

# The Mediating Role of Brand Love in the Relationship Between Consumer-Based Brand Equity and Brand Loyalty: a Research on Starbucks

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## Abstract

The present study aims to determine the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between CBBE and brand loyalty. The study makes an analysis of CBBE, brand loyalty, and brand love related to Starbucks – a global coffee house and roastery catering concept. The study population comprises customers of the Starbucks enterprises operating in the city of Mersin, Turkey, and adopts a convenience sampling method. During the data collection process, 384 customers of Starbucks stores within Mersin who were over 18 years of age were surveyed. The dependent variables of the study are "brand loyalty" and "brand love," whereas the independent variable is "CBBE". The hypotheses developed in the research model were tested through structural equation modeling (SEM). Based on the study findings, it was concluded that brand love, as well as the dimensions of CBBE of "Service Quality: Physical Quality SQ:PQ" and "Lifestyle-Congruence LC", had full mediation with brand loyalty, while "Service Quality: Staff Behavior SQ:SB", "Ideal Self-Congruence IS-C" and "Brand Identification BI" had no such mediating effect on brand loyalty. In the study, the mediating role of brand love in terms of the impact of CBBE in the service industry on brand loyalty has been examined for the first time. The research findings show that a strong bond will be established with the target audience through compatible and parallel strategies that will be implemented by the managers on the SQ:PQ and LC dimensions of CBBE and this situation will increase loyalty to the brand. As a result of the consumers' strong emotions and their increasing loyalty towards the brand, this situation will lead the businesses in the service industry to protect their market share along with having a positive impact on their sustainable competition and profitability.

**Key Words:** brand love, cbbe, brand loyalty, service industry, mediating role, starbucks

**JEL Classification:** M31, L83

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## 1. Introduction

Brand loyalty is among the most common research topics in marketing, and is considered essential for the success of enterprises in the long term (Han, Kwortnik & Wang, 2008; Nam, Ekinçi & Whyatt, 2011; Shin, Hwang, Lee & Cho, 2015), as it is brand loyalty that brings in loyal customers who buy products on a frequent basis, and who try other products and services (facilitating cross selling) plays a crucial role for firms in terms of gaining new customers and developing a positive social image (Tu, Wang & Chang, 2012). Businesses are able to gain more market share through brand loyalty, which leads loyal

customers to purchase the products of their preferred brand, despite the marketing activities of its competitors and situational factors (Yoo, 2009).

Brand equity, as a theoretical concept has been research in the 80's (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2018). Aaker (1991) has defined brand equity as "all assets and liabilities linked to the distinctive features of the brand such as name and symbol which increase or decrease the value of the products and the services a business provides to the consumers". Various approaches have been established to evaluate brand equity. The first approach is the behavioral approach consisting of consumer's attitudes and behaviors in evaluating brand equity. The second approach is the financial approach consisting of the calculation of the financial statements in determining the total brand equity (Grębosz-Krawczyk, 2018).

Abdullah et al. (2018) have indicated that brand equity plays an essential role in structuring consumer behavior, attitude and preferences. Therefore, the concept of CBBE has gained importance for the researchers in recent years. Jorfi & Gayem (2016) claims that CBBE and its different dimensions are important for enterprises on account of its effect on consumer satisfaction, perceived value and consumer loyalty. Aaker (1991) states that CBBE can be provided by means of quality perception, brand association, brand loyalty and brand awareness. Keller (1993), on the other hand, claims that CBBE "*is the impact that brand knowledge has on different buyer responses to the marketing of a brand*". In another study, CBBE has been defined as "the total symbolic and functional benefits obtained by the consumer as a result of utilizing and consuming the brand" (Vazquez et al., 2002:28). Yoo et al. (2000) on the other hand, have defined CBBE as, "a value added by the brand name or the increasing benefits". CBBE is based on both consumer perception and consumer behavior, referred to as cognitive and attitudinal effects (Şimşek, 2019).

CBBE is treated as multidimensional in marketing literature, although the same body of literature features discussions of whether the principles behind the creation of brand awareness can be applied directly to brands such as hotels and food and beverage establishments, in which the service element is dominant. For instance, Aaker (1991) defines perceived quality as one of the elements of brand equity, but doesn't indicate clearly whether it refers to goods or services. Furthermore, Aaker (1991) and other studies offer no explanation which quality elements should be counted in the brand equity model, and whether it is feasible to evaluate brand equity models, such as hotels and restaurants, in which the service aspect is dominant. Adaptations to the service-based branding models are necessary to satisfy the peculiar features of service provision (i.e. non-physical), as the different dimensions of brand equity are revealed when brands are evaluated in the service industry (Souri, 2017; Nam, Ekinici & Whyatt, 2011). In their measurement of CBBE in the service sector, Nam et al. (2011) suggested that accomplished brands are not planned not only to gratify physical consumer needs but also to meet their symbolic needs.

