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## Effects of customer brand perceptions on store image and purchase intention: An application in apparel clothing

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### Abstract

Purchase intention for apparel products in retail stores has taken attention in the last decades since the sector has been growing rapidly. The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of price image, brand image and perceived risk on store image and purchase intention of consumers in apparel sector. The study also examines the mediating effect of store image on the relationship. The data was gathered through questionnaire distributed in face to face interviews. The findings of the research which was conducted on 146 retailer shoppers supported direct effect of price image, brand image and perceived risk on purchase intention. There has been also empirical evidence regarding mediating effect of store image on the relationship between price image and risk perception and purchase intention.

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*Keywords:* Apparel, brand image, risk perception, price image, store image, purchase intention.

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### Introduction

Any kind of perception aimed to build on consumers is considered as a topic of marketing communication and brand management. In that sense, positioning of a mix of price, brand and store attributes aims to constitute messages and commitments for consumers in order to build targeted perception in their minds. Brand image is established with consumer perception which is treated to some extent as controllable by marketing strategists (Erdil and Uzun, 2010) and it includes brand recalls of consumers for the performance and the experience with the brand (Granot et al., 2010) and results in cognitive and emotional satisfaction (Kumar and Kim, 2014). From this perspective, brand image reflects the ability to meet consumers' needs. Brand image also reveals value and identity created for the customers (Rayburn and Voss, 2013). Consumer attitudes toward product or store brands are formed not only by positive recalls but also negative cues and recalls as well (Aghekyan-Simonian et al, 2012). Negative attitude for the brand may arise from unfavorable merchandise performance or unfavorable experience with the brand that may lead to risk perception. High levels of risk perception may cause customers not to buy the brand.

Store brands' domination in Turkish market has shown a significant increase in recent decades as in European and in other emerging markets. Store brands, also known as private label brands or retail brands, has shown significant success in recent years. The success of store brands will be based on their relative perceived quality and brand image. Apparel retail stores or retail chains seem to improve their quality in order to increase the image of the store and encourage consumer loyalty (Labeaga et al., 2007). Apparel stores improve themselves by adding multiple attributes

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such as store atmosphere and ambient, enjoyment from shopping, service quality of salesperson, relationship quality and quality of merchandise sold. All these attributes add value to the store brand by building retailer personality (Das, 2014), and product signatureness (Bao et al., 2011), and brings customer satisfaction, identification with brand and customer loyalty (Labeaga et al., 2007). A retailer who carries a brand name itself will be at an advantage of strengthening both its emotional and rational relationship with its customers. By building good relationships, a retail store can create a strong brand that differentiates itself from other retailers (Kumar and Kim, 2014). The private label, in this manner, affects the image of the retail store and enables customers to differentiate between the retailers (Mendez et al., 2008). Store brand retailers try to maintain an image combining both store image and product image in order to maintain a clear strong brand perception in customers' minds (Grewal and Levy, 2009). Retail satisfaction or shopping satisfaction from the point view of consumers includes consumers' perception of store characteristics as well as consumers' subjective evaluations of products obtained from the store (Torres et al., 2001).

Consumers' perceptions of product value is characterized by quality considerations, the pricing of the merchandise and the level of risk involved. These antecedents are used to describe perceived value, which then directly influence consumers' willingness to buy the brand (Beneke and Carter, 2015). Consumers' perceptions of product value is characterized by quality considerations, the pricing of the merchandise and the level of risk involved. These antecedents are used to describe perceived value, which then directly influence consumers' willingness to buy the brand (Beneke and Carter, 2015).

This study explores the effects of brand image, price image and perceived risk on store image and purchase intention. First, the concepts are introduced and theoretical background is provided. Upon the theory, hypotheses are developed. In the second part, research methodology including sample and data collection and measures is described. Lastly, findings are given and discussed in addition to limitations and academic implications.

