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THE RELATION BETWEEN BRAND IMAGE, BRAND LOYALTY AND SLOW FASHION

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Abstract:
In highly competitive markets, brands expose consumers to a wide range of stimuli to be one step ahead of their competitors. Companies aim to create a brand image by using various symbolic, distinctive cues to differentiate themselves from competitors. At the same time, growing environmental concerns have led to the emergence of slow fashion as an alternative to the fast fashion business model, emphasizing sustainability within the fashion industry. This study aims to examine the effect of brand image on brand loyalty and to investigate the role of slow fashion consumer orientation in this relationship. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from 405 consumers in Turkey. A structural model was tested using structural equation modeling. The findings reveal that brand image has a significant and positive effect on both brand loyalty and slow fashion orientation. The results further indicate that the only conscious consumption dimension of slow fashion orientation has a significant and positive effect whereas the localism and exclusivity dimensions do not show significant effect on brand loyalty. Moreover, mediation analysis demonstrates that conscious consumption plays a mediating role in the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty, whereas no mediating effects are found for localism and exclusivity. This study contributes to the literature by empirically integrating brand image, slow fashion consumer orientation, and brand loyalty within a single structural model, thereby extending existing research beyond purchase intention to loyalty-based behavioral outcomes.

Keywords:
Brand image, brand loyalty, slow fashion, sustainability, fashion industry.

JEL Classification:
M31, D12, L67

1. Introduction
In the fashion retail context, brand image is a key determinant of consumer perceptions, attitudes, and loyalty. Especially in sectors characterized by symbolic and emotional consumption, such as fashion retail, brand image contributes to long-term brand loyalty by shaping consumers' identity formation and lifestyle preferences. At the same time, growing environmental and ethical concerns have led to the emergence of slow fashion as an alternative to fast fashion, emphasizing sustainability, ethical production, and conscious consumption. Consumers with strong orientation toward slow fashion evaluate brands not only based on product-related attributes but also on value-based dimensions such as authenticity, ethical responsibility, and transparency. These changing consumption patterns suggest that brand loyalty is increasingly driven by the alignment between brand image and consumers' value systems. Accordingly, this study addresses a research gap that has received limited empirical attention in the existing literature by examining the impact of brand image on brand loyalty in the fashion retail sector in Türkiye and by investigating the mediating role of slow fashion orientation in this relationship.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, the fundamental concepts of the research—brand image, brand loyalty and slow fashion orientation—are discussed in detail, and the relationships among these concepts are analyzed within a theoretical framework.

2.1. Brand Image

Brand image has been a central concept in marketing research for understanding consumer behavior. Initially conceptualized through symbols and associations formed in the consumer's mind, brand image has evolved into a multidimensional structure enriched by emotional, social, and cultural elements. Consumers' mental representations of brands and the influence of these representations on purchasing behavior remain a core concern in brand management studies. Brand image is commonly defined as the totality of associations a brand evokes in the consumer's mind (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). These associations include sensory, cognitive, and emotional experiences related to the brand and shape consumer perception. Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986) conceptualized brand image as a core element of strategic brand management, emphasizing that favorable brand perceptions directly influence brand preference and loyalty. Brand image is not formed solely through logos or advertising messages; rather, it emerges from all communication and interaction processes established between the brand and the consumer. In this process, the consumer establishes a meaningful relationship with the brand, and this relationship can transform into an emotional attachment over time. As Levy (1973) defines it through the concepts of "images and symbolism," a brand is not merely the name of a product or service; it is also positioned as a symbol that gains meaning in the consumer's mind. In this respect, brand image extends beyond the physical attributes of a product, offering symbolic value that may integrate with consumers' self-concepts and identity construction (Gardner and Levy, 1955). Brand image is not just an external perception; it is a reciprocal and meaningful interaction established with the consumer. Kunkel and Berry (1968), defining retail image as a behaviorally based construct, demonstrated that the consumer's perception of the store and brand should be evaluated holistically (Bird, Channon, and Ehrenberg, 1970; Herzog, 1963; Levy, 1978). Given its symbolic and emotional character, brand image plays an important role in shaping long-term consumer-brand relationships and constitutes a significant antecedent of brand loyalty, particularly in emotionally driven sectors such as fashion retail.