Brand love, which has attracted little academic interest to date, has started to emerge as a novel marketing phenomenon that is attracting the attention of academicians as much as sectoral practitioners (Bergkvist & Larsen, 2010). According to Roberts (2004), CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, a long-dated correlation between the brand and the customer, and the level of brand loyalty in the customer base is linked to the love attached to the brand, and states that brands such as Harley Davidson, Apple and Starbucks have all achieved success through brand love. Brand love is an emotion that has a positive impact on buyer, and ensures that customers remain "loyal customers", regardless of the prices; to talk positively about the brand; and even to feel an emotional attachment to it (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Kalyoncuoğlu, 2017).

Rapid technological advancements have led to the popularity of the concept of modern coffee houses and roasteries to increase gradually in the 21st century. Brand equity must be increased if sustainability is to be maintained in the catering sector, which is based on a modern coffee house and roastery concept in the case of Starbucks (Ongkowidjoyo, 2015). Starbucks ranks 24th in the world in the "BrandZ Top 100" global brands list in 2020 with a brand value of 47.7 billion dollars (ntv.com.tr, 2020). Today, Starbucks offers coffee drinks to millions of customers every day, with more than 24,000 retail stores in 73 countries (Starbucks, 2021).

The present study seeks to determine the intermediary role of brand love in the correlation between CBBE and brand loyalty, addressing the issues of brand equity, brand loyalty and the brand love phenomenon through an analysis of Starbucks and the sale of coffee on a global scale. In previous studies, while in general, the effect of brand equity on brand loyalty and the intermediary role of buyer satisfaction have been assessed (Souri, 2017; Jorfi & Gayem, 2016; Ali & Muqadas, 2015; Shahroodi, Kaviani & Abasian, 2015; Ongkowitzo, 2015; Susanty & Kenny, 2015; Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt, 2011), there have also been those studying the effect of brand trust on brand loyalty and the intermediary role of brand love (Kalyoncuoğlu, 2017); brand trust, brand awareness and the intermediary role of brand love on the effect of self-image congruence on brand commitment (Ayдын, 2017); and the intermediary effect of brand love in the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty (Aşkın & İpek, 2016).

In the first part of the study, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) and its dimensions were explained conceptually. Furthermore, in this part, previously analyzed consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) and the relevant literature researching the relationship between brand love and brand loyalty were examined. Research model was established in accordance with the obtained data. In the third part, research method and data validity and reliability analysis were conducted. In the fourth part of the study, research hypothesis analysis were examined. Finally, research results were compared with previous studies in accordance with the obtained data. Moreover, the reflections of the research results in terms of sectoral perspective and in the literature were specified.

Mediation test is a highly effective method to prove "how" the relationships between variables arise (Şimşek, 2007: 143). Therefore, in the service industry, it is projected that the impact of CBBE will be provided by various mediating variables as well as brand love. In this context, the determination of the mediating effect of brand love is considered to be a very important issue. In the current research, the role of brand love on CBBE and loyalty will be researched for the first time. It is projected that the research results will contribute to profitability in the sector through the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage, while also serving as a guide to enterprises seeking to increase the customer loyalty by emphasizing certain concepts, and contributing to the related body of marketing literature.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Consumer-Based Brand Equity

Maintaining positive CBBE is necessary for marketing experts (Jorfi & Gayem, 2016). Each component (physical quality, staff behavior, ideal internal consistency, brand identity, life style consistency) of brand equity is an indication of one's customers' perceptions and imagination in respect to the brand, and this image they create supports the consumer in their purchasing decisions (Shahroodi et al., 2015). Although CBBE is considered to be multidimensional (brand awareness, brand image) in marketing literature (Keller, 1993), discussion continues as to whether branding principles in the marketing of products manufactured in the industrial sector, the agricultural sector and other sectors, can be carried out to brands providing service-weighted products, such as hotels and catering businesses (Nam et al., 2011). In his study, Aaker (1991) did not specify which quality components should be included in the brand equity model, and whether the brand equity model could be applied successfully in such service-based sectors as tourism. For example, it is argued that good-based brand equity models exhibit a slight validity in service-based brand equity models, such as those applied to the tourism sector (Boo et al., 2009). That said, the CBBE model operates differently in the service sector due to the structural differences of the sector (in features such as abstractness, synchronicity, non-storability, heterogeneity, etc.). This led Nam et al. (2011) to determine CBBE dimensions in the service industry through the utilization of Aaker's (1991) dimensions (*Service Quality: Physical Quality, Service Quality: Staff Behavior, Ideal Self-Congruence, Brand Identification, Lifestyle-Congruence*), and to state that these dimensions effect brand loyalty. Nam et al. (2011) made use of these five dimensions measure CBBE in the hotel and

restaurant sectors, and these same five dimensions will be used also in the present study for the investigation of Starbucks – a global coffee house and roastery catering concept – and the measurement of CBBE. Nam et al. (2011) and Sürücü et al. (2019) also looked into "physical quality" and "staff behavior" in their studies, as the two most effective functional dimensions in the services sector, and these two quality dimensions are also addressed in the present study, making use of the data obtained by Nam et al. for the measurement of CBBE.