## **1. Conceptualization and hypotheses development**

### *1.1 Price image*

Price has been considered as an indicator of product cost and an important parameter in marketing literature. Consumers assess prices with perceptive coding and transform price signals into cognitive structures (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011) where a more subjective interpretation of the product's monetary value such as cheap or expensive is made (Beneke and Carter, 2015). While some consumers may prefer purchasing a product based solely on the influence of price, for many other consumers the price relative to the quality will have a greater importance (Beneke and Carter, 2015). Previous pricing research has suggested that prior knowledge and experience with the brand or product category moderates the effect of price on consumer evaluations (Grewal et al., 1998).

Pricing, also as a marketing communication tool, is used to convey some message to consumers for the product and brand perception and is influential in consumers' decision-making process. Price perceptions have been related to various factors such as the extent customers can afford the purchase, price-quality match in the minds of consumers as well as competitive prices of other brands and, how positioning takes place according to customer categories (Erdil and Uzun, 2010). Price in association with the symbols and associates of brand will identify the prestige of the brand as well. Consumers perceive that high prestige and high quality premium products eventually will be high price.

Pricing in retails has been a difficult issue considering how competition will react to prices with the possibility of price wars. During the past decades, many insights have been made into pricing issues including internal and external reference prices, effectiveness of price promotions and discounts, the role of price matching guarantees and perceived price policy fairness (Grewal and Levy, 2007; Kukar-Kinney et al., 2007; Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011).

Price-making policies of store retailers and price fairness perception of consumers has received attention in marketing and retailing literature. Previous research has focused on fairness of prices and store-level policies (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2011). Fairness perception of price addresses a judgment by a consumer regarding a seller's price. It is considered as a measure of price acceptability and can be assessed in terms of internalized and/or externalized reference prices by customers (Heo and Lee, 2011). Previous research shows that pricing procedure (i.e., pricing fairness) and a price outcome (i.e, fairness of the price paid) affect store price perceptions of customers (Kukar-Kinney et al, 2007). According to the research results, price fairness perceptions of consumers play an important role and

influence customer satisfaction and subsequent purchase behavior (Heo and Lee, 2011). Researchers have also shown that there is loyalty in low priced, frequently purchased product categories which is consistent with theory of routinized response behavior where consumers exhibit inertia in their brand choices over time (Labeaga et al, 2007). Similarly, retailers develop strategies to emphasize value for money in case of choosing their own brands. Thus, creating a perception of a relatively low price, retailers intend to have a positive influence on consumer loyalty to store brands (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011).

Retailers also rely on tactical perspectives of pricing by using practices including price reductions and pricing guarantees (Grewal and Levy, 2007). In this manner, price discounts and regular promotions have long been used to attract consumers to a retail store and generate high levels of store crowds (Grewal et al., 1998). However, while price discounts and promotions may increase sales in a retail store, such discounts may have negative effects on the brand's quality perception and may even harm the brand image and the store's overall image. This explanation is consistent with the findings in literature that there is a strong relationship between product quality and perceived price (Ding et al., 2010; Beneke and Carter, 2015). In another study conducted by Torres and colleagues (2011), it was found that price, quality and selection of merchandise were the store attributes ranked as the most important by male consumers.

Upon explanation given above, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: Price image has a positive effect on store image perceptions.

Hypothesis 2: Price image has a positive and direct effect on purchase intention of the consumers.

### 1.2. Brand image

Firms pay attention to creating value for their products and brands. Brand management, also consistent with strategic logic, deals with creating extrinsic, intrinsic and/or combined values for customers. Intrinsic value creation relies on objective features related to experiential or functional utility offered to customers whereas intrinsic value creation focuses on symbolic and experiential attributes which are evaluated as subjective responses as ends in customers. The third type of value creation adopts a combination of both objective and subjective features as a unique outcome (Högström et al., 2015).

