

Brand And Brand Perception: An Example of University

Arzu KILIÇ

Ardahan University

Faculty of Economics and Administrative
Sciences

Ardahan, Turkey

orcid.org/0000-0001-7020-0727

arzukilic@ardahan.eud.tr

Şafak ALTAY

Ardahan University

Faculty of Economics and Administrative
Sciences

Ardahan, Turkey

orcid.org/0000-0001-7035-0362

safakaltay@ardahan.edu.tr

Extensive Summary

1. Introduction

A brand is a feature that distinguishes between product, firm or person alternatives and gives an organization its identity. Many factors can be influential in the choice of brand. The brand sense depends on or changes according to the factors and expectations that are important to the consumer. Therefore, the perception of a brand may differ among consumers. Brand perception contains all of the sensory codes that are formed in the consumer's mind. These codes are passed through the sense of organs, that are reflected in the mind of the person; and the consumer receives a sense of that brand. This sense of feeling that is formed in the mind is always strong and real. When this sensation reaches its individual happiness point, in other words when it triggers the sense of loyalty, it becomes the most important building stone of the brand perception (Moralıoğlu, 2016).

During the period when the globalization process has developed rapidly, Everything and everyone is face to face with the pressure of change and competition. These two factors, which were previously thought to be valid in the private sector, now affect public institutions and organizations, and even individuals. Today, worldwide branded companies are regularly examining their products and customers' changing expectations. It responds fully to changing expectations, making both existing customers profitable for them and developing strategies for attracting the customers of other competitors in the market or dragging hesitant customers to their own brand. It is necessary for an institution to question how their brand is perceived by public or segments that it serves and shares in order to manage the alteration process properly. This questioning is the fundamental step in the creation of a customer-focused management approach. As the customer satisfaction increases, the company believes that it is the brand that it can choose, in this way it starts to introduce the product or

institution voluntarily. Thus institutional branding efforts start to find direct and fast response on the customer base.

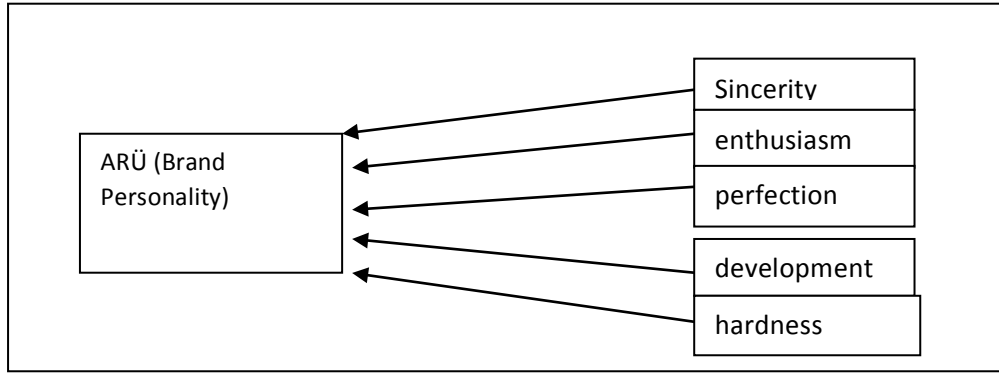
Universities, which have a very important role in shaping the future of countries, are beginning to be heavily influenced by this change and competition. As education becomes more widespread and facilitation of access to education through technology support has increased, universities have begun to increase their qualifications and encourage students to choose for themselves. Today, there are approximately 181 universities in our country, including state and foundation schools. According to data from 2013, 5.5 million people are educated in organized and non-formal education institutions. Each university in our country conducts a lot of publicity work so that student candidates choose to be their students. In addition, many universities in our country are investing in academics, technical systems and their infrastructure to compete with international educational institutions. Briefly, each university wants to make its name as a trademark and aims for student candidates to choose itself. They also want to know how they are perceived by internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. This study was conducted to measure the perception of the brand personality by internal and external stakeholders of Ardahan University, which was established in 2008. The information that will be obtained at the end of the research can help Ardahan University's branding strategy.

2.Method

Survey's primary data was provided by questionnaire. The study is carried out within the university, clustering sampling method was applied in the questionnaire for the students due to the constraints related to time, cost and accessibility. Questionnaires were conducted by the interviewers to public institutions and organizations in the provinces and districts of Ardahan.

The measurement of brand perception is based on the "Aaker's brand personality scale". Aaker developed a scale in the USA that measures the brand personality and difference of dimensions; and in this study, the brand personality can be defined by 5 general dimensions. These dimensions are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and robustness. However, the scale used was changed according to the conditions of this research. Aaker classified sub-dimensions under these general dimensions. These include adjectives such as dignified, honest, honorable, cheerful, eye-catching, agile, vibrant, creative, timely, reliable, intelligent, successful, top-class, impressive, sporty and harsh. The validity of this scale has also been examined in Japan and Spain. The questionnaire about the parents of the students was done by phone and face to face interview. The questionnaire of the student parents was carried out by the interviewers.

The research model used in the study is given (Figure 1) and the data obtained in the study is interpreted by analyzing it in the SPSS 17.0 statistical program.



3. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to identify the university's brand personality. As a result of the analysis, brand personality scale was collected under four main factors. These are: "Sincerity-Competence (sub-factors: honest, realistic, trustworthy, sincere, original, hardworking, solid, straighthead, helpful, corporate, warmblooded, emotional, talented, contemporary and successful), Enthusiasm - Development (sub-factors: exciting, vibrant, attractive, modern, trendy, imaginative, unique, dazzling, top class appearance), Hardness (sub-factors: rigid, tough, western and masculine), Young-simple-extrovert (sub-factors: young, plain, extrovert). When we look at the average of these factors, enthusiasm-development is 2,137, hardness is 2,17, sincency-competence is 1,74 and young-plain-extrovert is 1,54. In summary, participants in the first two factors were found to be hesitant about the judgments, whereas in the last two factors, it was seen that they did not participate in the judgments related to these two personality traits. In terms of stakeholders, it was examined whether there was any difference between their participation in these factors and the following results were obtained:

The following suggestions can be made about strengthening the brand personality perception of Ardahan University. The expectations of internal and external stakeholders should be investigated and the social activities that will meet these expectations should be emphasized, the activities that provide scientific activities and interaction with the society should be given importance, institutionalization should be developed, social and emotional sense of belonging should be developed, all kinds of communication channels that can be reached to stakeholders and public relations activities should be used effectively should be in uninterrupted and regular relationship with the groups. It is also necessary to follow how this established communication is perceived by stakeholders and the extent of their return. In addition to this, it should be also decided which characteristic of the brand personality of the university should come to the forefront.

Generally speaking, the results of the judging survey participants on perceived brand personality are "uncertainty" and "disagree". The interpretation that can be drawn from this general distribution is that there is no distinctive element regarding the brand of the university in terms of participants. The factors that may cause this result to be different may be different. However, Ardahan University began to complete its institutional and physical building blocks since 2014 and is still continuing. Considering

that the survey was conducted in 2016-2017, an uncertain and unfavorable outlook on brand personality and brand perception can be regarded as an expected result. It would be useful if this work was done again in the following years and the situation of the university perceptions was analyzed more clearly.