*Service Quality: Physical Quality (SQ:PQ)* refers to the equipment, design, materials and the general appearance of the facilities of the enterprise in a service business (Madanoğlu, 2004), although brand loyalty among consumers is being measured increasingly based on perceived service quality (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016). Moreover, the physical environment is also influential in the recommendations made by customers related to the service they receive to their inner circle in the event of them being satisfied and maintaining their purchasing continuity (Susanty & Kenny, 2015: 15).

*Service Quality: Staff Behavior (SQ:SB)* is the image that is projected based on the skills, benevolence, sincerity and sensitivity of the accommodation and food and beverage staff (Ekinici et al., 2008; Madanoğlu, 2004). The workforce of an enterprise is important in shaping customer perception and satisfaction, being the component of the business that is responsible for the provision of quality service in accordance with customer expectations (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996).

*Ideal Self-Congruence (IS-C)* self-conception can be considered as the integrity of an individual's ideas and feelings with reference to the person as an object of thought (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-congruence reflects to what extent the consumer's true self or ideal self conception coincides with a brand image (Nam et al., 2011; Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000). The more a brand projects the consumers' self, the more powerful a personal connection the consumer will develop with the brand (Aaker et al., 2004; Park et al., 2010). Astakhova et al. (2017) suggests that a meaningful and positive relationship exists between the ideal self-congruence and the obsessive brand passion of a consumer. Köksal and Demir (2012) have determined in their studies that Ideal Self-Congruence (IS-C) has a positive impact on brand loyalty through brand love.

*Brand Identification (BI)* delivers what a brand provides or represents to consumers (Keller, 2008), and satisfies the symbolic needs of consumers more than their functional needs (He et al., 2012). Alnawas & Altarifi (2015) and Sallam (2014) established in their study that a meaningful and positive relationship exists between brand identification and brand love, and that brand identification makes important contributions to the improvement of brand love.

*Lifestyle-Congruence (LC)* indicates the extent to which the brand effects buyer lifestyles (Nam et al., 2011), refers to the ability of the brand to support their buyers' values and lifestyles, and their expressions of the same within their social environments (Keller, 2008). Majerova (2020) identified life-style congruence as one of the optimum components of brand value sources. The greater the level of congruence for a brand's image in respect of a buyer's personal lifestyle, the greater the level of buyer satisfaction related to brand experience and brand love (Nam et al., 2011).

Finally, in addition to all these dimensions, Sürücü et al. (2019) have indicated in their studies that CBBE has a direct influence on brand loyalty. According to the data obtained from the literature, H1 hypothesis and its sub-hypotheses had been established for CBBE and its sub-dimensions.

***H1: Brand equity, as perceived by consumers, has a significant positive effect on their brand loyalty.***

## 2.2. Brand Love

Customers may consider a brand as an individual, and so may feel a similar level of love for a brand as they do a person (Ranjbarian, Kazemi & Borandeg, 2013). When a consumer starts to love a brand, they may actually become considerably emotional and passionate. They may purchase this brand continuously, turning a blind eye to other brands, as a result of this emotional bond they create (Carroll



& Ahuvia, 2006). Furthermore, consumers who build strong emotions towards the brand are willing to pay more money for this brand; therefore, brand love contributes to the financial value of brand in the long term (Başkol & Asar, 2019).

Gomez & Perez (2018) identified a meaningful and positive relationship between brand equity and brand love, while in the studies of Carroll & Ahuvia (2006), it is argued that the more hedonic a product and/or how well it expresses itself, the more it will be liked and loved in terms of consumer tendencies. Önen (2018) on the other hand, have determined that brand equity has an important influence on brand love in the study conducted by Aaker (1991) on the dimensions of brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and the perceived quality).

In accordance with the data obtained from the literature, H2 hypothesis and its sub-hypotheses have been established for CBBE and its sub-dimensions.

***H2: Brand equity, as perceived by consumers, has a significant positive effect on their brand love.***

### 2.3. Brand loyalty

Consumer loyalty refers to the level of attachment of the consumer to a certain brand (Rather & Camilleri, 2019). In Aaker's brand equity model, loyalty refers to lowering the marketing costs, gaining new customers (building awareness and trust) and a commercial support on account of responding competitive threats (Gil et al, 2007). Traditionally, loyalty is regarded as a dimension of Aaker (1991) 's brand equity model. Many previous studies support this (Başkol & Asar, 2019; Önen, 2018; Kim & Chao, 2018; Ongkowidjoyo, 2015). However, most of the studies on service industry considers loyalty as a result of brand equity (Tanushan & Kennedy, 2020; Sourı, 2017; Susanty, et al.,2015; Nam, et.al., 2011).