In line with brand management, brand information is used to build brand equity with components of brand awareness and brand image (Huang and Sarigöllü). Brand image plays an important role in distinguishing between brands within similar product or brand categories. Furthermore, brand image consists of additional associates embedded in fundamental product or service attributes. Thus, "The concept and practice of brand image focuses not only on objective factors such as product or service quality and price, but also on subjective benefits such as enabling psychological utility, signifying social status and differentiation of customers from others and maintains affective and mental perceptions of the brand" (Erdil and Uzun, 2010, p.90). By integrating these symbolic attributes with their products/services, brands constitute their images. As studied widely in brand management literature (e.g., Grewal et al., 1998), functional or performance utility and hedonic or experiential utility are the motivations for purchase behavior. Brand image representing both rational and emotional evaluations in consumers' minds will lead to brand perceptions, ultimately influencing decisions to buy or not to buy. Following this logic, the brand-related facts once planned and implemented will deviate from what consumers recall and how they value the brand depending on differences in their perception (Erdil and Uzun, 2010, 93).

A well-known brand positioning typology developed by Kim and Mauborgne (2000), defines a six-levers model, a consumer-focused perceived benefit typology, for successful service brands. These benefits are identified as simplicity (service, easier to use), convenience (availability, ease of purchase), risk reduction (safety of physical and financial risk), fun and image (positive and enjoyment) and lastly environmental friendliness. This model provides a practical framework focusing on consumer benefit or buyer utility in service retailing (Burton and Easingwood, 2006).

Another approach in explaining consumer perceptions and judgments of brands is the consumer-psychology model presented in Schmitt's (2012) study. The model uses five distinguished brand-related processes: Identifying, experiencing, integrating, signifying and finally connecting with the brand. In the identifying phase, a consumer builds inter-brand relations and identifies brand category. Experiencing means active involvement in brand participation and

ffective experience. Then the consumer integrates all brand information and forms an overall brand concept reflecting brand personality and brand relationships. Later in the process, signifying refers to brand symbolism, brand as identity signal and information cue. Finally, the consumer connects himself or herself with the brand and develops an attitude toward the brand and gets belonged to the brand community (Schmitt, 2012).

Specifically in retailing, the retailer has a set of brand-based emotional, cognitive and social consumer benefits. The brand conveys information and experience to the consumers much more than just its product types; the brand is the store environment, the in-store shopping experience, the brand is sales personnel (Granot, 2010). Therefore, the interactions between the consumer and the brand has gained importance for retailers in understanding consumer's sense of connectedness (Foster and McLelland, 2015). There is evidence in the previous research supporting the positive effects of brand name on the quality perception and intention to buy (Grewal et al., 1998). Relying on explanation given above we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Brand image has a positive effect on store image perception.

Hypothesis 4: Brand image has a positive and direct impact on purchase intention of the consumers

### *1.3. Consumer Perceived Risk*

Perceived risk of consumers has been an important factor in understanding consumer purchase behavior (Stone and Gronhavg, 1993). Consumers rely on risk reducing cues such as brands or stores that have good reputations to lessen their uncertainty and risks associated with their shopping choices (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012). Perceived risk has been referred as the individual's subjective beliefs about potentially negative consequences from his/her buying decision or behavior which can not be anticipated with certainty (Diallo,2012).

Six main dimensions of risk have been defined to describe consumers' decision making or choice behavior: financial, social, psychological, physical and time or convenience risk. The perceived functional and financial risk will be lower if quality is perceived high for a store brand. Since product brand image and store image signals quality and attributes of the products, both product brand image and store image are expected to influence perceived product risk (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012). The dimensions measured frequently by researchers have been grouped as overall risk, and financial risk and performance or functional risk (Liljander et al., 2009). For clothing or apparel, social risk appears particularly important because products are visible to others and communicate consumers' social identity or self-image (Liljander et al., 2009).