2.2. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is generally understood as a multidimensional construct that reflects consumers' favorable attitudes toward a brand, their intention to repurchase, and resistance to competing brands. This loyalty develops through both rational evaluations and emotional processes, as consumers' experiences with the brand, perceived quality, level of trust, and emotional attachment interact over time. The literature commonly identifies brand awareness, brand image, and brand trust as key factors shaping brand loyalty. Bernarto et al. (2020) demonstrated that brand awareness, brand image, and brand trust have significant and direct effects on brand loyalty. From this perspective, brand loyalty should be viewed not only as an outcome of repurchase behavior but also as an ongoing cognitive and emotional relationship between the consumer and the brand. Consumers' liking of a brand, identification with it, and their willingness to defend it against competing brands are also recognized as important indicators of brand loyalty (Bernarto et al., 2020; Yohana et al., 2020). Within the marketing literature, brand loyalty is acknowledged as a strategic asset for sustaining customer value and enhancing customer lifetime profitability. Loyal customers also contribute to a brand's reputation through positive word-of-mouth communication (Santoso et al., 2023).

In recent years, the importance of brand loyalty has extended beyond traditional brand management frameworks to include green marketing, sustainability-oriented strategies, and environmentally responsible branding practices. Research indicates that consumers with stronger environmental awareness tend to develop higher levels of loyalty toward brands that reflect green and ethical values (Chen et al., 2017; Bashir et al., 2020). In their study, Dhir et al. (2021a) revealed that consumers' brand loyalty toward environmentally friendly clothing products is shaped by both emotional and cognitive processes, and that this process is directly linked to brand image.

2.3. Slow Fashion Orientation

The concept of "slow fashion" was first introduced by British journalist Kate Fletcher. According to Fletcher, slow fashion aims not only to reduce the speed of production and consumption but also to protect workers' rights, prioritize social and environmental responsibilities, and guide consumers toward higher-quality products (Fletcher,

2007; Fletcher and Tham, 2015). In response to the negative impacts of fast fashion on sustainability, the importance attributed to slow fashion has increased. This growing interest has encouraged more conscious decision-making in both production and consumption processes, and a greater emphasis on quality rather than quantity. The slow fashion movement encourages consumers to think about the origin of the clothing they purchase, the production process involved, and the raw materials used. Rather than focusing on only aesthetic attributes, consumers are invited to consider who produced the product, whether ethical principles were respected during production, and how these factors influence overall product quality (Karaca, 2020). Slow fashion orientation also aims to increase consumer awareness by highlighting a sense of social and environmental responsibility. Moreover, the slow fashion concept enables consumers to engage with fashion not merely as buyers but as reflective participants in the design and production process. Particularly with the increasing interest in handcrafted products, a stronger bond is established between the consumer and the product, leading consumers to attribute greater value to such items. As a result, people reconsider their purchasing habits and demonstrate a tendency toward more conscious choices (Özmen, Haluk, and Özgül, 2016). As the slow fashion concept has evolved, different elements have been added to this approach. Jung and Jin (2016) conceptualized slow fashion not only as a sustainable production-consumption model but also value-oriented framework from the consumer perspective. Their study identified key sub-dimensions of slow fashion and explained its multi-layered structure both theoretical and practical perspectives. According to Jung and Jin (2016), the fundamental dimensions of slow fashion include exclusivity, functionality, localism, equity, and authenticity.