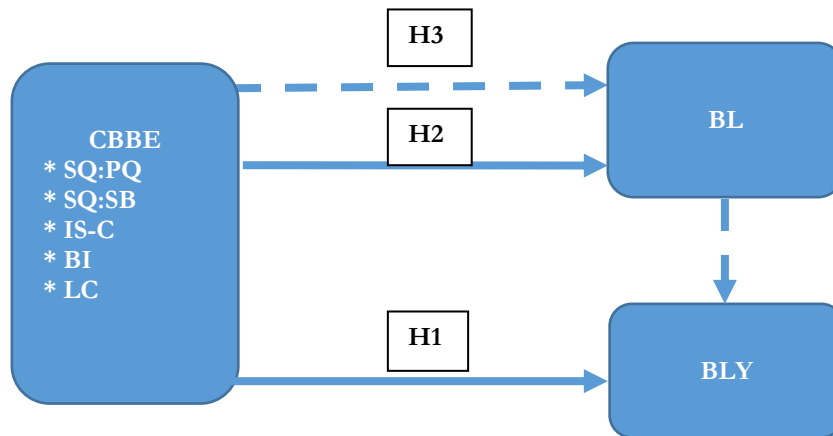
Although brand love has arisen as a significant structure in the consumer-brand relationship, there have been few studies to date on the source of the love connection between a consumer and a brand, and the potential behavioral consequences (for example, loyalty). For example, brand love may be affected by the characteristics of the product or the brand (for example, a hedonic product where the primary benefit is entertainment, joy or pleasure) and it can also have an influence on the loyalty to the brand (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). As such, brand love can be considered an initiator of brand loyalty (Bergkvist et al., 2010; Kamat & Parulekar, 2007) that not only affects consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudinal preferences, but that also influences their insistent loyalty to the brand. The findings of previous studies demonstrate that a meaningful and positive relationship exists between brand love and brand loyalty (Alnawas & Altarifi, 2015; Loureiro, et al., 2012; Filho, Monteiro & Souki, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Several studies have been carried out into the intermediary role of the satisfaction variable in the impact of brand equity and brand loyalty (Tanushan & Kennedy, 2020; Sourı,2017; Jorfi & Gayem, 2016; Ali & Muqadas, 2015; Shahroodi, Kaviani & Abasian, 2015; Ongkowidjoyo, 2015; Susanty & Kenny, 2015; Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt, 2011). Kalyoncuođlu (2017) has defined brand trust as the customers' trust to the existing brand in the event of a risky situation they might encounter and stated that brand love has a full mediating role on the relationship between trust towards the brand and brand loyalty. In other words, they have determined that the impact of the customer's trust towards the Starbucks on brand loyalty actualizes through brand love. In their research result, Aşkın and İpek (2016) have stated that brand experience plays a significant role in establishing customer satisfaction and transforming it into brand loyalty afterwards and that brand love has a full mediating role on the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty. In their next study on alimentary goods, Majerova et al. (2020) determined that sources of brand value (image, benefit, attitude and quality) had no significant effect on the perceptions of loyal and disloyal customers.

To date, however, there has been no study investigating the mediating role of brand love in CBBE and its effect on brand loyalty. The present study makes use of the data from previous studies to achieve the primary purpose of the study by developing H3 and its sub-hypothesis.

**H3: Brand love plays a mediating role in the impact on brand loyalty of consumer perceptions of brand equity.**

Figure 1. Theoretical Model



Source: own

### 3. Methodology

The present study aims to determine the mediating role of brand love in the relationship between CBBE and brand loyalty. The study investigates the factors of brand equity, brand loyalty and brand love through an analysis of Starbucks – a global coffee house and roastery catering concept.

#### 3.1. Sampling and data collection

A questionnaire technique was adopted for the study, being a recognized quantitative data collection method. The research questionnaire was applied to patrons of Starbucks in the city of Mersin, Turkey. The study population comprised customers of Starbucks enterprises operating within the city of Mersin, Turkey. A "convenience sampling" approach was adopted for the study, in which individuals who agree to be involved in the sampling are included, rather than all those constituting the study population (Ural & Kılıç 2006:44). Accordingly, a sample size was calculated using the formula (NEA 1965; Sekaran 2003; Altunışık et al., 2005) suggested for large populations and quantitative research. There are three Starbucks operations in total within the boundaries of the city center of Mersin, Turkey. The sample size table was used where indicated by Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan (2004: 49-50), recommending a sample size of 384 in the event of the population representing a high target with a sampling error of  $d = \pm 0.05$  and a confidence interval of  $p = 0.05$ ,  $q = 0.05$ , since the number of customers of the Starbucks operations in Mersin who are over 18 years of age cannot be precisely known.

#### 3.2. Questionnaire design

The research scale comprises four sections, while the "CBBE" scale in the first section consists of five dimensions. The CBBE scale has six representations in the "Service Quality: Physical Quality" dimension, and draws from the studies conducted by Susanty & Kenny (2015), Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt (2011) and Madanoğlu (2006). The "Service Quality: Staff Behavior" dimension consists of four representations, drawing upon the studies conducted by Susanty & Kenny (2015), Nam, Ekinci & Whyatt (2011) and Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg (2000). The "Ideal Self-Congruence" comprises three representations, having been constituted from the studies conducted by Susanty & Kenny (2015), Nam,

Ekinici & Whyatt (2011) and Back (2005). The "Brand Identification" dimension consists of four representations and was compiled based on the studies conducted by Alnawas & Altarifi (2015), and Bhattacharya & Şen (2003); while the "Lifestyle-Congruence" dimension consists of three representations, having been constituted from the studies conducted by Susanty & Kenny (2015); Nam, Ekinici & Whyatt (2011). "Brand Love", covered in the second part of the study, consists of nine representations, and was compiled based on the studies conducted by Rodrigues and Reis (2013); Ünal & Aydın (2013) and Carroll & Ahuvia (2006). "Brand Loyalty", covered in the third part of the study, consists of four representations, and was compiled based on the studies conducted by Susanty and Kenny (2015); Nam, Ekinici & Whyatt (2011) and Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman (1996). In the last part of the study, questions are posed inquiring the participants' personal characteristics (gender, age, marital status and educational background) and their frequency of Starbucks purchases. A total of 33 statements were included in the scale.