Previous research has demonstrated that for brands with a good image, consumers have a more positive attitude for the brand which enhances purchase intention (Wu et al., 2011) Store image has been proven to reduce financial risk in traditional store environments as well as on-line shopping of apparel (Aghekyan-Simonian at al., 2012). Consumers' perceived financial risk of buying store-branded apparel products has a negative effect on store branded purchase intention (Diallo, 2012). From this discussion we propose that;

Hypothesis 5: Perceived risk has a negative effect on store image perception.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived risk has a negative and direct impact on purchase intention of the consumers

### *1.4 Store image perception*

Store image is defined as the set of brand associations linked to the store in the consumer's memory. Brand associations are concerned both with perceptions of the store attributes and the consumer's perceived benefits (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011). Store image dimensions have been centred on factors such as the quality and variety of the products sold, the prices of the products, physical facilities of the store, and the services provided by sales personnel (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011). Quality service delivery, therefore helps maintaining brand image and customer satisfaction and is very important for gaining competitiveness (Torres et al. 2001).

Perceived quality represents a consumer's judgments about brands' overall superiority and/or excellence. The superiority of products or services offered by companies or brands will mostly depend on consumers' perception of the quality that may result in repetitive buying behaviour of loyal consumers (Das, 2014). Consumers consider a variety of factors or attributes in evaluating product or store quality. Informative inputs used in the evaluation relate to

situational and personal factors (Mendez et al., 2008). All these attributes in combination refers to the concept of perceived or subjective quality which is related to the capacity of satisfying the consumer's need.

Quality of the merchandise and brands sold appears as one of the key components to store management decisions (Grewal et al., 1998). Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between store brand and perceived quality of the merchandise. Therefore, stores need to make certain in consumers' minds that the merchandise category they carry under the store brand fits the image they want to create (Liljander, 2009). Store image can be built with several characteristics like physical environment of the store, service levels and merchandise/brand quality (Grewal et al., 1998). This indicates that quality of the brand will convey favorable cues to the image of the store.

Design elements: Store environments consist of several cues that influence individual evaluation of customers. Certain design elements such as colour, layout and architecture can affect customer's cognitive evaluations of the store with regard to perceived merchandise and service quality, and perceived price (Kumar and Kim, 2014). In addition to design elements, social factors and ambient factors add value to the store image of customers' evaluations. The same merchandise can be perceived to be of higher quality and value when purchased from a store with upscale atmosphere than a store with discount design (Kumar and Kim, 2014).

A rather new approach, experiential marketing, to retail atmospherics suggest retailers take a more holistic approach to the elements, through the enrichment of the consumers' shopping experience that can have a positive impact on the customer-brand association (Foster and Mc Lelland, 2015) This holistic view brings with it the use of a constructed retail theme in which the environment is perceived as a whole conveying the brand message (Foster and Mc Lelland, 2015).

Organizational perception management thought suggests that perceptions of the store or retail as an entity include such basic factors as images (e.g., trust worthiness), reputations (e. g., being viewed steadily as a competitor), and identities (e. g., being categorised as a top-tier) (Elsbach, 2003). These three types of perceptions under a holistic view will lead actions related to verbal accounts, categorizations/labels, symbolic behaviours and physical markers (Elsbach, 2003).

Relationship quality: Relationship quality has a strong linkage with service quality and it focuses on personal and social relationships. In apparel retailing stores, relationship quality between salesperson and customers signifies long term relationship with the customers and thereby achieving customer satisfaction and building trust (Tripathi and Dave, 2003). Trust, and customer satisfaction are found to be dimensions of relationship quality in the literature (e. g., De Canniere et al., 2010). According to the previous literature, researchers found that perceived relationship quality has a significant impact on buying intention and purchase behaviour (e.g., Tripathi and Dave, 2013)

Hypothesis 7: Store image has a positive effect on purchase intention of the consumers.

Hypothesis 8: Store image has a mediating effect on the relationship with purchase intention.

### 1.5. Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention refers to the attempt to buy a product or service (Diallo, 2012). Consumers' positive feelings and attitude toward a product/service or private label store will influence his/her purchase intention (Das, 2014). Purchase intention from a retail store is affected by some external factors like brands sold in the store, physical location and timing (Das, 2014) and some intrinsic factors like fulfilling a need, satisfying a preference and placing the consumer in a better position ( Luo et al., 2011).

