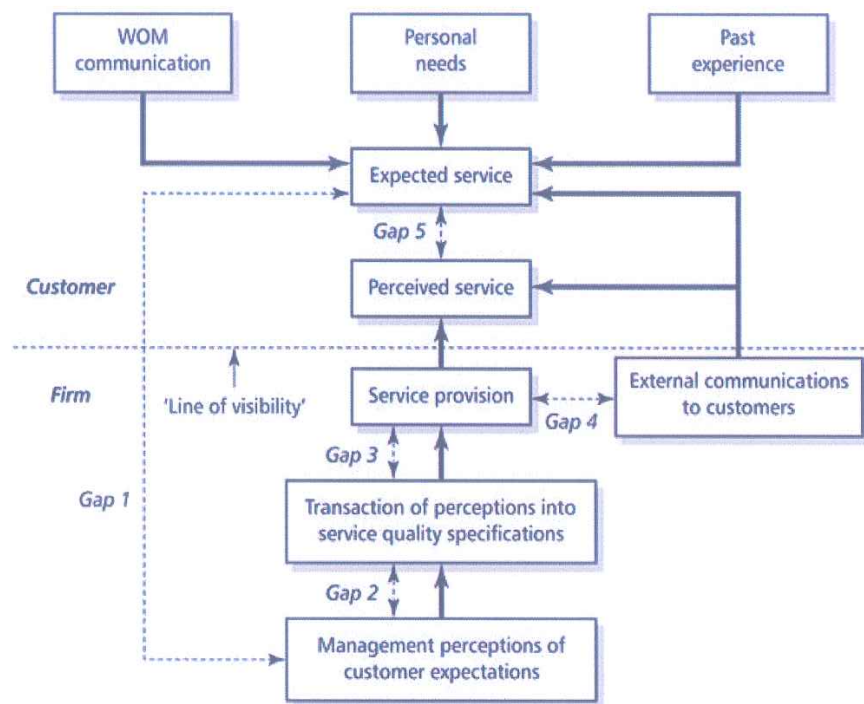
- *Tangibles*: Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
- *Reliability*: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- *Responsiveness*: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- *Assurance*: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- *Empathy*: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

2.1.2. Service Quality Model

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) define service quality from customers’ point of view as the “*gap between expectations and perceptions*”. The

authors also offer a model that represents the delivery of service quality in a structured way, with a focus on the four provider gaps and one customer gap. Figure 2.1. is the visual depiction of the model, which includes word-of-mouth communications, personal needs, and past experience as the determinants of customer expectations (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990).

Figure 2.1. Service Quality Model



Source: Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., and Berry, L. (1990). *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. New York: The Free Press.

The first four gaps are referred to as the “*provider gaps*” and they are responsible for the existence of the fifth gap – “*customer gap*” (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Gap 1 is related to not knowing what customers expect (Parasuraman and Zeithaml,

2003). This gap may occur due to lack of marketing research; lack of upward communication by the front line employees who are in close contact with the customers; lack of focus on establishing relationships with the customers; and not giving enough importance to service recovery strategies (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Gap 2 occurs when the company cannot design the service based on the customers' expectations (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). This gap is mostly due to the fact that intangibility of services makes it difficult for customers to communicate explicitly what they expect and for the companies to conceptualize customers' expectations (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Even when the company can design the service in a way that reflects the real preferences of customers, it may not be always possible to deliver the service up to those standards and *Gap 3* emerges (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Since the service is delivered through front line employees, the management of human resources is a critical task to close this gap. Another problem that may widen this gap is the existence of intermediaries to deliver the service and how well they are trained, integrated, and managed makes a difference in customer perceptions (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). The final gap, *Gap 4*, is related to the difference between the company's actual service delivery and what it communicates to the customers (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). The promises made by the service providers through media increase customers' expectations; and when the companies cannot deliver up to those expectations, this gap inevitably emerges (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003).

On the other hand, *customer gap* is the difference between what customers expect and what they perceive (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). According to the expectation/disconfirmation paradigm of satisfaction, when perceptions of

performance are equal to or above expectations, confirmation (or positive disconfirmation) occurs and the customers are satisfied (Oliver, Rust, and Varki, 1997). Nevertheless, when perceptions are below expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs and the customers are dissatisfied (Oliver, Rust, and Varki, 1997). The principles of this paradigm are applied to service quality evaluations as well.

Bitner and Hubbert (1994) define service encounter satisfaction as “*consumers’ satisfaction/dissatisfaction with a discrete service encounter*”; overall service satisfaction as “*consumers’ satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the organization based on all encounters*”; and service quality as “*consumers’ overall impression of the inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services*”. These states of satisfaction/dissatisfaction or service quality evaluations are all a result of existence/nonexistence of the customer gap. When the perceptions exceed the expectations, the customers are satisfied and they have a positive evaluation of the service quality; but when the expectations are not met by the perceptions, then the reverse occurs.

2.1.3. Outcomes of Service Quality

After the research on the definition and dimensions of service quality and the service quality model have saturated, authors started to investigate its consequences - both behavioral and financial (e.g., Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham, 1995; Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1991).

2.1.3.1. Behavioral Outcomes

The studies on behavioral consequences of service quality perceptions report a positive correlation between service quality and customers' repurchase intentions, willingness to recommend the service to others, willingness to buy more, and the tendency to become less price sensitive (e.g., Bolton, Kannan, and Bramlett, 2000; Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham, 1995; Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994; Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml, 1993; Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). One further analysis of this issue is conducted by Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman in 1996; where the authors make a detailed analysis of the impact of positive/negative service quality perceptions on consumers' favorable/unfavorable behavioral intentions. The results show that positive quality perceptions improve loyalty and willingness to pay more; while decrease propensity to switch and negative word-of-mouth. The authors incorporate the notion of "*zone of tolerance*" (the tolerance level between the lower end of adequate service expectations and upper end of desired service expectations) in their analysis as well and recommend marketers to improve quality on a cost-effective manner. They support this proposition with the fact that improving quality above the desired level will not always provide positive payoffs.

2.1.3.2. Financial Outcomes

The link between high service quality and company profitability is also investigated by researchers (e.g., Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham, 1995); despite the difficulties in identifying such a relationship. According to Parasuraman and Zeithaml (2003), there are three reasons why it is not easy to see how investments in

service quality improves profitability: the long time period required to turn service quality improvements into behavioral intentions and then to financial outcomes; the simultaneous effects of other factors (like pricing or advertising) on company profitability; and the fact that investments in every element of the service do not lead to improved service quality perceptions.

Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham, (1995) provide a framework to examine quality-profitability relationship through a series of events. According to authors' model, the improvements in a service is first reflected in increased customer satisfaction at the process or attribute level; followed by overall satisfaction with the service or improved perceived service quality; which is then turned into repurchase intentions; and results in improved profitability (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003).

Offensive and defensive effects of service quality on profits also attract attention (e.g., Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987). By offensive effects, authors refer to market share growth, improved firm reputation, or ability to command a high price premium (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). It has been claimed that improved service quality increases positive word-of-mouth communications, which in turn attracts new customers and increases profitability (Kordupleski, Rust, and Zahorik, 1993). On the other hand, defensive effects are related to customer retention (e.g., Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1987). Reichheld and Sasser (1990) show that customer retention increases profits due to decreasing costs of serving long-term customers, increased purchases, decreased price sensitivity, and positive word-of-mouth communications. In 1997, Heskett, Sasser, and Schlesinger proposed the service-profit chain, which also supports the findings of Reichheld and Sasser (1990).

2.1.4. Service Quality Measurement

Due to intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of production and consumption, it is difficult for marketers to conceptualize and measure customers' service quality perceptions (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). The most famous tool for service quality assessment has been developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1988; called SERVQUAL. The scale includes 22 items that represent five general service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles) (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). In their 1993 work, Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman also introduced the "zone of tolerance" concept, which represents the range of performance that the customers would consider satisfactory. Accordingly, they adjusted their SERVQUAL scale to include not only measures of service superiority (difference between perceived and desired service levels); but also measures of service adequacy (difference between perceived and adequate service levels) (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). Furthermore, the application of SERVQUAL revealed that reliability is perceived by customers as the most important dimension of service quality whereas tangibles are the least important determinants of it (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1991).

2.1.5. Service Quality in Higher Education

Service quality concepts can be adapted and applied to higher education (Vrana and Zafiroopoulos, 2008), in which the customers include students, donors, staff, faculty, and others (Kara and DeShields, 2004). Especially, students are considered as the primary consumer of higher education (Hill, 1995) as they share responsibility for the results they have in the education process (Elassy, 2013; Eagle

and Brennan, 2007). They receive the educational service, the service is paid by the parents, students are hired by institutions, and faculty staff teaches students (Madu, and Kuei, 1993).

The education process that includes the lecture form, advising, counseling, and project supervision enabled to students (Yeo, 2008) is a type of service that features all the classical service characteristics as defined in the marketing literature such as production and consumption at the same time, perishability, and the participation of students in the process of service delivery (Cuthbert, 1996). The components of students' service quality perceptions in higher education are grouped into environmental and personal elements (Lazibat, Baković, and Dužević, 2014). Students' personal characteristics, engagement to the class, and motivation significantly affect their satisfaction level with the service (Qureshi, Shaukat, and Hijazi, 2010; Kuh et al., 2008; Umbach and Porter, 2002). Environmental elements, on the other hand, include teaching performance, organizational values and culture, institutional facilities, and career-related issues (Lazibat, Baković, and Dužević, 2014). However, among all these factors, teaching performance is stated as the most important source of student satisfaction (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005).

"Quality" of an education process is defined as *"defect avoidance"* (Crosby, 1979); *"adjustment of education output to planned goals, specifications, and requirements"* (Crosby, 1979); *"meeting or exceeding the educational expectations of customers"* (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985), *"excellence in education"* (Peters and Waterman, 1982), and finally *"suitability of the outcome in education and the experience to use it"* (Juran and Gryna, 1988). The increasingly competitive environment in the service sector requires a good service quality as a highly critical

determinant of success in the higher education industry.

To compete against other educational institutions, satisfying students' expectations becomes increasingly important (Coccari and Javalgi, 1995). Therefore, the meaning of service quality emerges as a key consideration while developing offers to students (Durvasula, Lysonski, and Madhavi, 2011). Students are more demanding today than they were ever before and require reputable programs so that they can guarantee their employment after graduation (Asif and Searcy, 2013; Yeo and Li, 2013; Duque and Weeks, 2010; Lizzio, Wilson, and Simons, 2002). At this point, higher education institutions need to manage students' needs and expectations (Lazibat, Baković, and Dužević, 2014).

Similar to the regular consumer behavior, students can also have positive word-of-mouth communication to potential students (Helgesen and Nettet, 2007; Kotzé and du Plessis, 2003; Athiyaman, 1997), tend to be loyal to their universities, tend to return to the same university for a next level education (Helgesen and Nettet, 2007), participate in activities of their universities (Hennig-Thurau, Langer, and Hansen, 2001), etc. if they are satisfied with the service quality (Chong and Ahmed, 2012).

Some scholars suggest attributes for an excellent university. The opportunities for career, physical properties, program issues, location, and reputation are seen as the most important features by Ford, Joseph, and Joseph (1999). Vidal, Diez, and Vieira (2003), on the other hand, state that "*guidance services*" in "*professional*", "*academic*," and "*personal*" development are crucial for success. Adee (1997) also adds competent teaching, library services, staff availability for students' consultation, recreational activities, computerized facilities, and sizes of

classes, subject contents, and students' workload as other issues of service quality in a higher education context.

2.2. BRAND TRUST

Gaining consumers' trust towards a brand is one of the main objectives of marketing (Habibi, Laroche, and Richard, 2014) and it is stated to be a main antecedent of brand loyalty (See-To and Ho, 2014; Pentina, Zhang, and Basmanova, 2013).