### **3.3. Analysis Methods**

In the study, a frequency analysis was carried out to ascertain the customers' demographic characteristics. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the dimensions "CBBE", "Brand Love" and "Brand Loyalty" were also calculated. A CFA was carried out to determine the construct validity of the scale, and the Cronbach Alpha (CA) value has been calculated to test the reliability of internal consistency. SEM was used to measure the hypotheses in the model, being a comprehensive statistical approach to the testing of models in which casual and reciprocal relationships exist between the observed and the latent variables (Çelik & Yılmaz, 2013:5).

### **3.4. Validity and reliability**

A CFA (Hair et al., 2010: 709) was applied to investigate of the construct validity of the measurement tool, revealing problems in the measurement model's goodness of fit (GIF). Among these problems, the primary ones were the normalized Chi-square (Chi-square GIF obtained by dividing the Chi-square GIF by the degree of freedom) GIF, corresponding to 6.77; and the RMSEA value corresponding to 0.10. When examining the modification recommendations provided at the end of the output report of the model, it could be observed that the items of "Service Quality: Physical Quality" numbered SQ:PQ1, and the "Brand Love" items numbered BL2, BL4 and BL9 were perceived as similar by the participants, and that a significant improvement in the reduction of the Chi-square value would be achieved should they be excluded from the scale. The CFA was repeated after excluding these four items, and the normalized Chi-square statistic was found to have reduced to 5.11, while the RMSEA had reduced to 0.09. In response, when the suggested model modifications were re-examined, it was observed that the item "Service Quality: Staff Behavior" numbered SQ:SB4 and the "Brand Love" item numbered BL1 were considered to be similar, and that a significant improvement could be achieved in the reduction of the Chi-square value should they be excluded from the scale. The exclusion of these two items from the scale led to a model being developed with a Chi-square of 4.43 (1343.59/303) and a RMSEA of 0.08.

When examining the model modification suggestions, it could be observed no problematic items remained in terms of observed variables describing the latent variables. Thereupon, the t-test values, factor loadings and margins of error that emerged in the correlation between the latent variables and the observed variables were re-examined. As can be seen in Table 1, all of the t-values were found to be statistically significant with a significance level of 0.01, while standardized load values varied between 0.62 and 0.97.

The composite reliabilities of the constructs ranged from 0.84 to 0.96. The adequate internal consistency of multiple items for each construct in the seven-factor model all exceeded 0.60, being the minimum criterion suggested by Bagozzi & Yi (1988). A convergent validity in the factor structure was first noted, as each indicator's estimated factor loading on its underlying construct was significant (Peter, 1981) and the AVE (average variance extracted) of all seven constructs exceeded the minimum criterion of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.51 to 0.89.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on CFA measurement model

Dimensions & Items	$\bar{X}$	S.S.	CA	t-Value	Std. Load	R <sup>2</sup>	CR	AVE
<b>Service Quality: Physical Quality (SQ:PQ)</b>	<b>3.86</b>		<b>0.83</b>				<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.51</b>
SQPQ2.	3.82	1.05		16.73**	0.69	0.48		
SQPQ3.	3.41	1.25		17.35**	0.71	0.51		
SQPQ4.	3.84	1.01		16.55**	0.69	0.47		
SQPQ5.	4.33	0.83		17.57**	0.72	0.52		
SQPQ6.	3.89	1.03		18.29**	0.74	0.55		
<b>Service Quality: Staff Behavior (SQ:SB)</b>	<b>4.01</b>		<b>0.87</b>				<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.69</b>
SQSB1.	3.95	0.88		21.76**	0.83	0.69		
SQSB2.	4.10	0.88		23.77**	0.88	0.77		
SQSB3.	3.99	0.96		21.34**	0.82	0.67		
<b>Ideal Self-congruence (IS-C)</b>	<b>3.69</b>		<b>0.90</b>				<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.77</b>
IS-C1.	3.86	0.95		20.99**	0.80	0.64		
IS-C2.	3.69	1.06		27.10**	0.94	0.88		
IS-C3.	3.52	1.10		24.45**	0.88	0.78		
<b>Brand Identification (BI)</b>	<b>4.11</b>		<b>0.88</b>				<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.67</b>
BI1.	4.01	0.96		23.14**	0.86	0.73		
BI2.	4.14	0.89		23.15**	0.86	0.73		
BI3.	4.00	0.96		23.17**	0.86	0.74		
BI4.	4.28	0.80		16.58**	0.68	0.46		
<b>Lifestyle-Congruence (LC)</b>	<b>3.64</b>		<b>0.95</b>				<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.89</b>
LC1.	3.70	1.08		27.23**	0.93	0.87		
LC2.	3.65	1.08		29.08**	0.97	0.93		
LC3.	3.57	1.13		27.04**	0.93	0.86		
<b>Brand Love (BL)</b>	<b>3.35</b>		<b>0.96</b>				<b>0.96</b>	<b>0.83</b>
BL3.	3.70	1.11		21.83**	0.81	0.66		
BL5.	3.21	1.28		27.51**	0.94	0.88		
BL6.	3.31	1.29		28.02**	0.95	0.89		
BL7.	3.14	1.26		27.60**	0.94	0.88		
BL8.	3.39	1.21		26.94**	0.93	0.86		
<b>Brand Loyalty (BLY)</b>	<b>3.41</b>		<b>0.83</b>				<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.58</b>
BLY1.	3.52	1.10		21.76**	0.83	0.69		
BLY2.	4.05	0.83		19.80**	0.79	0.61		
BLY3.	2.88	1.09		14.54**	0.62	0.38		
BLY4.	3.17	1.15		20.79**	0.81	0.65		