2.4. Relationships Between Variables

Brand perception has traditionally been shaped by factors such as aesthetic value, trend conformity, and price-performance balance. In recent years, consumers increasingly attach importance to brand's environmental and ethical responsibilities (Clark, 2008). Within this framework, brands adopting the slow fashion approach construct a distinct brand identity by focusing on values such as sustainability, transparency, and social responsibility (Domingos, Vale, and Faria, 2022). The shift toward environmentally responsible production processes creates a positive image in the eyes of consumers. Particularly conscious consumers pay attention not only to a brand's product quality but also to its values and production chain (Henninger, 2015). Therefore, slow fashion brands enhance credibility and foster customer loyalty base by emphasizing elements such as low carbon footprint, fair working conditions, and the use of recyclable materials (Fletcher, 2010). Fadila and Mahmud (2024) examined the effects of environmental awareness, brand trust, and brand image on purchasing decisions and found that brand loyalty plays a mediating role in this relationship. Their findings demonstrate that environmental awareness not only directly influences consumers' purchasing decisions but also exerts a stronger indirect effect when reinforced by brand image and trust. These findings are particularly valuable for slow fashion brands that stand out with their environmental identity. Consumers with sustainability awareness connect not only with the product but also with the brand's holistic image and ethical stance. Supporting brand image through environmental sensitivity strengthens loyalty and increases intention to repurchase. Within consumer perceptions, slow fashion brands are commonly associated with attributes such as "ethical," "sincere," and "quality." These brands succeed in establishing an emotional connection with the consumer by paying attention to telling the story behind the product (Şener, Bişkin, and Kılınç, 2019). In addition, limited production and an emphasis on craftsmanship, in line with the spirit of slow fashion, add prestige and originality to the products; thereby contributing positively to brand image (Choi and Han, 2019). Çetin (2025) conducted an analysis of circular fashion within the scope of the basic components of circularity. The study determined that the circular fashion approach strengthens the image of sustainability and conscious consumption in consumers' perceptions. Its principles (reuse, recycling, minimum waste) enable brands to build a value-oriented brand image, not just a product-oriented one. This supports the formation of long-term consumer loyalty.

Based on the theoretical background, the following section develops hypotheses to examine the relationships between brand image, brand loyalty, and slow fashion orientation, as well as the mediating role of slow fashion orientation in this relationship.

2.5. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1 presents the conceptual research model of the study. The model illustrates direct relationships between brand image and brand loyalty, as well as the direct effect of brand image on slow fashion orientation. In addition, the model shows a mediating role of slow fashion in the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

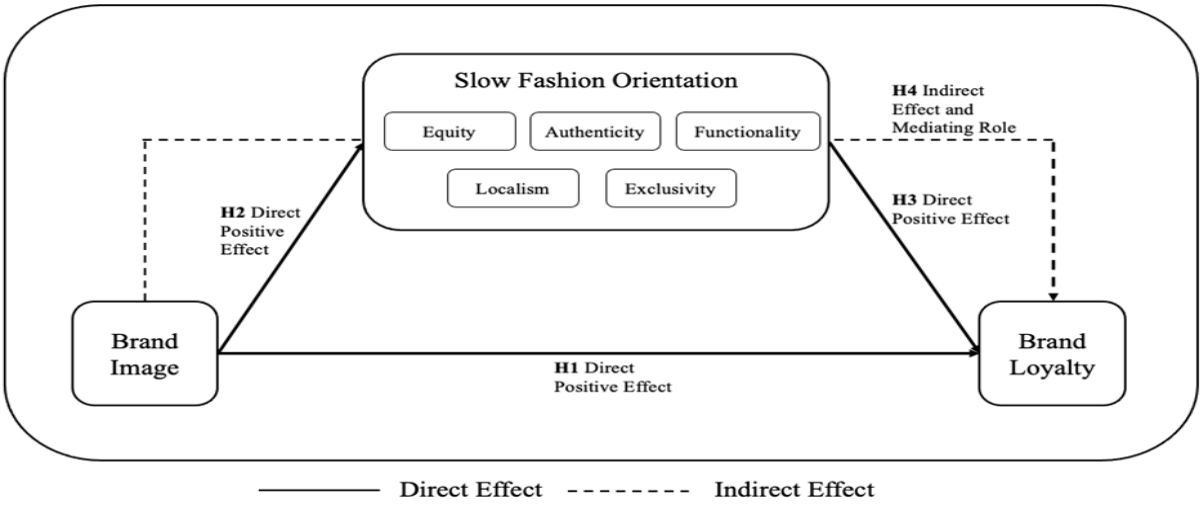

Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

The theoretical model of this study is based on the following three hypotheses:

Direct Effects

H1: Brand image significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.