Several scholars paid a great deal of attention to the trust concept across different disciplines such as marketing (e.g., Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Andaleeb, 1992), management (e.g., Williams, 2001; Barney and Hansen, 1994), sociology (e.g., Lewis and Weigert, 1985), and social psychology (e.g., Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna, 1985; Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Frost, Stimpson, and Maughan, 1978). As a result of this multidisciplinary perspective, reaching a consensus for the conceptualization of the construct became difficult (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005).

Within the marketing literature, an early definition of brand trust (hereafter, BT) is offered by Deutsch (1973) as being confident about what is desired from one another, not what is feared. Barber (1983) and Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) define trust as an expectancy based on the attributions about a relational partner's behaviors, intentions, and qualities. Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) further suggest that prior interaction and past experience cause trust. According to Schurr and Ozanne (1985), trust is being able to rely on an exchange partner who will fulfil the perceived obligations of the relationship. In a similar way, Moorman, Deshpandé, and Zaltman (1993) define (brand) trust as "*a willingness to rely on an exchange*

partner in whom one has confidence” (p. 82), Morgan and Hunt (1994) state that trust exists “*when one side is confident of the exchange partner’s integrity and reliability*” (p. 23). Doney and Cannon (1997) also propose that the construct of trust involves a calculative process based on the ability of an object, such as a brand, to meet its obligations continuously. The authors stress that trust is the result of the benevolence of a company to act based on the shared values and goals for the customers’ interests.

With a similar line of reasoning, Ravald and Grönroos (1996) support the idea that experience develops trust. Supporting this view, Lau and Lee (1999) define trust as a willingness to rely on the brand. Similarly, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) offered another definition as “*the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function*” (p. 82). Thus, the authors emphasize that facets of trust are beliefs about safety, honesty, and reliability. That’s why brand trust is developed over a process that is carefully considered and well thought out; while brand affect develops more spontaneously, more immediate, and less intentionally reasoned in nature (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Hiscock (2001) affirms that trust is the key ingredient of the intense link between the brand and the consumer. Quester (2003) defines trust in the sponsorship context as a psychological orientation with an intention to accept vulnerability depending on expectations of the intentions in a positive way. In opposition to this conceptualization, Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yagüe-Guillén (2003) define brand trust as “*the confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer*” (p. 37). Accordingly, trusting a brand means expecting positive outcomes led by the brand for the consumer with a

high probability (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005).

The common idea underlying all of these explanations is that risk plays a critical role on influencing consumer behavior and choice and trust is actually an expectation that this risk will be cancelled out (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Alemán, and Yagiie-Guillent, 2003). To sum up, trust has often been defined with a psychological perspective from the point of “*confidence in*” (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Barney and Hansen, 1994), “*perceived probabilities of*” (Bhattacharya, Devinney, and Pillutla, 1998), or “*expectations about*” (Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna, 1985) positive brand performances.

When all the attempts to define brand trust are analyzed, it is seen that “*brand intentions*” and “*brand reliability*” appear as the two main components (Barber, 1983). The first component, brand intentions, involve consumers’ belief that the consumer’s interest will be held by the brand in case of an unexpected problem about the product during consumption (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Alemán, and Yagiie-Guillent, 2003). The second component, brand reliability, involves a persistent competence based on the value promise of the brand (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Andaleeb, 1992). While Mitchell, Reast, and Lynch (1998) suggest fair-mindedness, confidence, personal experience, truthfulness, predictability, quality standing, and dependability as the dimensions of the trust; Jarvis, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff (2003) and Li et al. (2008) state that competence and benevolence are the essential components of brand trust.

Trust in business relationships is gained difficult but lost easily (Miranda and Klement, 2009). To mitigate the risk, it is believed that trust is particularly necessary especially in uncertain situations (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Moorman, Zaltman, and

Deshpandé, 1992). Specifically, it is stressed that uncertainty in an environment is reduced as consumers feel vulnerable with the help of the brands they trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Accordingly, confident expectations and risk are considered to be critical components in brand trust development (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005).

Apart from all of this discussion, brand trust is seldom explicitly studied in the consumer-brand domain (Delgado-Ballester, 2004) due to the fact that researchers do not have a consensus about its dimensionality and measurement (Li et al., 2008). According to Delgado-Ballester (2004), this lack of research is also mostly due to the fact that brand trust is difficult to comprehend since brand is an inanimate object. On the other hand, it is accepted that brand trust plays an important role in the relationship between the brand and the consumer since the cornerstone of any close relationships is trust (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Larzelere and Huston, 1980).

Trust has been proposed to predict customer behavior, reduce customer attrition rate, and create higher customer value (Reinartz and Kumar, 2002, 2000); which will, in turn, may increase customer satisfaction (Chowdhury, 2005; Anderson and Narus, 1990) and establish long-term relationships with the brands (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004; Doney and Cannon, 1997). Trust has been pointed out to influence satisfaction directly and positively as well (Bart et al., 2005; Johnson and Grayson, 2005; Rosanas and Velilla, 2003; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000; Anderson and Narus, 1990).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) also argue that trust causes commitment and loyalty and, therefore, guarantees a successful relationship. According to the authors, trust,

along with commitment, is a key characteristic of relationship marketing, which also plays a relevant role in buyer-seller relationships in any industry (e.g., Ganesan, 1994; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987) and distribution channel (e.g. Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp, 1995; Andaleeb, 1992). It has a significant influence on shopping behavior (Powers et al., 2012) and attitude toward the brand (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987) as well.

The role of brand trust in enhancing customer relationships draws increasing attention in the recent years (Selnes, 1998). Research supports the strong effects of trust on building commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), customer loyalty (Akbar and Parvez, 2009; Ball, Coelho, and Machas, 2004, Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2001; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000), and brand equity (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Building trust also has a positive influence on customer commitment (Cater and Cater, 2010). Another finding about the consequences of brand trust is that customers recommend the brand they trust and use this brand's services and products in peace (Tran and Cox, 2009; Yeung, Cheng, and Chan, 2004).

2.3. CUSTOMER-BASED CORPORATE REPUTATION

Corporate reputation (hereafter, CR) has been a focus of study in different disciplines, including sociology, psychology, management, marketing, and economics since 1950s (Fombrun, 1996). As a result, scholars from these fields have offered different definitions of it. According to sociologists, CR is the joint evaluation of an entity relevant to the public at large (Shamma and Hassan, 2009). From an economic perspective, CR reflects a company's possible future activities

based on its past performance in the marketplace (Davies et al., 2003). Within the strategic management literature, CR is commonly referred to as an intangible asset that indicates the overall assessment of the firm from different stakeholders' perspectives (Dowling, 2004, 1994; Barney, 2002; Hall, 1992; Milgrom and Roberts, 1982), which Fombrun (1996) calls the reputational capital.

From the institutional view, corporate reputation is described as an overall evaluation of the firm if it is good or bad at heart (Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Weiss, Anderson, and MacInnis, 1999). According to Aaker and Keller (1990), CR is a quality perception related to the corporate name. In Podolny and Phillips' (1996) view, the value of a firm's past efforts to create financial and non-financial success determines its reputation; where non-financial factors inducing corporate reputation are basically product and service quality (Schwaiger, 2004; Podolny and Phillips, 1996; Fryxell and Wang, 1994). Reflecting a marketing viewpoint and incorporating the similarities and differences across previous definitions, Fombrun and van Riel (1997) describe the construct as "*a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver multiple stakeholders*" (p. 10).

Additionally, Gotsi and Wilson (2001) state that CR is based on the company's behavior, communications, and symbolism and the way these are projected to the stakeholders. Similarly, Roberts and Dowling (2002) define CR as a perceptual representation of a company's past and current actions reflecting the company's overall attraction to its key stakeholders when compared to other rivals. Wang, Lo, and Hui (2003) also argue that as the pre-purchase service quality evaluation will be incomplete and vague, reputation plays especially an important strategic role in service markets. CR is considered by Caruana, Cohen, and Krentler

(2006) as an attitude having a direct effect on intention to impose a certain behavior as well.

As another view, Walsh and Beatty (2007) indicate that CR is a customer evaluation resulting from his/her experience or interaction with the firm and the reputation-relevant information he/she has received. The authors also clearly state that this overall customer evaluation determines how the customer will react to the firm's good or service offers, or communication activities (Walsh and Beatty, 2007). To sum up, the CR concept is a summary indicator of a company's past and present behaviors (Jeng, 2011) and it has a vital role in the marketing of a service to be successful (Weiss, Anderson, and MacInnis, 1999; Anderson and Weitz, 1992).

Whether corporate reputation is a uni- or multidimensional construct remains largely unanswered by several researchers (Walsh and Beatty, 2007). Still, it is discussed that the construct is comprised of three components: image, identity, and desired identity (Chun, 2005). The first component, image, is frequently used interchangeably with reputation term (Chun, 2005). The most common definition of image used in the reputation context is a summary of the impressions or perceptions held by external stakeholders (Davies and Miles, 1998; Bromley, 1993). The second component, identity, is defined under two themes in the literature, which are organizational and corporate identity (Chun, 2005). Organizational identity refers to the perceptions thoughts and feelings of an organization's employee's (Hatch and Schultz, 1997; Albert and Whetten, 1985). The third component is corporate (or so-called desired or strategic) referring to an organization's visual elements like company name, symbols, and logo (Ind, 1992; Olins, 1989, 1978; Bernstein, 1984) or its strategy including vision, philosophy, and mission (Dowling, 1994; Selame and

Selame, 1988).

A company's good reputation can sustain a competitive advantage (Fombrun, 1996; Hall, 1993) as a result of its stability across a certain period of time (Barney, 2001; Henderson and Cockburn, 1994). If customer-based CR is properly managed, transaction costs and risks perceived by the customers can be reduced, higher loyalty can be encouraged, and customer-based CR can act as a difficult set to entry (Thomsen and Rose, 2004; Dierickx and Cool, 1989). If not, then these firms will suffer more than the companies with poor reputation will, especially when they make a mistake (Herr, 1989).

Previous research shows that CR is seen in an association with customer satisfaction (e.g., Walsh, Dinnie, and Wiedmann, 2006; Davies et al., 2002), customer perceived value and purchase intention (e.g., Hansen, Samuelsen, and Silseth, 2008; Walsh and Beatty, 2007), loyalty (e.g., Fombrun and van Riel, 1997; Hall, 1992), trust (e.g., Doney and Cannon, 1997), and positive word of mouth (e.g., Groenland, 2002; Fombrun and van Riel, 1997).

The effects of corporate reputation on individuals are explained based on both economical and relationship-based perspectives, which are both believed to affect cross-buying intentions of the customers (Jeng, 2011). In other words, CR has usually been considered as an important determinant in consumer decision making and purchasing (Carmeli and Tishler, 2005). An argument stated by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) is that reputation can help to predict the service – production process outcomes and can be considered as the most reliable indicator of customer satisfaction. Accordingly, a service company with a good reputation leads to customers' higher quality inferences and thus a positive association between

customer-based corporate reputation (CBR) and satisfaction appears (Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988). In addition, Zinkhan et al. (2001) argue that there is a strong association between customers' perceptions of a company and their attitudes toward the company. Customers' strong reputation perceptions forge attitudes towards a company's products to be positive as well (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Brown and Dacin, 1997) and this strong reputation can also lead to buying intentions in a higher degree, especially for new products or services (Yoon, Guffey, and Kijewski, 1993). Roberts and Dowling (2002) also propose that customers value transactions and associations with companies that are found to be highly reputable. Positive reputation perceptions influence customer loyalty significantly (Greysier, 1999; Fombrun and van Riel, 1997; Yoon, Guffey, and Kijewski, 1993; Hall, 1992) and companies with more credible reputation successfully create brand trust (Walsh and Beatty, 2007). Therefore, companies are willing to develop a good reputation by making investments (Kirmani and Rao, 2000) and taking risk through acting opportunistically (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Tsler, 1980).