\*\*p<.01(t >2,58), \* p<.05(t >1,96); CA: Cronbach Alpha Value; CR: Composite Reliabilities; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; S.S.: Standard Deviation;  $\bar{X}$ : Mean

Source: own research

Table 2 presents the reference values for GIF, which indicate that a measurement model has a construct validity, and the statistics for congruity on the measurement model of the study. When the measurement tool's statistics for congruity are compared with the reference values, it can be argued that the measurement model, as a whole, has a GIF, being at an acceptable level and with convergent validity.



Table 2. CFA measurement model GIF statistics

X <sup>2</sup> /sd	RMSEA	AGFI	GFI	RMR	SRMR	CFI	NFI	NNFI	IFI	RFI	Model
											CAIC/Saturated CAIC
1343.59/ 303=4.43	0.084	0.79	0.83	0.061	0.054	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.97	1883.32/ 2720.26

Sources: Çelik & Yılmaz, 2013; Hair et al., 2010: 666-669; Çokluk et al., 2012: 271-272.

#### 4. Results

Table 3 presents the individual characteristics and the distribution of the frequency of purchases for the participants involved in the sample group of the study.

Table 3. Demographic profile of respondents (n=491)

Variable	Groups	f	%
Sex	Male	207	42.2
	Female	284	57.8
Marital Status	Married	113	23.0
	Single	378	77.0
Age	18–21	161	32.8
	22–34	217	44.2
	35–44	85	17.3
	45–54	23	4.7
	55 and above	5	1.0
Education Degree	Primary School Graduate	17	3.5
	High School	119	24.2
	Vocational High School	34	6.9
	Undergraduate	253	51.5
	Master's / Doctorate Degree	68	13.8
How often do you go to Starbucks each month?	1–3 Days	117	23.8
	4–6	153	31.2
	7–9	145	29.5
	10 or more	76	15.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>491</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: own research

According to the data in Table 3, 57.8 percent of the sample group were female, 61.5 percent were aged 22 to 44 years, and 65.3 percent were educated to an undergraduate or post-graduate level. Moreover, while 23.8 percent of the participants visited Starbucks 1–3 times a month, 45 percent of the participants visit Starbucks more frequently than every 7 days.

#### 4.1. Hypothesis Tests

While the dependent variable of the research is "brand loyalty", its dependent and intermediary variable is "brand love" and the independent variable is "CBBE". A three-stage SEM approach was used to examine whether brand love was an intervening variable. In this analysis, first of all, the effect of the dependent variable on the intervening variable was examined. In the second stage, the effects of the independent variable and intervening the variable on the dependent variable were examined through a collective analysis. SEM analyses revealed that the impact of the independent variable on the dependent

variable to have been reduced, and so it could be concluded that the brand love in the model was the intervening variable.

Table 4. GIF statistics of the model for the correlation between CBBE and brand loyalty through brand love

Model	X <sup>2</sup>	sd	X <sup>2</sup> /sd	P	AGFI	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Model1	1455.94	308	4.72	0.00000	0.78	0.82	0.98	0.97	0.087
Model2	1322.41	299	4.42	0.00000	0.80	0.83	0.98	0.97	0.084