Purchase intention has been widely used as a predictor of subsequent purchase and linkages had been found between store image and purchase intention (Grewal et al., 1998). In the study conducted by Granot et al., (2010), three themes have been found to be drivers in retail purchase decision-making of female consumers. These drivers are emotional (brand), service (retail environment) and lastly experiential (shopping). They further suggest that retailers should consider all three issues to attract and satisfy customers, and specifically the retail brand constitutes emotional satisfaction and loyalty for repetitive purchases (Granot et al., 2010). Purchase intention is also used as an indicator of estimating consumer behavior (Wu et al., 2011).

Previous research studies have shown that a favorable brand image has a positive effect on purchase intention (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012) Store image perception can be a determinant of product quality and furthermore, store brands can be considered as a brand extension of the store (Diallo, 2012).

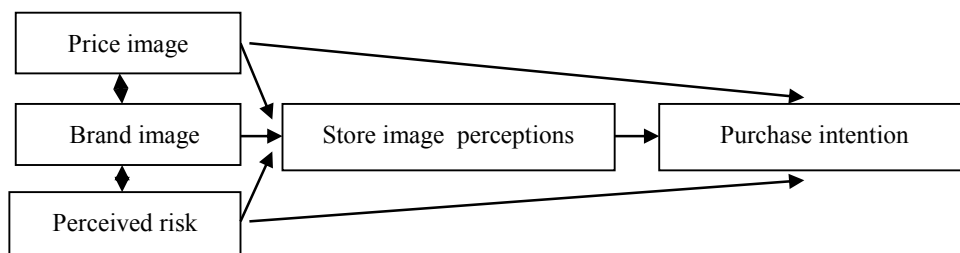


Fig 1. Research model (adapted from Wu et al, 2011 and Diallo, 2012)

## 2. Research Design

### 2.1. Sample and data collection

A survey was designed to obtain consumers' purchase intention of apparel store brands. A questionnaire was developed and applied to master's and doctoral students at four different universities in Istanbul. The respondents were chosen among apparel retail shoppers. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to the constructs and measures needed in the study. In order to test the proposed hypotheses, one hundred and forty-six responses from Turkey Marmara Region were surveyed. The data were gathered through the use of questionnaires distributed face to face interviews. All of the participants had bachelor's degree and were pursuing graduate studies at the time when the data collected. Almost all of the respondents were employed in full-time positions at various sectors. The age of majority of the respondents was between 25-35 years. The questionnaire was prepared following an exhaustive literature review and all constructs were measured with existing scales. All items were measured on a seven point Likert-type scale where 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

### 2.2. Measures

All measures were adopted from existing literature in the field.

*Price image:* Price image was measured using six items adapted from Diallo (2012) and Kukar-Kinney et al. (2007). An example item is "I believe the store offers low price guarantee".

*Brand image:* Brand image was adopted from Wu et al.,(2011) and was measured using five items. An example item is "Too many of the brand I buy at this store are good quality".

*Perceived risk:* Perceived risk was measured by six items adopted from Diallo, (2012). An example item is "I am suspicious of the quality of this store brand".

*Store image perception:* Store image perception was measured through service perspective using six items adopted from Diallo (2012). An example item is "Employees are courteous."

*Purchase intention:* Purchase intention was measured using three items adopted from Diallo(2012). An example item is "The probability that I would consider buying store brand is high".

### 2.3. Factor Analysis

We used SPSS software for the evaluation of our data. Factor analysis, correlation, reliability tests, the means of the variable and regression analysis were used to analyze the relationships between variables of the research model.

Varimax rotational, exploratory factor analysis in SPSS software has been used to evaluate factor structure for the variables. KMO (0,852) and significance value (p=0.00) shows that our sample is suitable for the hypothesis analysis. Since some items were below 0.45 or were having collinearity with more than one factor, and some factors contains

one item, it is continued to perform factor analyzing by removing the items one by one till the obtained ideal table. We used the Cronbach's Alpha to estimate reliability for scales. Each scale had satisfactory reliability with Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70. Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations and correlations for the variables used in the study. Reliabilities are located along the diagonal of the correlation matrix. According to correlation analysis, all variables are correlated with each other as expected.