Improving value perceptions and customer satisfaction can induce customer loyalty to a great extent and may increase corporate revenues, and lead to market share growth (Chang and Zhu, 2011). Loyal customers recommend the company to other potential customers through word of mouth (Chang and Zhu, 2011) and they also support these organizations with voluntary behaviors like giving valuable feedback for the improvement of the service delivery (Bartikowski and Walsh, 2011). Due to high satisfaction, these customers are less sensitive about the price and request more services and products from the same company (Chang and Zhu, 2011).

Therefore, a company with a strong reputation can charge a premium price when compared to its rivals (Greyser, 1999).

2.4. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

“*Customer engagement*” (hereafter, CE) is a cognitive, affective, and behavioral construct that reflects customers’ attachment to brands from a variety of perspectives (Vivek, Beaty, and Morgan, 2012). According to the Marketing Science Institute (hereafter, MSI; 2006), market globalization and the rapid changes in communications technologies help the development of customer communities, especially through increased “*engagement*” with the brands. Realizing this fact, companies are trying new ways (e.g., innovation, design, etc.) to create strong bonds with their customers (MSI, 2006).

While the “*engagement*” term is still being developed in the marketing literature and lacks a clear conceptualization and measurement (Vivek, Beaty, and Morgan, 2012), there is an increasing amount of research on the topic in psychology (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002) and organizational behavior (e.g., Avery, McKay, and Wilson, 2007) fields as well as in marketing. For instance, according to Kahn (1990), employees are more likely to be engaged with the company they are working for when they are under supportive conditions for authentic expression. With this line of reasoning, “*employee engagement*” (hereafter, EE) is defined as “*the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active, full role performances*” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). This definition is mostly an extension of the emotional engagement construct, which is perceived to be more motivational in

nature, through the addition of attention and identification (Bakker et al., 2008; Demerouti and Bakker, 2008) and absorption (Rothbard, 2001) dimensions. In a similar vein, Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) define work engagement term as “*persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment*” (p. 417). The common theme in these definitions is that they approach the engagement concept from a psychological aspect (So, King, and Sparks, 2012).

Although marketing practitioners and academics define the concept in different ways, CE is attracting an increased attention (Vivek, Beaty, and Morgan, 2012). From the practitioners’ point of view, CE is the activities that facilitate interactions strengthening the customer’s physical, psychological, or emotional investment to a brand (Sedley, 2010). On the other hand, academics define CE as customers’ intensive participation with both the representatives and other customers of the organization in a collaborative knowledge exchange process (Wagner and Majchrzak, 2007). Marketing researchers also include a behavioral focus to CE (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). CE is seen by MSI (2006) as a beyond purchase behavior toward a brand that results from the interactions between customers, word-of-mouth recommendations, and reviews. It can be inferred from this definition that engagement is continuing after the purchase (Vivek, Beaty, and Morgan, 2012) and Hoffman and Ingram (1992) argue that engagement with a service organization induce customer satisfaction in the long-term.

EE literature forms a basis for the emerging CE construct. By including the EE concept’s perspectives, both psychological and behavioral dimensions are reflected in the conceptualization of the CE term (e.g., Patterson, Yu, and De Ruyter, 2006). As a result, a comprehensive definition of the CE concept is offered by Brodie

et al. (2011) as “a *psychological state* that occurs by virtue of *interactive, cocreative* customer experiences with a *focal agent/object* (e.g., a brand) in *focal service relationships*” (p. 9). CE is seen as a multidimensional concept depending on a context-specific expression of relevant dimensions consisting of behavioral, emotional, and/or cognitive processes (Brodie et al., 2011). Within service relationships, where value is co-created, CE endures as an iterative, dynamic process. Nomological network that governs service relationships include other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) as well. In iterative customer engagement processes, these relational concepts are antecedents and/or consequences (Brodie et al., 2011) of CE. In other words, CE has a central role in these nomological networks governing service relationships processes (Brodie et al., 2011).

On the other hand, CE is also seen as a behavioral construct emerging from motivational drivers (Bijmolt et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft, 2010; MSI, 2006). As a result of the psychological connection during interaction with the brand beyond purchase, more loyalty and purchase decisions can emerge with CE (e.g., Hollebeek, 2009; Patterson, Yu, and De Ruyter, 2006). The result of engagement with a brand will also have an impact on the brand knowledge of the consumer, attitudes toward the brand, brand perceptions, and brand loyalty (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009).

2.4.1. Dimensions of Customer Engagement

CE has been conceptualized around a number of dimensions: enthusiasm (or vigor), attention, absorption, interaction, and identification.

a) Enthusiasm: Enthusiasm emerges as a result of the strong excitement and

interest while the individual is engaged with a brand (Vivek, 2009) and is seen as a central indicator having a positive effect on consumer behavior (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). According to Bloch (1986), the feeling of excitement defines enthusiasm as an active state. Recent research shows that there is a consistency between enthusiasm and activation (Hollebeek, 2009) and vigor (Patterson, Yu, and De Ruyter, 2006). For example, a customer who is excited by news that he/she reads about a brand in his/her interest will be activated to form a sort of connection with the brand. To sum up, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and a sense of significance are all found to be creating passion about the organization and resulting in higher engagement (e.g., Salanova, Agut, and Peiro, 2005; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

b) Attention: Literature posits attention to be a key dimension of engagement as well. According to Rothbard (2001), attention is related to the duration of focus. Highly engaged individuals pay a great attention to the object of engagement (So, King, Sparks, 2012). While defining work engagement, Kahn (1992) argues that personal engagement is affiliated with being integrated, engaged, attentive, and focused in one's role performance. In marketing theory, it is also believed that attention represents the attentiveness and focus, which makes it an important dimension of CE (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). Focused attention is either seemed to be the same as engagement itself (Lin, Gregor, and Ewing, 2008); or it is discussed as being directly related to participating consciously (Vivek, 2009). Customers who are highly engaged with a brand are expected to be attracted to the news, products, events, or ads of the company and this attraction is believed to create a great deal of attention towards the brand.

c) Absorption: Absorption stands for having a loss of self-consciousness,

being concentrated effortlessly, time distortion, and enjoyment (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990), absorption means a high degree of engrossment and concentration that extends beyond feeling efficacious and gets close to an optimal experience. Absorption is a pleasurable situation that shows one's full concentration as well as happily and deeply engrossment with his/her role (Patterson, Yu, and De Ruyter, 2006), and time is perceived to be passing quickly during the interaction with the brand for the absorbed customers (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). Therefore, it is regarded to be a strong indicator of CE (So, King, and Sparks, 2012).

d) Interaction: Another dimension of CE is interaction. This interaction refers to one's participation with the brand or with different customers in the online and off-line platforms apart from purchase situation (So, King, and Sparks, 2012). Sharing one's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences about the brand are included in the interaction and they play an important role in the development of CE (Vivek, 2009). However, there are differing thoughts about the role of interaction on CE development. While some researchers only take interactions among the customer into consideration (Bijmolt et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft, 2010; MSI, 2006); some others refer to the communication of customers' with other customers or with the brand to exchange and share information (e.g., Wagner and Majchrzak, 2007). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), the more there is interaction, the more there will be CE, and the existence of brand communities is a strong support for the importance of the interaction element in the emergence of CE since these communities are set among those highly engaged customers or admirers and the brand.

e) Identification: Originated from the social identity theory (Turner, Brown, and Tajfel, 1979), the identification concept is regarded as a self-concept including social and personal identities (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Tajfel and Turner, 1985). It is defined from the perspective of a consumer as an individual's "*perceived oneness with or belongingness to an organization*" (Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn, 1995, p. 46). Identification with a brand emerges when the brand's image is overlapped by one's self-image (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). For instance, a teenager can identify him/herself with Redbull due to the brand's young, energetic character. Identification plays an active, selective, and volitional role and is also a source of motivation for consumers in engaging with the brand and displaying company-related behaviors like recommending the brand and its products to other consumers (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

2.5. EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

Travis (2000) states that a brand is a brand when an emotional connection with the consumer is developed and when the feelings of the consumers is crucial. In today's world, marketers desire more repurchases for their brands (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Therefore, they propose loyalty programs (O'Brien and Jones, 1995). Similarly, scholars widely acknowledge the intensive positive effect of the psychological tie with the brand on the repurchase attitude (Dickand Basu, 1994; Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). When this tie is affectively strong, its outcome is ensured repurchase behavior against all the costs and odds (Oliver, 1999). Hence, by having profit due to the consumers' emotionally attached repurchases, companies face less disruption (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011).

This affective commitment is also referred to as “emotional attachment” (hereafter, EA) by Meyer and Allen (1997). Consumers come across to thousands of various brands and products in daily life. However, an EA is intensely developed towards only a small set of them (e.g., Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). That’s why firms are looking for ways to make strong emotional brand connections with their customers (Malaik et al., 2011). This strong emotional bond influences customers’ behavior and their lifetime value for the firm as well as it enhances companies’ profits (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).

The emotional attachment concept has recently attracted significant attention of the researchers (e.g., Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). It has been suggested by different scholars that consumers’ emotional connections to the brand is required for true loyalty (Park, MacInnis, and Priester, 2009; Oliver, 1999). Emotional attachment is defined by and Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) as the extent of passion a satisfied consumer feels for a brand. Brand affection, brand love, and brand connection form a basis for emotional attachment to the brand (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). These properties propose that a strong brand attachment leads to brand commitment and long-term relationship with the company (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). This construct is valued by Park et al. (2010) as a more important predictor of brand need and brand purchase than brand attitude. For instance; in the service industry, the personnel plays a critical role in the development of emotional connection with the consumer in long run (Kandampully, 1998) and this makes how service performance is perceived to have a serious effect on emotional attachment to it (Jawahar and Maheswari, 2009).

Predictions about the nature of interaction between the consumer and the

brand are usually explained through the “attachment theory” from the psychology literature; which focuses on the degree of an individual’s emotional attachment to an object (Bowlby, 1979). When the attachment theory’s line of reasoning is applied to consumer-brand connections, strongly attached consumers are expected to be more likely to commit themselves to the brands, and be more loyal and more willing to invest (Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Bowlby, 1980). It is also stated that attachments are based on dependability, trust, and consistency of responses (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2011). To put differently, consumers’ attachments to a brand is developed as they can depend on these brands and always be with it whenever they need it (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2011).

The commitment concept is defined as the extent to which a person examines his or her relationship in long-term and is willing to maintain this relationship even if the things are getting complex and difficult (van Lange et al., 1997). Being loyal to the brand is seen as an indicator of commitment (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999), whereas commitment is proposed to be an outcome of emotional attachment (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2011).

According to Bowlby (1980, 1979), attachment a complete set of emotions targeted specifically between an object and a person. Emotions are the key components reflecting a mental state in arising from thoughts or events (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer, 1999). Positive attachment emotions lead to superior value or association, whereas negative attachment emotions may contain anger (Dwyer et al., 2015). The stronger the attachment is, the stronger are the feelings, connections (e.g., Brennan, Clark, and Shaver, 1998; Aron and Westbay, 1996; Feeney and Noller, 1996; Collins and Read, 1994, 1990; Fehr and Russell, 1991; Sternberg, 1987;

Bowlby, 1979) and the closer are the objects (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). It is also related to the self-concept (Mikulincer and Shaver 2005). Consumers use products in a manner to present themselves to other people around them. Accordingly, they purchase certain products or brands if they represent themselves (Aaker, 1999; Belk 1988). In this context, brands people are attached to are used as a way of self-expression and make consumers' life easier (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982).