Source: own research

Table 5. Results of research hypotheses

Hypotheses	Stand. Loads	T-value	Results
<b>H1: CBBE → Brand Loyalty</b>			<b>Partially Accepted</b>
H1 <sub>a</sub> : SQ:PQ → Brand Loyalty	0.25	2.67**	Accepted
H1 <sub>b</sub> : SQ:SB → Brand Loyalty	0.10	2.49*	Accepted
H1 <sub>c</sub> : Ideal Self-Congruence → Brand Loyalty	0.11	0.70***	Rejected
H1 <sub>d</sub> : Brand Identification → Brand Loyalty	0.18	2.33*	Accepted
H1 <sub>e</sub> : Lifestyle-Congruence → Brand Loyalty	0.19	3.01**	Accepted
<b>H2: CBBE → Brand Love</b>			<b>Partially Accepted</b>
H2 <sub>a</sub> : SQ:PQ → Brand Love	0.27	3.66**	Accepted
H2 <sub>b</sub> : SQ:SB → Brand Love	0.07	1.21***	Rejected
H2 <sub>c</sub> : Ideal Self-Congruence → Brand Love	0.10	1.91***	Rejected
H2 <sub>d</sub> : Brand Identification → Brand Love	-0.01	-0.09***	Rejected
H2 <sub>e</sub> : Lifestyle-Congruence → Brand Love	0.51	9.56**	Accepted
<b>H3: CBBE → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty</b>			<b>Partially Accepted</b>
H3 <sub>a</sub> : SQ:PQ → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.27/0.47	3.60**/ 7.10**	Accepted
H3 <sub>b</sub> : SQ:SB → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.06/0.47	1.05***	Rejected
H3 <sub>c</sub> : Ideal Self-Congruence → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.10/0.47	1.91***	Rejected
H3 <sub>d</sub> : Brand Identification → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	-0.02/0.47	-0.26***	Rejected
H3 <sub>e</sub> : Lifestyle-Congruence → Brand Love → Brand Loyalty	0.52/0.47	9.66**/ 7.10**	Accepted

\*\*p<.01(t >2.58), \* p<.05(t >1.96); \*\*\*NS: Not Significant

<b>Direct Effect</b>	BL=	0.27* SQ:PQ + 0.60* SQ:SB + 0.100* ISC - 0.17* BI + 0.52* LC, Error var. = 0.30, <b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.70</b>
<b>Direct Effect</b>	BLY=	0.25* SQ:PQ + 0.060* SQ:SB + 0.100* ISC + 0.19* BI + 0.20* LC, Error var. = 0.37, <b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.63</b>
<b>Mediating Effect</b>	BLY=	0.47*BL+ 0.12* SQ:PQ + 0.15* SQ:SB+ 0.049* ISC + 0.19* BI - 0.047* LC, Error var.=0.30, <b>R<sup>2</sup>=0.70</b>

Source: own research

In the model, the "Brand Love" variable fully functions as a mediator in the effects of the "SQ:PQ" and "Lifestyle-Congruence" dimensions on "Brand Loyalty", since it can be observed that the effect of "SQ:SB", "Brand Identification" and "Ideal Self-Congruence" dimensions on "Brand Loyalty" were insignificant, but that an indirect effect can occur by means of "Brand Love". Thus, pursuant to each of the two models, while the sub-hypotheses of H1<sub>a</sub>, H1<sub>b</sub>, H1<sub>d</sub>, H1<sub>e</sub>, H2<sub>a</sub>, H2<sub>e</sub>, H3<sub>a</sub> and H3<sub>e</sub> could be accepted, the hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 were only partially accepted.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

Nowadays, it's a necessity for the businesses who wants to survive in the intense competition environment to establish long-term relationships with their customers. Businesses must provide symbolic benefits (IS-C, BI, LC) and functional benefits (SQ:PQ, SQ:SB) to their consumers in order to ensure that they establish a bond with the brand. Businesses will strengthen their customers' emotional bond as well their loyalty to the brand in the event that they increase these benefits.

In this study, the aim was to determine the intermediary role of brand love in the relationship between CBBE and brand loyalty. In study, a three-stage SEM approach was used to determine whether or not brand love is an intervening variable. To this end, first of all, the effect of the dependent variable on the intervening variable was examined, while in the second stage, the effects of the independent variable and the intervening variable on the dependent variable were examined through a collective analysis. It was observed that the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable was reduced, and so it can be accepted in the model that brand love is the intervening variable. Consequently, the H1, H2 and H3 hypotheses in the study are partially accepted. In the research findings, it has been determined that the "Service Quality: Physical Quality SQ:PQ and Lifestyle-Congruence" dimensions of CBBE constitute brand loyalty while affecting the intervening variable of brand love. Accordingly, business managers can evoke relatively strong emotional effects as well as various behavioral results such as brand loyalty on consumers as a result through brand love which they can establish by building strong strategies on the dimensions of "Service Quality: Physical Quality SQ:PQ and Lifestyle-Congruence". Moreover, in the study, it has been established that the dimensions of SQ:PQ, SQ:SB, BI and LC have a direct, positive and significant effect on brand loyalty. In their study, Nam, Ekinci and Whyatt (2011) found that IS-C, BI and LC, among the brand equity dimensions, to have a positive effect on brand loyalty. Accordingly, it is demonstrated how deep and meaningful relationships can be built between brands and consumers by means of symbolic consumption. In their study, Susanty and Kenny (2015) found physical quality, ideal self-congruence and lifestyle-congruence to have a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction in Excelso and Starbucks. This situation supports the H2<sub>a</sub> and H2<sub>b</sub> results of the current study. In their studies to determine the dimensions, Önen (2018), building on the work of Aaker (1991), identified a positive and significant correlation between all of the dimensions of CBBE and brand love. In his study, Souri (2017) found CBBE to have a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty. In the studies of Niyomsart & Khamwon's (2016), a positive correlation was identified between brand love and brand loyalty.