Table1. Results of the Standart Deviations, Means, and Correlations

	MEAN	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.PI	3,9208	1,20377	(,800)				
2.BI	5,2855	1,03031	,174(*)	(,882)			
3.PR	2,8764	1,26624	,041	,-401(**)	(,866)		
4.SIP	4,9546	1,15223	,257(**)	,583(**)	,-218(**)	(,933)	
5.Purc	5,5770	1,04767	,225(**)	,462(**)	,-240(**)	,510(**)	(,841)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level SD = Standard Deviation () = Cronbach's alpha

**PI:**Price image **BI:** Brand image **PR:** Perceived risk **SIP:** Store image perception **Purc:** Purchase intention

#### 2.4. Analysis and Results

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a serious of multiple linear regression models. In order to test the first hypothesis stating that "Price image has a positive effect on store image perceptions" regression analysis is performed. The results of the regression analysis showed that there is a significant effect of price image on store image perception (beta=,257 Sig=002). Therefore, first hypothesis is supported. For testing the second hypothesis that "Price image has a direct positive effect on purchase intention of consumers", regression analysis is done. Results indicate that there is a significant effect of price image on purchase intention of consumers (beta=,225 Sig=,007). Accordingly, second hypothesis is supported. To test our third hypothesis stating that "Brand image has a positive effect on store image perceptions", regression analysis is performed. Findings indicate that the relationship between brand image and store image perception is statistically significant (beta=, -583,Sig=,010). Therefore, H3 is supported. To test our fourth hypothesis stating that "Brand image has a positive direct impact on purchase intention of consumers", regression analysis is performed. The results of the analysis showed that there is statistically significant (beta=, 462, Sig=,000) relationship among brand image and purchase intention of consumers. This finding provided evidence to support our fourth hypothesis. To test our fifth hypothesis stating that "Perceived risk has a negative effect on store image perceptions", regression analysis is conducted. The results of the analysis showed that (beta=, -218, Sig=,010) the relationship between perceived risk and store image perception is statistically significant. To test our sixth hypothesis stating that "Perceived risk has a negative effect on purchase intention of the consumers", we used regression analysis. The results of the analysis showed that (beta=, -240, Sig=,004) there is negative effect among perceived risk and purchase intention. Therefore, our sixth hypothesis is supported relying upon the evidence. To test our seventh hypothesis stating that "Store image has a positive effect on purchase intention" is statistically significant (beta=, 510, Sig=,000). Therefore, our seventh hypothesis is supported. For testing our last hypothesis stating that "Store image perceptions has a mediating effect on purchase intention" hierarchical regression analysis is performed. The mediating effect of store image perception on purchase intention and price image, brand image and perceived risk relationship is estimated. According to the results of the analysis store image has mediating effect on the relationship

among price image (beta= , 092, Sig=,229), perceived risk (beta=, -137, Sig=,070) and purchase intention. Therefore, our last hypothesis is supported. Table 2 provides the results of the regression analyses.

Table 2: Regression Analyses Results and Results of Mediating Effect of Store Image Perception of Purchase Intention

Independent V	Dependent V		Mediator Variable	
	Purchase Intention		Store Image Perception	
Price Image	<b>,225**</b>	F: 7,500 DW=2,056 R <sup>2</sup> : ,051	<b>,257*</b>	F: 9,673 DW=1,828 R <sup>2</sup> : ,066
Brand Image	<b>,462**</b>	F: 9,673 DW=1,642 R <sup>2</sup> : ,034	<b>,583**</b>	F: 67,443 DW=1,712 R <sup>2</sup> : ,340
Perceived Risk	<b>-.240**</b>	F: 8,597 DW=1,942 R <sup>2</sup> : ,057	<b>-.218**</b>	F: 6,820 DW=1,548 R <sup>2</sup> : ,047
Store Image Perception	<b>,510**</b>	F: 48,962 DW=2,033 R <sup>2</sup> : ,260		