The researchers suggest four components of the attachment concept as defined by Bowlby (1979); separation protest, proximity seeking, secure base, and safe heaven (Hazan and Zeifman, 1994). Emotional attachments to brands indicate a preservation for security as a feeling when connected to the brand and also avoiding switching costs and separation (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). On the other hand, disconnecting from brands leads to nuisance and anxiety (Grisaffe and Nguyen, 2011). Therefore, it is also implied in the literature that attachment is also related to trust (Rempel, Ross, and Holmes, 2001; Spake et al., 2003; Thomson, 2006; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). This suggestions supports that the greater the responsiveness and familiarity to the brand is, the stronger will be the attachment (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2013). This familiarity increases the psychological comfort as well (Patwardhan and Balasubramanian, 2013).

EA is a unique concept theoretically and different from other related concepts including loyalty, involvement, satisfaction, materialism, attitude and interaction (Jiménez and Voss, 2007; Park and MacInnis, 2006; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005; Kleine and Baker, 2004). It is distinct from the following constructs, which it may also be in correlation with (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005):

Brand attitudes: Emotionally attached consumers tend to act in a favorable

manner toward the brand (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005) as these brands or objects are important and profound for them (e.g., Richins, 1994; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). This leads to positive brand attitudes (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).

Satisfaction: It is not the synonym of attachment; however, it is suggested that when a consumer has an emotional attachment with a brand, he or she has a greater tendency to be satisfied (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).

Involvement: Involvement implies cognition, whereas emotional attachment to objects and brands is about emotions (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).

Researchers have proposed a valid scale for measuring emotional attachment comprised of attitude favorability, involvement, and satisfaction, which are all correlated with each other (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005). A ten-item scale is finalized as a reflection of the dimensions first ordered as affection, passion, and connection. The second ordered factor is emotional attachment concept (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005).

2.6. SELF-BRAND CONNECTION

Customers' integration with brands based on their self-concept or self-identity (Fournier, 1998), through branded communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001), in terms of their attachment behaviors (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005) or engagement (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009), and related to resulting materialism concerns (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Wong, 2008) have been frequently subject of inquiry within the marketing literature. It has been asserted by many researchers that consumers engage in consumption in order to construct their personal identity and self-concepts (e.g., Richins, 1994; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan,

1993; Ball and Tasaki, 1992). Through brand choices and depending on the congruity between the self-image and the brand image, consumers introduce themselves to people around them, also representing their self-mentality (Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

According to Aaker (1991), brand associations have a pivotal role in terms of consumer behavior through any types of linkages customers form with the brand. In addition to this view, Keller (1993) proposes that these associations are informational nodes providing a meaning. Such connections are led by reference and social groups, as a provenance for brand associations (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). At this point, consumers associate the reference groups with the brands (Escalas and Bettman, 2003) and brand adoption is a form of connection to the group.

Escalas and Bettman (2003) state that self-brand connections emerge, especially when customers have favorable, positive, and strong associations about the brand (Kemp, Childers, and Williams, 2012). These associations consist of the brand quality perceptions and customers' attitudes toward the brand (Low and Lamb, 2000). In addition to this, when the brand is perceived as unique, the self-brand connection can also be enhanced (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2003).

Customers select brands that are congruent with their self-concepts (Schau, Muniz Jr., and Arnould, 2009). Through self-brand connections, they reflect the image of the brand on them and show it to other people as well as themselves (Escalas and Bettman, 2003), where they propound their personality (Allen, Kleine, and Kleine, 1995). In other words, brands, as symbols, enhance the way consumer's think or feel about themselves (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). This situation indicates

the reason why consumers value brand benefits psychologically and symbolically (Escalas, 2004).

The way people tend to have strong bonds with brands or objects are usually tried to be explained through the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1977). According to this theory, customers rely on possessions to maintain their self-concept (Ball and Tasaki, 1992; Belk, 1988). Based on the theory, Escalas and Bettman (2003) define self-brand connection as a degree to which a brand is integrated into the consumer's self-concept. Self-brand connections "*need only occur between the brand and one aspect of the self, with more schematic aspects of the self, resulting in stronger connections*" (Escalas, 2004, p. 170). The consumers with high self-brand connection have a strong feeling about the brand (Wei and Yu, 2012) and they keep their view about the brand in a favorable way (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly, 2013). On the other hand, low self-brand connection leads to less favorable brand attitudes (Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly, 2013) and a weaker attachment (Wei and Yu, 2012). The stronger is the relationship between the customers and the brand, the more they are insulated from the impact of negative word-of-mouth about the brand, and they become more forgiving (Chandler and Schwarz, 2010; Swaminathan, Page, and Gurhan-Canli, 2007; Hess, Ganesan, and Klein, 2003; Ahluwalia, Unnava, and Burnkrant, 2001; Ahluwalia and Gurhan-Canli, 2000; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar, 1998).

It is proposed that satisfied consumers tend to use their favorite brands continuously to maintain and reinforce their self-identity (Dolich, 1969). Thus, with the development of self-brand connections, personal connections are formed (Dwivedi, 2014). Accordingly, from a marketer's point of view, self-brand

connections are extremely useful. As consumers use brands and products for forming their self-identity, they tend to be less sensitive to prices of the products and keep being loyal (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). To satisfy the customers' needs psychologically and to allow the individuals to have a connection with others, the brands can use these self-brand connections (Escalas, 2004; Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). It is proved that brands help customers to meet their motivational goals; such as expressing themselves, integrating socially, providing self-esteem, differentiating one from another, etc. (Escalas, 2004).

Apart from the attachment theory as aforementioned, self-brand connection's influence on the relationship quality is also supported through the reciprocal action theory by Li and Dant (1997). According to this theory, a commitment is strongly developed towards a brand (Dwivedi, 2014), when consumers desire to represent their self-concepts (Cooper, Schembri, and Miller, 2010; Escalas, 2004; as and Bettman, 2003).

According to Harmon-Kizer, Kumar, Ortinau, and Stock (2013), self-brand connection is a construct similar to the "*brand-engagement in self-concept*" (BESC) construct developed by Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009). In BESC, consumers engage with a number different brands, not to one brand specifically, that are favorites and they tend to add the important ones to be a part of their self-concepts (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg, 2009); whereas consumers engage with only one brand in the self-brand connection logic (Harmon-Kizer, Kumar, Ortinau, and Stock, 2013). However, Dwivedi (2014) argues that self-brand connections of consumers are more important in consumption and it serves more meaningful, deeper connections that can last longer. As a result, many researchers proposed that the link

between the consumers' self-concept and the brand is a driver of their emotional experiences with the brand (Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman, 2011; Park et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

In light of the review of literature, a conceptual model that shows the processes through which individuals' self-brand connections are shaped is developed (see Figure 3.1.).

Building strong connections with brands plays an important role in marketing management. People consume products and choose brands that are in accordance with their self-images (Chaplin and John, 2005; Hankinson, 2004; Dolich, 1969). According to this view, Escalas and Bettman (2003) highlights that consumers need a fit between brand images and their self-concepts in order to represent themselves in the way they desire. At this point, when the desired fit is discovered by the consumers, self-brand connections are created (Kemp, Childers, and Williams, 2012). Based on the empirical findings found in the literature, it can be claimed that self-brand connections are necessary as they are a representation of one's self and they play a vital role in consumers' attitudes and behaviors.

Previous studies have proposed that perceived quality has a positive effect on self-brand connection (Kemp, Childers, and Williams, 2012). However, other possible antecedents of this important tie that consumers establish with brands have not been given enough attention and research on this topic is lacking. This finding can form a basis for the conceptual model. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to investigate the process through which people form connections with brands, with a specific focus on the higher education industry. With this aim, PSQ (perceived service quality), BT (brand trust), CBR (customer-based brand

reputation), CE (customer engagement), and EA (emotional attachment) have been taken under consideration as significant factors shaping SBC (self-brand connection).

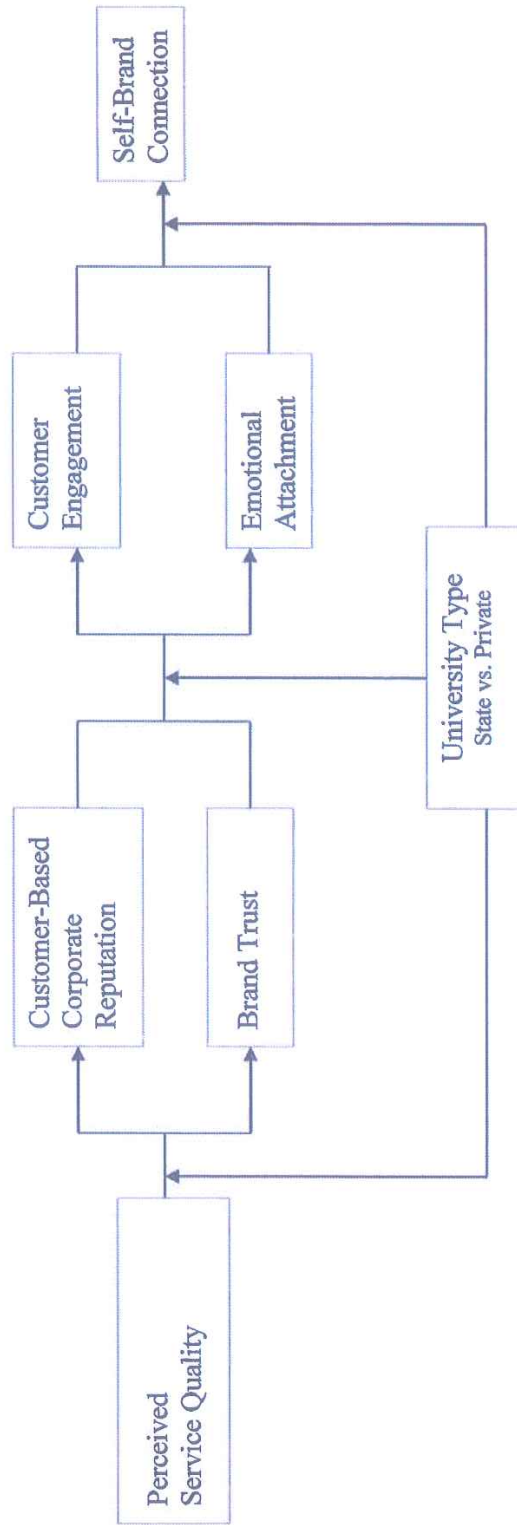
The effects of PSQ on BT (Chen, Chang, and Lan, 2013) and CBR (Schwaiger, 2004; Podolny and Phillips, 1996; Fryxell and Wang, 1994) have been previously supported in the literature. BT is also found to have a positive effect on customer commitment (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001) and purchase loyalty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). However, this concept is not studied in relation to the customer engagement concept. CBR is discussed with its effects on loyalty and commitment concepts as well (Bartikowski and Walsh, 2011).

CE, on the other hand, is proposed to affect trust, loyalty, value, affective commitment, word-of-mouth (WOM), and brand community involvement strongly (Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan, 2012); but it has not been studied before in the SBC context. Finally, EA is stated to influence brand loyalty (So, Parsons, and Yap, 2013); but there is no evidence as to its effects on SBC again.

To sum up, while the aforementioned concepts have been subjects of inquiry as to their effects on consumer satisfaction, purchase intention, or loyalty to a certain extent; their relations to each other, more specifically the strong effects of PSQ on CBR and BT; how CBR and BT influence CE and EA; and the effects of CE and EA on SBC are not studied neither in marketing nor in the education literatures.

The significance of this study is that it attempts to fill in the gap regarding the recently popular SBC concept in literature, with a special focus on the higher education industry; while exploring the mechanisms through which this important bond develops. Furthermore, the study aims to find out whether the organization type (being state-owned vs. privately owned) plays a role on the relationships of interest.