Brand identity, defined as a unique cluster of brand associations arising out of brand awareness and prestige (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Ghodeswar, 2008; He & Mukherjee, 2009), has received the most positive evaluations ( $\bar{X}=4.11$ ) from the participants among the CBBE dimensions of Starbucks. This situation shows that the Starbucks brand has more influence in terms of brand awareness and associations compared to other brands.

The dimension of staff behavior, referring to the skills, benevolence, sincerity and the sensitivity of the hotel or restaurant employees, (Ekinci et al. 2008; Madanoglu, 2004), has been another dimension which the participants have evaluated positively ( $\bar{X}=4.01$ ) among the CBBE dimensions of Starbucks. One of the most important policies of the Starbucks company is the importance they give to their staff.

According to Howard Schultz, "... there is nothing more important than the trust relationship a company builds with its employees", drawing upon his own experience (Starbucks, 2020). This is a strong indicator of the impact company policies can have on the branding of the company, and the motivations of customers to demonstrate a long-term preference for a brand supports the research findings.

Kalyoncuoğlu (2017) supports the current research result by determining that customers' love towards the brand has a positive impact on their brand loyalty. Thus, it is projected that the customers establishing an emotional bond with the brand are strong candidates for being steady customers of the enterprise.

In his study, Sallam (2014) has stated that Brand Identification (BI) has a positive influence on brand love. Moreover, Aydın (2017), brand love has a mediating role in the impact of Ideal Self-Congruence (IS-C) on brand loyalty. These results do not overlap with the current research results. It is predicted that the root cause behind this is that CBBE dimensions implemented in the service industry can be perceived differently according to the manufactured products.

The study has been limited to the customers of 3 Starbucks stores within the city of Mersin, Turkey who were over 18 years of age. While it is expected that the research results will be a guide for the businesses who aspire to provide profitability for the catering enterprises which are among the sub-sectors of the tourism industry as of the service sector and for those who desire to earn customer loyalty by creating a sustainable competitive advantage in the practice, it is also predicted that it will also contribute to the relevant tourism marketing literature in terms of applying the mediating role of brand love for the first time. The study findings may also contribute to future marketing studies, and may be expanded upon with investigations of the correlation between CBBE, brand love and brand loyalty in other tourism subsectors (such as hotels, airline business, travel agents and tour operators).

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Appendix 1. Scales (5-point Likert scale: '1' Disagree Strongly and '5' Agree Strongly)

Factors	Items	Abbrev.
<i>Service Quality: Physical Quality</i>	Starbucks has modern-looking equipment.	SQ:PQ1
	Materials associated with service provision (such as menus, furniture) are visually appealing.	SQ:PQ2
	The Starbucks brand has an atmosphere that "makes me feel at home".	SQ:PQ3
	The Starbucks brand offers good Wi-fi connectivity.	SQ:PQ4
	The drinks served by the Starbucks brand suit my taste.	SQ:PQ5
	The food served by the Starbucks brand suits my taste.	SQ:PQ6
<i>Service Quality: Staff Behavior</i>	Employees of Starbucks always listen to customer complaints.	SQ:SB1
	Employees of Starbucks are helpful, e. g. In helping me choose what to purchase.	SQ:SB2
	Employees of Starbucks are friendly to Customers.	SQ:SB3
	Employees of Starbucks are competent in their jobs.	SQ:SB4
<i>Ideal Self-congruence</i>	The typical Starbucks customer has an image similar to how I would like to see myself.	IS-C1
	The image of Starbucks is consistent with how I would like to see myself.	IS-C2
	The image of Starbucks is consistent with how I would like others to see me.	IS-C3
<i>Brand Identification</i>	The Starbucks brand has a distinctive identity.	BI1
	The Starbucks brand stands out from its competitors.	BI2
	Starbucks is a first-class, high-quality brand.	BI3
	The Starbucks brand has a high reputation.	BI4
<i>Lifestyle-Congruence</i>	Starbucks reflects my personal lifestyle.	LC1
	Starbucks is totally in line with my lifestyle.	LC2
	Starbucks supports my lifestyle.	LC3

<b>Brand Love</b>	Starbucks is a wonderful brand	BL1
	Starbucks makes me feel good.	BL2
	Starbucks makes me very happy.	BL3
	I'm in love with Starbucks.	BL4
	I am passionate about Starbucks.	BL5
	I am very attached to Starbucks.	BL6
	I feel like I am whole with Starbucks.	BL7
	Starbucks is a pure delight.	BL8
	Starbucks is totally awesome.	BL9
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>	I would recommend this brand to someone seeking my advice.	BLY1
	I will continue to use Starbucks products.	BLY2
	I would not switch to other brands if I experience a problem with this brand.	BLY3
	I encourage friends and relatives to do business with Starbucks.	BLY4