Previous studies have shown that brand image plays a significant role in shaping consumers' attitudes and loyalty toward brands. A positive brand image strengthens trust, perceived value, and emotional connection; this, in turn, reinforces consumers' intention to establish long-term relationships with brands, particularly in emotionally driven sectors such as fashion retail (Park et al., 1986; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Pappu et al., 2005).

H2: Brand image significantly and positively influences slow fashion consumer orientation.

- H2a: Brand image significantly and positively influences the equity dimension.
- H2b: Brand image significantly and positively influences the authenticity dimension.
- H2c: Brand image significantly and positively influences the functionality dimension.
- H2d: Brand image significantly and positively influences the localism dimension.
- H2e: Brand image significantly and positively influences the exclusivity dimension.

As consumers evaluate brands based on ethical, environmental, and value-oriented criteria, brand image is becoming an important factor shaping consumers' inclinations toward slow fashion. Brands that convey messages of sustainability, transparency, and social responsibility are more likely to generate positive perceptions aligned with slow fashion values (Fletcher, 2010; Jung & Jin, 2016).

H3: Slow fashion consumer orientation significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.

- H3a: The equity dimension significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.
- H3b: The authenticity dimension significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.
- H3c: The functionality dimension significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.
- H3d: The localism dimension significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.
- H3e: The exclusivity dimension significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.

The slow fashion approach reflects consumers' value-oriented consumption patterns that emphasize ethical production, conscious consumption, and authenticity. This alignment of values strengthens emotional connection and trust, thereby increasing brand loyalty (Joergens, 2006; Niinimäki & Hassi, 2011).

Indirect (Mediation) Effects

H4: Slow fashion consumer orientation mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

H4a: The equity dimension mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

H4b: The authenticity dimension mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

H4c: The functionality dimension mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

H4d: The localism dimension mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

H4e: The exclusivity dimension mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.

Brand image influences how consumers perceive value and develop a slow fashion orientation, while slow fashion orientation, in turn, affects loyalty formation. Based on this relationship, slow fashion orientation is expected to mediate the link between brand image and brand loyalty.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study was structured to test relationships and adopted a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional survey model was selected as the research design. Brand image is treated as the independent variable, slow fashion orientation as the mediating variable, and brand loyalty as the dependent variable.

3.2. Population and Sample

The target population of the study consists of urban female and male consumers in Turkey. Data were collected from 405 consumers through an online survey. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, using non-probability sampling methods, namely convenience and snowball sampling. Initially, data was collected from participants accessible to the researcher using the convenience sampling method, and subsequently, through the referrals of these participants, additional participants with similar characteristics were reached using the snowball sampling method.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire form was used as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of five main sections: Participants' demographic information, questions for capturing respondents' sustainability-oriented lifestyle and clothing consumption habits, brand image scale, brand loyalty scale and slow fashion orientation scale. The scales used in this study were adapted into Turkish using the translation–back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) to ensure semantic and conceptual equivalence. All scales utilized a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

- Brand image scale was based on the study by Martinez et al. (2009)
- Brand loyalty scale was based on the studies by Aaker (1996) and Ratchford (1987) and modified by Kim (1998)
- Slow Fashion orientation scale was based on Jung and Jin (2014) and consist of five sub-dimensions: Equity, localism, authenticity, functionality, exclusivity.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v23 and IBM AMOS v24. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Normality was assessed, and non-parametric tests were used where distribution assumptions were not met. Group comparisons were performed using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and relationships among variables were examined using Spearman's rho correlation. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation to examine the factor structure of the scales. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were applied to test measurement and structural models. Mediation effects were examined using the bootstrap method with 5000 resamples. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