Figure 3.1. Conceptual Model of the Study



Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between perceived service quality and customer-based corporate reputation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between perceived service quality and brand trust.

Hypothesis 3: Customer-based corporate reputation positively affects customer engagement.

Hypothesis 4: Customer-brand corporate reputation positively affects emotional attachment.

Hypothesis 5: Brand trust positively influences customer engagement.

Hypothesis 6: Brand trust positively influences emotional attachment.

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive relationship between customer engagement and self-brand connection.

Hypothesis 8: There is a positive relationship between emotional attachment and self-brand connection.

Hypothesis 9: The effect of perceived service quality on customer-based corporate reputation will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 10: The effect of perceived service quality on brand trust will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 11: The effect of customer-based corporate reputation on customer engagement will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 12: The effect of customer-based corporate reputation on emotional attachment will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 13: The effect of brand trust on customer engagement will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 14: The effect of brand trust on emotional attachment will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 15: The effect of customer engagement on self-brand connection will be different for state vs. private universities.

Hypothesis 16: The effect of emotional attachment on self-brand connection will be different for state vs. private universities.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study attempts to provide empirical support that perceived service quality, customer-based corporate reputation and brand trust affect customer engagement and emotional attachment leading to self-brand connection; and to show significant differences in these relationships based on the university type (state vs. private).

The main research questions of interest are presented below:

- Are there any relationships between perceived service quality and brand trust in the higher education context?
- Are there any relationships between perceived service quality and customer-based corporate reputation in the higher education context?
- Are there any relationships between brand trust and customer engagement in the higher education context?
- Are there any relationships between brand trust and emotional attachment in the higher education context?
- Are there any relationships between customer-based corporate reputation and emotional attachment in the higher education context?
- Are there any relationships between customer-based corporate reputation and customer engagement in the higher education context?
- What role does customer engagement play in self-brand connection with the university?

- What role does emotional attachment play in self-brand connection with university?
- How does perceived service quality affect customer-based corporate reputation depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does perceived service quality affect brand trust depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does brand trust affect customer engagement depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does perceived brand trust affect emotional attachment depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does customer-based corporate reputation affect customer engagement depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does customer-based corporate reputation affect emotional attachment depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does customer engagement affect self-brand connection depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?
- How does emotional attachment affect self-brand connection depending on the type of university (state vs. private)?

4.2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

4.2.1. Selection of Stimuli

By year 2014, YÖK (Turkish Higher Education Institution) stated that there are 181 universities in Turkey (Wikipedia, 2014). 109 of these universities are state

universities and the remaining 73 universities are private universities. In order to represent both university types in the current study, three private and three state universities are selected to be used as frames of reference in the data collection instrument. The state universities are Boğaziçi University, Marmara University, and İstanbul Technical University; and the private universities are İstanbul Bilgi University, İstanbul Kemerburgaz University, and Doğuş University. Students from both undergraduate and graduate levels have participated in the study.

4.2.2. Measures

The measures employed are multi-item scales, all adopted from prior works and adapted to the context of the present study.

Perceived service quality is measured by 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The 44 items of this construct are adapted from Berry, Parasuraman, and Zeithaml (1988). 22 of these items measure the customers' expectations (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .971$) and the other 22 items measure perceptions (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .972$) of service quality.

Similarly, customer-based corporate reputation is also measured by 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The 11 items of this construct are adapted from Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever (2000) (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .942$).

Brand trust is measured with 5-point Likert scale as well (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The three scale items are adapted from the existing literature, from Delgado-Ballester (2004) (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .867$).

In addition to the above-mentioned constructs, customer engagement is also assessed by 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The four items measuring the behavioral intention of loyalty are adapted from So, King, and Sparks (2012) and the three items measuring pride and passion are adapted from Applebaum (2001). Totally, seven items are used to measure customer engagement (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .886$).

On the other hand, emotional attachment is measured by 7-point semantic differential scale (1= doesn't even reflect me, 7 = strongly reflects me). The seven items of emotional attachment are adapted from Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005). These adapted items reflect how much consumers feel affectionate, friendly, loved, peaceful, passionate, delighted and captivated regarding their university (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .937$).

Finally, in order to measure the self-brand connection construct, five items are adapted from the prior works of Escalas and Bettman (2003). These items are measured by 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) assessing how much consumers incorporate brands into their self-concepts (Cronbach's coefficient alpha, $\alpha = .907$). All the measurement items with their respective Cronbach's alpha values are provided in the Appendix A.

To test the scales items in advance, a pilot test is conducted with 64 individuals with the aim to further purify the scales. Based on the comments and suggestions from the respondents, the questionnaire is improved in terms of the clarification of wordings and overall format, before the main study. The final version of the measurement instrument is given in Appendix B1 in English and Appendix B2 in Turkish.

4.3. SAMPLING AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

4.3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

For each one of the six universities selected, a different version of the questionnaire is prepared and then distributed online via an e-mail hyperlink to an online survey. The online design is preferred because of its advantages such as accurate data-capture and elimination of interviewer and researcher biases that were likely in face-to-face surveys (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, 2009). The questionnaire has been available online for approximately three weeks. At the end of this period, 395 usable questionnaires from both type of universities (state and private) are collected.

4.3.2. Sample Characteristics

A demographic breakdown of the sample shows that female respondents account for 58 % of the sample, while male respondents represent 42 %. As for the age distribution, approximately 51.5% of the respondents fall between the age group of “18-24”, 45.1% is between “25-34”, 2.6% is between “35-44”, and 0.8% is above the age of 45. This distribution of frequency showed that the majority of the respondents are among the age group 18-24 years (51.5%); which is due to the fact that undergraduates students participated in the study more than the graduate ones.

In state vs. private university distribution, it is observed that the majority of the respondents (54.7%) study in selected state universities. On the other hand, 45.3% of the respondents are from private universities.

84% of the participants are single, whereas 15.7% of them are married. Only 0.3% percent is widowed. Additionally, the big majority of the respondents do not have a child (93.7%). In terms of education, a significant percentage, almost half of the respondents, (47.8%) have a high school degree as their latest degree; besides, another significant percentage (37.9%) has graduate degrees. Almost half of the respondents (44.1%) report monthly income between 2,000-5,000TL, whereas only 3.4 % report monthly income in excess of 15,000TL. In terms of the working status, the largest group, almost half of the sample, is students (47.6%), followed by the private sector employment (33.3%) and public employment (8.9%). All the demographic characteristics of the participants of the survey are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Sample Characteristics

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Gender (<i>n</i> = 395) | | |
| Female | 229 | 58% |
| Male | 166 | 42% |
| Age (<i>n</i> = 388) | | |
| ≤ 24 | 200 | 51,5% |
| 25 – 34 | 175 | 45.1% |
| 35 – 44 | 10 | 2,6% |
| ≥ 45 | 3 | 0.8% |
| Income (<i>n</i> = 603) | | |
| < 2000TL | 111 | 28.6% |
| 2001 - 5000TL | 171 | 44.1% |
| 5001 - 10000TL | 68 | 17.5% |
| 10001 - 15000TL | 25 | 6.4% |
| > 15000TL | 13 | 3.4% |
| Education (<i>n</i> = 393) | | |
| Secondary school | 1 | 0.3% |
| High school | 188 | 47.8% |
| University | 149 | 37.9% |
| Master | 51 | 13.0% |
| PhD | 4 | 1.0% |
| University (<i>n</i> = 395) | | |
| State | 216 | 54.7% |
| Private | 179 | 45.3% |
| Marital Status (<i>n</i> = 394) | | |
| Single | 331 | 84.0% |
| Married | 62 | 15.7% |
| Widowed | 1 | 0.3% |
| Children (<i>n</i> = 394) | | |
| Yes | 25 | 6.3% |
| No | 369 | 93.7% |
| Working Status (<i>n</i> = 393) | | |
| Students | 187 | 47.6% |
| Wage earners in the private sector | 131 | 33.3% |
| Wage earners in public corporations | 35 | 8.9% |
| Works on his/her own | 20 | 5.1% |
| Unemployed | 13 | 3.3% |
| Housewife | 4 | 1.0% |
| Other | 3 | 0.8% |

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Researchers should have a solid understanding of the data and relationships among variables in order to ensure accuracy of the results of multivariate analyses (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, this chapter starts with exploratory factor analyses and reliability tests that are conducted for measure purification and confirmatory factor analyses that are conducted for measure validation. Then, results of the hypotheses tests (structural equation modeling analyses) are provided. While AMOS 18.0 is used for measurement and structural model assessments as well as multiple group analyses, SPSS 18.0 is used for all the remaining statistical tests.

5.1. MEASURE PURIFICATION AND VALIDATION

In order to validate all the measures, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses are conducted consecutively. Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) provide evidence for the unidimensionality of the constructs, since a single factor with a cutoff point of eigenvalue = 1 is extracted for each scale. The only exception is the SERVQUAL; which includes 22 items that represent five general service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles) (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 2003). However, these dimensions are not of concern since perceived service quality is represented by only a single value: expectation scores are subtracted from the perception scores across these five dimensions to find the “gap” scores and, then, these dimension scores are averaged to reach the final service quality perception score.

Next, measures are exposed to a validation and purification process via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using the maximum likelihood estimation process. The aim of conducting CFA is to assess the validity of the measurement model, which reflects the extent to which observed variables accurately measure what they are supposed to measure (Cook and Campbell, 1979). In order to test model validity, different goodness-of-fit (hereafter, GOF) indices that indicate how well the specified model fits with the observed covariance matrix among the indicator items need to be checked (Hair et al., 2010). The recommended GOF values are as follows:

Table 5.1. Goodness-of-fit Indices and Recommended Values

| Indexes | Recommended Values |
|---|---------------------------------|
| χ^2 | Significant p values expected |
| Goodness of fit (GFI) | $\geq .90$ |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | $\leq .07$ |
| Root mean square residual (RMR) | $\leq .07$ |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | $\geq .90$ |
| Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) | $\geq .90$ |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | $\geq .90$ |

As a result of this purification process, two items are eliminated from the CE measure, two items from the CBR measure, two from the SBC measure, and three from the EA measure due to low factor loadings, high cross loadings on other factors, or high residual estimates. No items are deleted from the trust measure. The five-factor model results in a significant chi-square statistic [$\chi^2_{(240)} = 657$], which is expected due to the large sample size. However, the goodness-of-fit indices (hereafter, GOF) signal that the observed and estimated covariance matrices fit well [comparative fit index (CFI) = .95; normed fit index (NFI) = .93; tucker lewis index (TLI) = .95; root mean square residual (RMR) = .06; root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA) = .07]. The standardized factor loadings and related *t*-values for the measures are provided in the Appendix C.

Construct validity is assessed through both convergent and discriminant validities of the measurement scales. While convergent validity examines the similarity between related constructs, discriminant validity looks for “a divergence between measures of related but conceptually different things” (Cook and Campbell, 1979, p. 61).

Convergent validity of the measurement scale for all the constructs is ensured by significant loadings of all items on their respective constructs, with lowest *t*-value being 15.13. Finally, since average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct included in measurement model tests is greater than its squared correlations with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), discriminant validity of the measurement scales are obtained as well. Descriptive statistics for the scales as well as the average variance extracted estimates, the coefficient alpha estimates, and the resulting latent factor correlations are displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Descriptive Statistics for Constructs and Construct Correlations

| | AVE | Mean | S.D. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| (1) Brand Trust | .77 | 3.02 | .94 | .91 | | | | |
| (2) Emotional Attachment | .80 | 4.13 | 1.61 | .65** | .94 | | | |
| (3) Customer Engagement | .69 | 3.50 | .96 | .75** | .63** | .93 | | |
| (4) Self-Brand Connection | .74 | 2.91 | 1.05 | .68** | .66** | .73** | .90 | |
| (5) Customer-Based Corporate Reputation | .75 | 3.41 | .87 | .82** | .68** | .86** | .74** | .96 |

Note: Values on the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha estimates.
 ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests).
 * $p < .05$ (one-tailed tests).