Table columns contain standardized beta coefficients. "bold" values are significant. (\*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05) DW: Durbin Watson value

## Discussion and Conclusions

Based on statistical analysis of data obtained, factors effecting purchase intention of consumers in apparel retailing have been mostly found to be consistent with that of existed in the literature. The model proposed in the study, suggested price image, brand image and perceived risk as factors effecting store image. These factors were also suggested to be influential on purchase intention both directly and through the effect of store image which is included and tested as a mediator in the model. Among the factors, brand image has long been evaluated as an antecedent of purchase intention of consumers (Erdil and Uzun, 2010; Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011). Since brand image conveys information about the quality of product/service, price-quality matching cues, and recalls of service quality, brands sold in the store build a unique understanding and perception of store image in the minds of consumers which then turns in to repetitive purchase behavior. Therefore, it is essential for the store to identify itself with the right combination of brands it sells and/or with private label brands it offers to consumers. In the study, the hypothesis regarding positive effect of brand image on store image and purchase intention was supported. This finding may imply high brand consciousness of relatively young respondents in the sample and brand image plays an important role in their buying decisions. Pricing, another fundamental domain used in store retailing, refers value for money and differentiates consumers in segments (Rezaei, 2015). Price-conscious consumers make their judgments taking prices as reference points (Tarnanidis et al., 2015) among other referents. Consumers' perception on benefits stemming from an appropriate quality-price or brand-price alignment will increase intention to buy. In the study, research findings approving links between price image and store image and purchase intention give evidence about the price consciousness of respondents in their apparel consumption. Similar to other emerging economies, this result may be meaningful and consistent for an emerging economy like Turkey. Perceived risk of product, finance and quality have been studied since 1970s in understanding consumer behavior (Liljander, 2009). The study findings indicated that perceived risk by shoppers in apparel retailing is still a prevailing issue. Risk perception of consumers have been found to be negatively related with store image and purchase intention implying the willingness of consumers to avoid risks involved in shopping in the store. Considering the shift toward online shopping and substantial increase in internet-based shopping witnessed in recent years, the risks involved will continue to take attention of both practitioners and academics in the coming years. Mediating effect of store image on the relationship between risk perception and purchase intention was another finding of the study consistent with literature (e.g., Liljander et al, 2009). Many creative ways and attributes used by store retailers to maintain store image help decrease risks involved in shopping. Store image may act as a risk reducer. The relationship between price image and purchase intention was found to be mediated by store image. This finding implies price fairness and pricing policy improves store image and then purchase intention.

## Limitations and future research directions

Findings reveal the conclusions for practitioners and marketing managers to consider price image, brand image and store image in their strategies in order to build repetitive purchase intention of consumers for sustainable competition.

In the study, price matching policy and relative price has been analysed. For further research, other considerations such as price discounts, sales campaigns and promotions can be included in the model. Brand image dimension was measured in terms of quality and affective satisfaction with brands. Other dimensions of brand perception like brand awareness or brand equity can be analysed in future research. For store image perception, the findings of the study suggest building good relationship with the customer and service quality provided by the employees in the store will increase purchase intention whereby problem-solving and guiding role of store employees is crucial in apparel retailing. This kind of relational advantage of stores offer benefits to consumers which does not exist in on-line shopping. The results obtained in the research may provide some cues of marketing communication for the intended target segments. The research was conducted on post graduate students of four universities in Istanbul, Turkey. This may be a limitation but also a good segmentation for the analysis because this group represent relatively young apparel consumers having bechalar's degree and living in a big city. The fitness between characteristics of the subjects in the sample and the consumption preference in apparel stores and private label brands increase the generalability and relaiability of findings. Another research suggestion might be analysing shopping and purchase behavior according to gender differences. Also, in further research, consumer loyalty may be included in the research model.

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