4. Findings

This section presents the analysis of the data obtained within the scope of the research and the results of hypothesis testing.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	n	%
Age		
18 – 24 years	14	3,5
25 – 34 years	66	16,3
35 – 44 years	118	29,1
45 – 54 years	162	40
55 – 64 years	37	9,1
65 years and above	8	2
Sex		
Woman	244	60,2
Man	161	39,8
Marital Status		
Married	246	60,7
Single	87	21,5
Divorced	63	15,6
Other	9	2,2
Education		
High school or below	78	19,3
Associate Degree	71	17,5
Bachelor's Degree	150	37
Master's Degree	74	18,3
Doctorate or above	32	7,9
Children		
Yes	281	69,4
No	124	30,6
Number of Children (for respondents with children)		
1 child	107	37,3
2 children	98	34,1
3 children	51	17,8
4 children	28	9,8
5 or more children	3	1
Employment Status		
Employed	264	65,2
Not Employed	141	34,8
Years of Work Experience		
Less than 1 year	17	4,3
1-5 years	60	15,2
6-10 years	88	22,3
More than 11 years	229	58,1
Sector of Employment		
Private sector	309	78,8
Public Sector	73	18,6
Other	10	2,6
Monthly Income (TRY)		

1 - 22.105 TRY	30	7,4
22.106 - 75.000 TRY	180	44,4
75.001 - 150.000 TRY	131	32,3
150.001 TRY or above	64	15,8

The demographic characteristics of the sample reveal that the majority of participants were between 35 and 54 years old, and 60.2% of the participants were female while 39.8% were male. Most participants (60.7%) were married and held at least a bachelor's degree. Regarding family status, 69.4% of participants reported having at least one child, with most parents having one or two children. In terms of employment, 65.2% of participants reported having a regular job, with the majority working in the private sector. Furthermore, most participants had more than ten years of work experience. Regarding income, the majority reported a monthly income between 22,106 and 75,000 TL.

4.2. Results of Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses

4.2.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the Brand Image Scale

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analyses of the Brand Image Scale

Items	Factor 1	Extraction	Anti-image Correlation Coefficient
Q19. The products have a high quality	0,819	0,671	0,868
Q20. The products have better characteristics than competitors'	0,717	0,517	0,871
Q22. The brand is nice	0,672	0,452	0,878
Q23. The brand has a personality that distinguish itself from competitors' brands	0,694	0,481	0,895
Q24. It's a brand that doesn't disappoint its customers	0,757	0,576	0,897
Q25. It's one of the best brands in the sector	0,677	0,455	0,868
Q26. The brand is very consolidated in the market	0,724	0,524	0,880
Eigenvalue	3,675		
Explained Variance (%)	52,507		
Cronbach's Alpha	0,848		

K-M-O=0,875; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2= 1002,127; p<0,001)

In the exploratory factor analysis, the principal components analysis method was used for factor extraction and the Varimax method was used for rotation. For the anti-image correlation matrix, all diagonal values must be above 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Each item had anti-image correlation values above 0.5. All extraction values are expected to be greater than 0.3 (Nunnally, 1978). All scale items had extraction values above 0.3. As a result of the factor analysis, the difference between factor loadings of each item exceeded 0.1, and no negative loadings were observed. The scale does not contain any overlapping items.

Item Q21 (Competitors are generally cheaper) was removed from the scale because it formed a distinct sub-dimension on its own and was the only item loading on that dimension. Since sub-dimensions consisting of a single item are not considered methodologically acceptable, this item was excluded from further analysis.