One of the most prominent objectives of this research is to test the differences in the hypothesized relationships between state and private universities. However, according to Hoes and Brekke (2009), measurement variance is “a prerequisite to making decisions that address group differences because finding differences or similarities across individuals and groups cannot be interpreted clearly unless measurement invariance is present” (p. 95).

Based on this fact, after all the scales are validated with the total sample, a multi-group CFA is done for the measurement model described above, in order to ensure factor structure invariance across groups defined by state versus private universities ($n = 179$ and $n = 216$ respectively).

In line with Kline (2005), measurement invariance across university groups is tested by comparing the chi-square statistics obtained from unconstrained models where all factor loadings are estimated freely for each subsample (configural invariance model) with those obtained from models where factor loadings are constrained to be invariant across groups (metric invariance model). If the chi-square differences between these models are nonsignificant (at a p value of .05), measurement invariance is ensured (French and Finch, 2006). In other words, when adding constraints to a model do not improve model fit significantly, these constraints can be accepted (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 5.3. provides results of the chi-square difference tests for the multiple group CFA. It is seen that the difference in chi-square statistics is small and highly nonsignificant, ensuring that the same factor structure exists for both university groups (Kline, 2005). In addition, GOF indices for the measurement model is at acceptable levels.

Table 5.3. Chi-squares Differences and GOF Indices for Multiple Group CFA

| $\Delta\lambda^2$ | Δdf | Sig. | CFI | NFI | TLI | RMR |
|-------------------|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 21.86 | 19 | .29 | .94 | .89 | .93 | .08 |

5.2. HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypotheses derived from the proposed model are first tested with the full sample and the differences between state and private universities are then examined through multiple group analysis. Both the full sample and multi-sample results are explained in the following parts consecutively.

5.2.1. Structural Equation Modeling Analyses

After the measurement model is assessed in terms of its reliability validity based on the CFA results, *structural equation modeling analysis* (SEM) is conducted. Structural models are different from measurement models in that while a measurement model accentuates the relationships between latent constructs and observed variables, a structural model emphasizes the nature and degree of relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2010). For the structural model assessment, the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) method is used, since it provides unbiased and more consistent and efficient parameter estimates. In addition to the five factors validated through CFA during the measurement model analyses, perceived service quality is also included in the structural model with a single indicator.

5.2.1.1. Full Sample Analysis

The structural path analysis produced a significant chi-square statistic, which is expected due the large sample size (see Table 5.4.). The overall chi-square estimate is 618 with a degrees of freedom of 263. The standardized parameter estimates and associated test statistics obtained from the analyses of the full sample are provided in Table 5.3. All goodness-of-fit indices are within the acceptable ranges [CFI = .96; NFI = .94; TLI = .96; RMR = .06; RMSEA = .06]. Based on these results, it is concluded that the hypothesized model fits the data well. In addition, path estimates are in line with expectations.

Table 5.4. Parameter Estimates

| | Nonstandardized parameter estimate | Standardized parameter estimate | <i>t</i> value |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Hypothesized path</i> | | | |
| Perceived Service Quality → Brand Trust | 2.48 | 1.00 | 8.15*** |
| Perceived Service Quality → Reputation | 1.97 | .91 | 7.61*** |
| Trust → Customer Engagement | .16 | .17 | 1.92* |
| Trust → Emotional Attachment | .62 | .35 | 2.68*** |
| Reputation → Customer Engagement | .86 | .80 | 7.99*** |
| Reputation → Emotional Attachment | .79 | .39 | 3.01*** |
| Customer Engagement → Self-Brand Connection | .70 | .66 | 10.79*** |
| Emotional Attachment → Self-Brand Connection | .14 | .25 | 5.14*** |
| GOF Indices: $\chi^2(263) = 618$; CFI = .96; NFI = .94; TLI = .96; RMR = .06; RMSEA = .06 | | | |
| *** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests). | | | |
| ** $p < .05$ (one-tailed tests). | | | |
| * $p < .10$ (one-tailed tests). | | | |

PSQ is found to exert significant effects on BT and CBR (the standardized parameter estimate, $\gamma_i = 1.00$; $P < .01$, and $\gamma_i = .91$; $P < .01$, respectively). In addition, BT has a strong influence on EA ($\gamma_i = .35$; $P < .01$); while it is only slightly influential on CE ($\gamma_i = .17$; $P < .10$). Similarly, CBR is found to have a strong effect on CE concept ($\gamma_i =$

.80; $P < .01$) as well as on EA ($\gamma_i = .39$; $P < .01$). Finally, both CE and EA are significantly affecting SBC ($\gamma_i = .66$; $P < .01$, and $\gamma_i = .25$; $P < .01$ respectively).

As a result, H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, and H8 are supported, whereas H5 is not supported.

5.2.1.2. Multi-Sample Analysis

The moderating effects of university types (state vs. private) on the proposed model (Figure 3.1) is examined through multi-group analysis. Chi-square difference test (shown in Table 5.5) is used to compare the unconstrained models in which all parameters are estimated freely with two other models: one in which factor loadings are constrained to be equal across the two subsamples and the other in which both factor loadings and structural weights are constrained to be equal. In line with the multi-group CFA results explained above, nonsignificant chi-square difference with the first model shows that measurement model is the same across state and private universities. GOF indices for the multi-group structural analysis show that the observed and estimated covariance matrices fit well: CFI=.95; NFI = .90; TLI = .94; RMR=.08; RMSEA=.05. On the other hand, despite expectations, there are no significant differences between the two different university groups in terms of the structural relationships of interest. As a result, H9, H10, H11, H12, H13, H14, H15, and H16 are that propose a significant difference in the relationships under examination for state vs private universities are rejected. A summary of all the hypotheses tests are provided in Appendix D.

Table 5.5. Chi-squares Differences and GOF Indices for Multiple Group SEM

| | $\Delta\lambda^2$ | Δdf | Sig. | CFI | NFI | TLI | RMR | RMSEA |
|--|-------------------|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Factor loadings invariant | 21.26 | 19 | .32 | .95 | .90 | .94 | .08 | .05 |
| Factor loadings and structural weights invariant | 31.92 | 27 | .24 | .95 | .90 | .94 | .08 | .05 |

All standardized parameter estimates for the two subsamples are shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Standardized Parameter Estimates for the Moderating Effects of University Type

| Group | Private | State |
|--|---------|---------|
| <i>Hypothesized path</i> | | |
| Perceived Service Quality → Brand Trust | 1.00*** | 1.00*** |
| Perceived Service Quality → Reputation | .87*** | .95*** |
| Trust → Customer Engagement | .17** | .18** |
| Trust → Emotional Attachment | .39*** | .37*** |
| Reputation → Customer Engagement | .82*** | .77*** |
| Reputation → Emotional Attachment | .39*** | .34*** |
| Customer Engagement → Self-Brand Connection | .67*** | .63*** |
| Emotional Attachment → Self-Brand Connection | .27*** | .28*** |

*** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests).
 ** $p < .05$ (one-tailed tests).
 * $p < .10$ (one-tailed tests).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS

6.1. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

With the increasing competition among higher education institutions, it becomes more challenging for universities to differentiate themselves in the marketplace and be an attraction point for the applicants (students). Existing students' thoughts and feelings about a university are as important as prospective students' attraction to the university. The reason is that, quality of education and life at a university are not easily represented to outsiders and word-of-mouth communications generated by the already enrolled students become invaluable for those applicants who need guidance. Considering these, the current study is designed to provide insights related to the factors that influence and motivate students to establish strong bonds to the universities they are affiliated with.

Based on an extensive review of the literature, perceived service quality, brand trust, and brand reputation are hypothesized to be antecedents of customers' engagement with and emotional attachment to brands; while self-brand connection is considered to be the major consequence. The proposed research model is tested with data collected from six different state and privately owned universities. The results are mostly in line with the expectations with only one exception.

The perceived quality of a university leads to the development of trust and reputation. Both brand trust and customer-based reputation cause an attachment between the student and the university emotionally, whereas only reputation affects customer engagement but brand trust does not. The reason may be the fact that

trusting in brands (universities) does not provide an engagement. It only makes customers (students) feel safe about the university's quality, performance, image, academic staff, or curriculum; but it does not help students to establish a connection. In other words, students may trust the university, but they may not find self-congruency between the institution and themselves.

Furthermore, customer engagement and emotional attachment are proved to be significantly influencing the self-brand connections. Feeling congruency between oneself and the university and having an emotional tie enable students to establish strong brand bonds. The main reason behind this may be that when students establish an attachment with the university emotionally, they become more engaged and more willing to support the university even after their graduation. At that moment, a long-lasting connection is created.

Another objective of the study is to understand whether the type of the university (state vs. private) moderates the abovementioned relationships in a higher education context or not. However, although a strong difference between the state vs. private universities is expected, interestingly, the results do not indicate that the type of university affects students' tie with their schools.

It is expected that if the university is a private one, it will be perceived as more modern, with more high-quality staff, greater social and academic opportunities, better technological infrastructure, etc. On the other hand, state universities are expected to be perceived as underdeveloped, with less social and academic opportunities, with less high-quality academic staff, and so on. However, the results show that the reality does not fit the expectations. It is found that there is

actually no difference between state and private universities the students' point of view.

The increasing number of new private universities try to inspire qualified students and also academicians, which leads to a great competition in the higher education sector. To differentiate themselves, state universities start to invest more in their physical, academic, and social systems. Like private universities, state universities are offering more and more social and academic opportunities, high quality equipment, qualified academicians, etc.

In today's circumstances, with more investment in education and institute's facilities, students that are more successful tend to study at state universities. Instead of spending much money for the education in private universities, with a low cost, students can get the same education and service from the state universities. More importantly, during the national university admission process, state universities get students with scores usually higher than those students who enroll to private universities. Being able to attract the more successful students may lead to improved reputation perceptions and may compensate the social and international opportunities offered by private universities. Still, the reality is that both university types update themselves according to the students' changing expectations.

6.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

Although the research on self-brand connection has been recently popular, the factors influencing this concept are not widely studied. More specifically, perceived service quality, brand trust, and customer-based corporate reputation have not been studied in the context of engagement (attachment) and connection to the brands. In addition,

the effects of perceived service quality or brand trust and reputation on consumers are mostly studied in the profit sector and partially in non-profit sector. However, self-brand connection and its antecedents have not attracted enough attention as a subject of inquiry. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill these gaps in the literature and enrich the body of knowledge through proposing a comprehensive conceptual model that incorporates all these concepts and testing its significance across the higher education industry.

6.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As all other profit and non-profit oriented organizations, educational institutions should be financially successful to sustain their existence. Therefore, the factors influencing students' preferences for and self-connections with these higher education institutions should be the stakeholders' one of the most important concerns.

It is proved here that people's (students') self-connection with these brands (universities) is their engagements and emotional attachments with the brand. This signals that universities' stakeholders should concentrate on not only the service quality and reputation of the institution, but also on the students' behavioral and attitudinal connections to the institutions. When the student feels congruence between his /her self-identity and the university, the university becomes a representative of the students in his/her social environment.

Day by day, as the competition increases, differentiating a university from the others is getting more and more difficulty. At this point, self-brand connection is a powerful tool that can cultivate a hard to imitate competitive advantage. It is clear

that meeting students' expectations is a main requirement for high service quality. More importantly, to make students feel the match between their self-identity and that of the universities, the institutions should engage students more in their academic, social, and international opportunities. The more the higher education institutions adapt themselves to the developing modern world, the more congruent they will be with the students.

As a result of all these indications, from the stakeholders' perspective it can be concluded that through emotional attachment, engagement, and self-brand connection, the value of the university (brand) and, accordingly, its investment value will increase.

6.4. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This study has a number of limitations. First, data are collected with respect to six universities in Istanbul, three of which are state universities and the other three are private universities. However, including more universities from different cities would help to improve the generalizability of the findings since the selected universities do not represent the general university spectrum in Turkey.

Second, future researchers can explore the hypothesized relationships with a larger sample and be more confident in the results.

Third, the self-brand connection concept examined in the context of higher education could be sorted by category, such as only among undergraduate or graduate students. The importance of the degree of self-brand connection could be examined among these students groups to see if there are any differences or not.

Fourth, the significance conceptual model proposed here is tested only with respect to the higher education industry. Future research examining these relationships can be studied in different industries other than the higher education sector.

Finally, this study focuses on only the students but it does not look at from the academicians' perspective. Future research including academicians is also highly recommended.

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Appendix A: Scale Items and Cronbach's Alpha Values

| Scale Items | Cronbach's alpha (α) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Perceived service quality (Expectations)</i> | |
| 1. They should have up-to-date equipment. | |
| 2. Their physical facilities should be visually appealing. | |
| 3. Their employees should be well dressed and appear neat. | |
| 4. The appearance of the physical facilities of these firms should be in keeping with the type of services provided. | |
| 5. When these firms promise to do something by a certain time, they should do so. | |
| 6. When customers have problems, these firms should be in keeping with the type of services provided. | |
| 7. These firms should be dependable. | |
| 8. They should provide their services at the time they promise to do so. | |
| 9. They should keep their records accurately. | |
| 10. They should not be expected to tell customers exactly when services will be performed.* | |
| 11. It is not realistic for customers to expect prompt service from employees of these firms.* | $\alpha = .971$ |
| 12. Their employees do not always have to be willing to help customers.* | |
| 13. It is okay if they are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.* | |
| 14. Customers should be able to trust employees of these firms. | |
| 15. Customers should be able to feel safe in their transactions with these firms' employees. | |
| 16. Their employees should be polite. | |
| 17. Their employees should get adequate support from these firms to do their jobs well. | |
| 18. These firms should not be expected to give customers individual attention.* | |
| 19. Employees of these firms cannot be expected to give customers personal attention.* | |
| 20. It is unrealistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are.* | |
| 21. It is unrealistic to expect these firms to have their customers' best interests at heart.* | |
| 22. They should not be expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers.* | |

*These items are reverse coded.

Appendix A: Scale Items and Cronbach's Alpha Values (continued)

| Scale Items | Cronbach's alpha (α) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Perceived service quality (Perceptions)</i> | $\alpha = .972$ |
| 1. has up-to date equipment. | |
| 2.'s physical facilities are visually appealing. | |
| 3.'s employees are well dressed and appear neat. | |
| 4. The appearance of the physical facilities of is in keeping with the type of services provided. | |
| 5. When promises to do something by a certain time, it does so. | |
| 6. When you have problems, is sympathetic and reassuring. | |
| 7. is dependable. | |
| 8. provides its services at the time it promises to do so. | |
| 9. keeps its records accurately. | |
| 10. does not tell customers exactly when services will be performed.* | |
| 11. You do not receive prompt service from's employees.* | |
| 12. Employees of are not always willing to help customers.* | |
| 13. Employees of are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly.* | |
| 14. You can trust the employees of | |
| 15. You feel safe in your transactions with's employees. | |
| 16. Employees of are polite. | |
| 17. Employees should get adequate support from to do their jobs well. | |
| 18. does not give you individual attention.* | |
| 19. Employees of do not give you personal attention.* | |
| 20. Employees of do not know what your needs are.* | |
| 21. does not have your best interests at heart.* | |
| 22. does not have operating hours convenient to all their customers.* | |

*These items are reverse coded.

Appendix A: Scale Items and Cronbach's Alpha Values (continued)

| Scale Items | Cronbach's alpha (α) |
|--|---|
| <i>Customer-Based Corporate Reputation</i> | |
| 1. I have good feelings about | $\alpha = .942$ |
| 2. I admire and respect | |
| 3. I trust | |
| 4. stands behind its products and services. | |
| 5. offers high quality products and services. | |
| 6. presents such products and services that it's worth the price. | |
| 7. is a leading company in its field. | |
| 8. has a clear vision about its future. | |
| 9. looks like a good company to work for. | |
| 10. looks like a low risk investment. | |
| 11. is likely to show a better performance than its competitors. | |
| <i>Brand Trust</i> | |
| 1.meets my expectations. | $\alpha = .867$ |
| 2. never disappoints me. | |
| 3. name guarantees satisfaction. | |
| <i>Customer Engagement</i> | |
| 1. I would say positive things about to other people. | $\alpha = .886$ |
| 2. I would recommend to someone who seeks my advice. | |
| 3. I would encourage friends and relatives to do business with | |
| 4. I would do more business with in the next few years. | |
| 5. I feel proud to be a customer. | |
| 6. is the perfect company for people like me. | |
| 7. I can't imagine a world without | |

Appendix A: Scale Items and Cronbach's Alpha Values (continued)

| Scale Items | Cronbach's alpha (α) |
|--|-------------------------------|
| <i>Emotional Attachment</i> | $\alpha = .937$ |
| 1. Affectionate | |
| 2. Friendly | |
| 3. Loved | |
| 4. Peaceful | |
| 5. Passionate | |
| 6. Delighted | |
| 7. Captivated | |
| <i>Self-Brand Connection</i> | $\alpha = .907$ |
| 1. reflects who I am. | |
| 2. I can identify with | |
| 3. I feel a personal connection to | |
| 4. I use to communicate who I am to other people. | |
| 5. I think helps me become the type of person I want to be. | |

Appendix B1: Questionnaire in English

Dear Participant,

This survey is part of an academic study that aims to research the effects of the self-brand connection, one of the effects of perceived service quality, on students in the education sector.

Your contribution is requested for receiving healthy results from this research by answering the questions in the survey related to ... **University**.

Your shared information will only be used in this academic study and will not be given under no circumstances to other people, institutions, or organizations.

Thank you.

Merve Beyazıt

Istanbul Bilgi University

Marketing Communication Department / Postgraduate

e-mail: merbeyaz@hotmail.com

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements considering ... **University**.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | I would say positive things about ... University to other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | I would recommend ... University to someone who seeks my advice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | I would encourage my friends and relatives to study in ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I would study Master or PhD in ... University in the next few years. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | I feel proud to be a student in ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | ... University is the perfect university for people like me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | I can't imagine a world without ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... University meets my expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... University never disappoints me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | ... University's name guarantees satisfaction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements considering ... **University**.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | I have good feelings about ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | I admire and respect ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | I trust ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | ... University stands behind its education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | ... University offers high quality education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | ... University presents such education that it's worth the price. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | ... University is a leading institution in its field. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... University has a clear vision about its future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... University looks like a good company to study. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | ... University looks like a low risk investment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11 | This company is likely to show a better performance than its competitors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements considering “**expected features from a university**”.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | A perfect university should have up-to-date equipment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | The campus of a perfect university should be visually appealing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university should be well dressed and appear neat. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | The appearance of the materials of a perfect university should be in keeping with the type of education provided. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | When a perfect university promises to do something by a certain time, it should do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | When students have problems, a perfect university should be in keeping with the type of education provided. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | A perfect university should be dependable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | A perfect university provides its education at the time it promises to do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | A perfect university keeps its records accurately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university are expected to tell students exactly when education will be performed. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university are expected to give prompt service to students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university always want to be willing to help students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university are not too busy to respond to student requests promptly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | A perfect university’s students should be able to trust of the academic and administrative staff of a perfect university. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | A perfect university’s students should be able to feel safe in their transactions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university should always be polite to students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | Students of a perfect university should get adequate support from the academic and administrative staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | A perfect university is expected to give students individual attention. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | A perfect company should have operating hours convenient to all their students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university give students personal attention. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21 | A perfect university has its students’ best interests at heart. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22 | The academic and administrative staff of a perfect university know what the needs of their students are. (For ex; make-up exam, appointment request, etc.) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements considering ... **University**.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | ... University has up-to date equipment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | The campus of ... University physical facilities are visually appealing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University are well dressed and appear neat. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | The appearance of materials of ... University is in keeping with the type of education provided. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | When ... University promises to do something by a certain time, it does so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | When students have problems, ... University is sympathetic and reassuring. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | ... University is dependable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... University provides its education at the time it promises to do so. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... University keeps its records accurately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University tell students exactly when education will be performed. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University give prompt service to students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University are always willing to help students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University are not too busy to respond to students requests promptly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | Students can trust ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | Students feel safe in their transactions with ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University are always polite. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | Students of ... University get adequate support from the academic and administrative staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | ... University gives students individual attention. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | ... University has operating hours convenient to all its students. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University give students personal attention. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21 | ... University has students' best interests at heart. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22 | The academic and administrative staff of ... University know what students' needs are. (For ex; make-up exam, appointment request, etc.) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

5. Please indicate the extent to which statement reflects you considering ... **University**.

| | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | ... University reflects who I am. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | I can identify with ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | I feel a personal connection to ... University. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I use ... University to communicate who I am to other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | I think ... University helps me become the type of person I want to be. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. Please indicate the level of your feelings about ... **University** in by selecting the appropriate number. (1=Doesn't even reflect me; 7=Strongly reflects me)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affectionate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Friendly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Loved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Peaceful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Passionate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Delighted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Captivated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Gender: Female _____
Male _____

Marital Status: Married _____
Single _____
Widowed _____
Divorced _____

Age: _____

Do you have children? Yes _____
No _____

Are you employed? Yes _____
No _____

Household Income: <2000TL _____
2000-5000TL _____
5000-10000TL _____
10000-15000TL _____
>15000TL _____

Latest degree earned: Primary school _____
Secondary school _____
High school _____
University _____
Master _____
PhD _____

Working status: Employed in public sector _____
Employed in private sector _____
Working on his own _____
Unemployed _____
Housewife _____
Retired _____
Student _____
Not able to work due to
agedness/disability _____
Other _____

Occupation: _____

Appendix B2: Questionnaire in Turkish

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu anket, hizmet algısının etkilerinden biri olan müşteri bağlılığının eğitim sektöründe öğrenci davranışları üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmayı amaçlayan akademik bir çalışmanın parçasıdır.

Sizden, ... **Üniversitesi** ile ilgili olan bu anketteki sorulara cevap vererek araştırmadan daha sağlıklı sonuçlar elde edilmesine katkıda bulunmanız rica edilmektedir.

Paylaşacağınız bilgiler sadece bu akademik çalışma kapsamında kullanılacak ve başka kişi, kurum veya kuruluşlarla hiçbir şekilde paylaşılmayacaktır.

Teşekkürler.

Merve Beyazıt

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Pazarlama İletişimi Bölümü / Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi

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1. Lütfen aşağıda ... **Üniversitesi** ile ilgili sıralanan ifadelere katılma derecenizi ilgili kısımları işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| | | Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum | Katılmıyorum | Ne Katılıyorum, Ne Katılmıyorum | Katılıyorum | Kesinlikle Katılıyorum |
|----|---|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Çevremdeki insanlara ... Üniversitesi ile ilgili olumlu şeyler söylerim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Bana akıl danışan insanlara ... Üniversitesi'ni öneririm. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Arkadaşlarım ve akrabalarımı ... Üniversitesi'nde okumaları konusunda teşvik ederim. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Önümüzdeki birkaç yıl içinde ... Üniversitesi'nde Yüksek Lisans veya Doktora yapmayı düşünürüm. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | ... Üniversitesi'nde öğrenci olmaktan gurur duyuyorum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | ... Üniversitesi bana benzeyen insanlar için mükemmel bir üniversitedir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | ... Üniversitesi'nin olmadığı bir dünya düşünemiyorum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... Üniversitesi beklentilerimi karşılar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... Üniversitesi beni hiçbir zaman hayal kırıklığına uğratmaz. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | ... Üniversitesi'nin ismi memnuniyetin garantisidir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. Lütfen aşağıda ... Üniversitesi ile ilgili sıralanan ifadelere katılma derecenizi ilgili kısımları işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| | | Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum | Katılmıyorum | Ne Katılmıyorum, Ne Katılıyorum | Katılıyorum | Kesinlikle Katılıyorum |
|----|---|----------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | ... Üniversitesi ile ilgili güzel hislerim var. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | ... Üniversitesi'nin hayranıyım ve saygı duyuyorum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | ... Üniversitesi'ne güveniyorum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | ... Üniversitesi eğitiminin arkasında durur. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | ... Üniversitesi yüksek kaliteli eğitim sunar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | ... Üniversitesi ödenen fiyatın karşılığını verecek eğitim sunar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | ... Üniversitesi alanında öncü bir kurumdur. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... Üniversitesi geleceği için net bir vizyona sahiptir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... Üniversitesi okumak için iyi bir okul gibi görünüyor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | ... Üniversitesi yatırım yapmak için düşük riskli bir kurum gibi görünüyor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11 | ... Üniversitesi rakiplerinden daha iyi performans gösterme eğilimindedir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Lütfen “bir üniversitenin sahip olması beklenen özelliklerinin” sıralandığı aşağıdaki ifadelere ne derece katıldığınızı ilgili kısımları işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| | | Kesimlikle Katılmıyorum | Katılmıyorum | Ne katılmıyorum, Ne Katılmıyorum | Katılıyorum | Kesimlikle Katılıyorum |
|----|---|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Mükemmel bir üniversite modern görünüşlü donanıma sahiptir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin kampüsü göze hoş görünür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu temiz ve düzgün görünüşlüdür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Mükemmel bir üniversitede eğitim verilirken kullanılan materyaller göze hoş görünür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | Mükemmel bir üniversite, verdikleri sözleri zamanında yerine getirir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Mükemmel bir üniversite, öğrencinin bir sorunu olduğunda, sorunu çözmek için samimi bir ilgi gösterir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | Mükemmel bir üniversite doğru hizmeti ilk seferde verir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | Mükemmel bir üniversite bir eğitimi daha önceden söyledikleri zamanda verir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | Mükemmel bir üniversite kayıtların hatasız tutulması konusunda çok hassastır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu bir eğitimin tam olarak ne zaman verileceğini öğrencilerine söyler. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerine süratli hizmet verir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu her zaman öğrencilerine yardımcı olmak ister. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu hiçbir zaman öğrencilerin isteklerini cevaplayamayacak kadar meşgul değildir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personelinin ve idari kadrosunun davranışları öğrencilerinde güven duygusu uyandırır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin öğrencileri, muameleleri yapılırken kendilerini güvende hisseder. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerine karşı her zaman naziktir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerin sorularına cevap verecek bilgiye sahiptir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin her öğrencisiyle tek ilgilenir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin çalışma saatleri tüm öğrencilere uygun şekilde düzenlenmiştir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | Mükemmel bir üniversite, her öğrenciyle kişisel olarak ilgilenen akademik personele ve idari kadroya sahiptir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21 | Mükemmel bir üniversite öğrencilerinin menfaatini her şeyin üstünde tutar. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22 | Mükemmel bir üniversitenin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerinin özel isteklerini anlar. (Örn; telafi sınavı, randevu talebi, vb.) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

4. Lütfen aşağıda ... **Üniversitesi** ile ilgili sıralanan ifadelere katılma derecenizi ilgili kısımları işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| | | Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum | Katılmıyorum | Ne katılmıyorum, Ne Katılmıyorum | Katılıyorum | Kesinlikle Katılıyorum |
|----|---|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | ... Üniversitesi modern görüntüslü donanıma sahiptir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | ... Üniversitesi kampüsü göze hoş görünür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu temiz ve düzgün görüntüslüdür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | ... Üniversitesi'nde eğitim verilirken kullanılan materyaller göze hoş görünür. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | ... Üniversitesi verdikleri sözleri zamanında yerine getirir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | ... Üniversitesi, öğrencinin bir sorunu olduğunda, sorunu çözmek için samimi bir ilgi gösterir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | ... Üniversitesi doğru hizmeti ilk seferde verir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | ... Üniversitesi bir eğitimi daha önceden söyledikleri zamanda verir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | ... Üniversitesi kayıtların hatasız tutulması konusunda çok hassastır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu bir eğitimin tam olarak ne zaman verileceğini öğrencilerine söyler. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerine süratli hizmet verir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu her zaman öğrencilerine yardımcı olmak ister. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu hiçbir zaman öğrencilerin isteklerini cevaplayamayacak kadar meşgul değildir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personelinin ve idari kadrosunun davranışları öğrencilerinde güven duygusu uyandırır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15 | ... Üniversitesi'nin öğrencileri, muameleleri yapılırken kendilerini güvende hisseder. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerine karşı her zaman naziktir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerin sorularına cevap verecek bilgiye sahiptir. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18 | ... Üniversitesi her öğrencisiyle tek ilgilenir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19 | ... Üniversitesi'nin çalışma saatleri tüm öğrencilere Uygun şekilde düzenlenmiştir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | ... Üniversitesi, her öğrenciyle kişisel olarak ilgilenen akademik personele ve idari kadroya sahiptir. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21 | ... Üniversitesi öğrencilerinin menfaatini her şeyin üstünde tutar. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22 | ... Üniversitesi'nin akademik personeli ve idari kadrosu öğrencilerinin özel isteklerini anlar. (Örn; telafi sınavı, randevu talebi, vb.) | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

5. Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerin sizi ne derece yansıttığını ilgili kısımları işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

| | Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum | Katılmıyorum | Ne katılıyorum, Ne Katılmıyorum | Katılıyorum | Kesinlikle Katılıyorum |
|--|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1 ... Üniversitesi beni / kim olduğumu yansıtır. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 Kendimi ... Üniversitesi ile özdeşleştiririm. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 ... Üniversitesi'ne özel bir bağım var. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 Diğer insanlara kim olduğumu anlatırken ... Üniversitesi'ni kullanırım. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 Bence ... Üniversitesi olmak istediğim insana dönüşmeme yardımcı oluyor. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. Aşağıdaki ifadelerin ... **Üniversitesi** ile ilgili duygu durumunuzu ne derece yansıttığını işaretleyerek belirtiniz. (1=Hiç yansıtmıyor; 7=Güçlü derecede yansıtıyor)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sıcakkanlı | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Arkadaşça | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Sevgi dolu | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Huzurlu | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Tutkulu | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Keyif verici | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Büyülenmiş | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Cinsiyetiniz: Kadın _____ Medeni durumunuz: Evli _____
Erkek _____ Bekar _____
Dul _____
Boşanmış _____

Yaşınız: _____ Çocuğunuz var mı? Evet _____
Hayır _____

Çalışıyor musunuz? Evet _____
Hayır _____

Aylık hane geliriniz: <2000TL _____
2000-5000TL _____
5000-10000TL _____
10000-15000TL _____
>15000TL _____

En son bitirdiğiniz okul: İlkokul _____
Ortaöğretim _____
Lise _____
Üniversite _____
Yüksek lisans _____
Doktora _____

Çalışma durumunuz: Kamu çalışanı _____
Özel sektör çalışanı _____
Kendi hesabına çalışıyor _____
İşsiz/İş arıyor _____
Ev kadını _____
Emekli _____
Öğrenci _____
Yaşlılık veya engeli _____
sebebiyle çalışmıyor _____
Diğer _____

Mesleğiniz: _____

Appendix C: GOF Indices and Standardized Item Loadings (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

| Item | Standardized Loadings | t-values |
|--|-----------------------|----------|
| <i>Brand Trust</i> | | |
| ... University meets my expectations. | .87*** | |
| ... University never disappoints me. | .80*** | 19.44 |
| ... University's name guarantees satisfaction. | .82*** | 19.94 |
| <i>Self-Brand Connection</i> | | |
| ... University reflects who I am. | .92*** | 19.93 |
| I can identify with ... University. | .89*** | 19.19 |
| I feel a personal connection to ... University. | Deleted | |
| I use ... University to communicate who I am to other people. | Deleted | |
| I think ... University helps me become the type of person I want to be. | .78*** | |
| <i>Emotional Attachment</i> | | |
| Affectionate | .94*** | |
| Friendly | .94*** | 37.11 |
| Loved | .90*** | 31.91 |
| Peaceful | .78*** | 21.93 |
| Passionate | Deleted | |
| Delighted | Deleted | |
| Captivated | Deleted | |
| <i>Customer Engagement</i> | | |
| I would say positive things about ... University to other people. | .84*** | |
| I would recommend ... University to someone who seeks my advice. | .86*** | 26.63 |
| I would encourage my friends and relatives to study in ... University. | .80*** | 19.39 |
| I would study Master or PhD in ... University in the next few years. | Deleted | |
| I feel proud to be a student in ... University. | .82*** | 19.50 |
| ... University is the perfect university for people like me. | .83*** | 19.76 |
| I can't imagine a world without ... University. | Deleted | |
| <i>Customer-Based Corporate Reputation</i> | | |
| I have good feelings about ... University. | .86*** | 18.05 |
| I admire and respect ... University. | .84*** | 17.53 |
| I trust ... University. | .85*** | 17.75 |
| ... University stands behind its education. | .82*** | 17.16 |
| ... University offers high quality education. | .73*** | 15.13 |
| ... University presents such education that it's worth the price. | Deleted | |
| ... University is a leading institution in its field. | .78*** | 16.21 |
| ... University has a clear vision about its future. | .78*** | 16.21 |
| ... University looks like a good company to study. | .86*** | 18.02 |
| ... University looks like a low risk investment. | Deleted | |
| This company is likely to show a better performance than its competitors. | .75*** | |
| GOF Indices: $\chi^2_{(240)} = 657$; CFI = .95; NFI = .93; TLI = .95; RMR = .06 | | |
| *** p<.01 (one-tailed tests). | | |

Appendix D. Summary of Hypotheses

| Hypotheses | Result | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| H1 | There is a positive relationship between perceived service quality and customer-based corporate reputation. | Supported |
| H2 | There is a positive relationship between perceived service quality and brand trust. | Supported |
| H3 | Customer-based corporate reputation positively affects customer engagement. | Supported |
| H4 | Customer-based corporate reputation positively affects emotional attachment. | Supported |
| H5 | Brand trust positively influences customer engagement. | Rejected |
| H6 | Brand trust positively influences emotional attachment. | Supported |
| H7 | There is a positive relationship between customer engagement and self-brand connection. | Supported |
| H8 | There is a positive relationship between emotional attachment and self-brand connection. | Supported |
| H9 | The effect of perceived service quality on customer-based corporate reputation will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H10 | The effect of perceived service quality on brand trust will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H11 | The effect of customer-based corporate reputation on customer engagement will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H12 | The effect of customer-based corporate reputation on emotional attachment will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H13 | The effect of brand trust on customer engagement will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H14 | The effect of brand trust on emotional attachment will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H15 | The effect of customer engagement on self-brand connection will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |
| H16 | The effect of emotional attachment on self-brand connection will be different for state vs. private universities. | Rejected |