The final structure consisted of seven items loading on a single factor, which explained 52.507% of the total variance. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was 0.875, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 1002.127, $p < 0.001$). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.848, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

4.2.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results for the Brand Image Scale

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Brand Image Scale

Items		Factors	β^1	β^2	S.E.	p-value	R^2	AVE	CR
Q19. The products have a high quality	<---	F1	1,290	0,801	0,097	**<0,001**	0,641	0,443	0,846
Q20. The products have better characteristics than competitors'	<---	F1	1,121	0,684	0,095	**<0,001**	0,468		
Q22. The brand is nice	<---	F1	0,835	0,569	0,083	**<0,001**	0,324		
Q23. The brand has a personality that distinguish itself from competitors' brands	<---	F1	0,981	0,633	0,089	**<0,001**	0,400		
Q24. It's a brand that doesn't disappoint its customers	<---	F1	1,023	0,698	0,085	**<0,001**	0,488		
Q25. It's one of the best brands in the sector	<---	F1	0,852	0,573	0,084	**<0,001**	0,329		
Q26. The brand is very consolidated in the market	<---	F1	1,000	0,674	---	---	0,454		

β_1: Unstandardized beta coefficient; β_2: Standardized beta coefficient; S.E.: Standard Error

For Maximum Likelihood (ML) to be used as the estimation method in confirmatory factor analysis, the data are required to conform to a normal distribution. Previous studies have shown that while a critical value below 10 is considered an excellent result in the assumption of multivariate normality, values up to 20 are generally considered acceptable (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In the multivariate normality test conducted, the critical value was found to be less than 20 (critical value = 11.522). Since the assumption of multiple normality was met, Maximum LikeliHood was used as the estimation method. The standardized path coefficients for all items loading on the factor were statistically significant ($p<0.05$). A first-level confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with a total of seven items loading onto a single factor. The model fit indices were obtained as follows: CMIN/DF (39.653 / 13) = 3.050, GFI=0.974, IFI=0.973, CFI=0.973, TLI=0.956, RMSEA=0.071, SRMR=0.035.

4.2.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the Slow Fashion Orientation Scale

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Slow Fashion Orientation Scale

Items	Conscious Consumption	Exclusivity	Localism	Extraction	Anti-image Correlation Coefficient
Q28. Fair compensation for apparel producers is important to me when I buy clothes.	0,705			0,585	0,938
Q29. I am concerned about fair trade when I buy clothes.	0,755			0,598	0,927
Q30. I am concerned about the working conditions of producers when I buy clothes.	0,643			0,478	0,954
Q32. Craftsmanship is very important in clothes.	0,738			0,596	0,931
Q33. Handcrafted clothes are more valuable than mass-produced ones.	0,652			0,530	0,941

Q34. I often enjoy wearing the same clothes in multiple ways.	0,642			0,468	0,954
Q35. I tend to keep clothes as long as possible rather than discarding quickly.	0,761			0,599	0,916
Q36. I prefer simple and classic designs.	0,626			0,408	0,919
Q37. We need to support Turkish apparel brands.			0,638	0,640	0,906
Q38. I believe clothes made of locally produced materials are more valuable.			0,765	0,669	0,889
Q39. I prefer buying clothes made in Turkey.			0,824	0,705	0,870
Q40. I enjoy having clothes that others do not.		0,770		0,635	0,864
Q41. I am very attracted to rare apparel items.		0,851		0,745	0,749
Q42. Limited editions hold special appeal for me.		0,838		0,718	0,732
Eigenvalue	5,498	1,778	1,098		
Explained Variance (%)	30,125	15,521	14,169		
Cumulative Explained Variance (%)	30,125	45,645	59,815		
Cronbach's Alpha	0,871	0,784	0,735		

K-M-O=0,903; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2= 2117,459; p<0,001)

In exploratory factor analysis, principal component analysis (PCA) was employed for factor extraction, and the Varimax rotation method was applied. For the anti-image correlation matrix, all diagonal values should exceed 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In this study, the diagonal values of the anti-image correlation matrix for all items were above 0.50. Extraction values are expected to be greater than 0.3 (Nunnally, 1978), and all items met this criterion. To ensure discriminant factor structure, the difference between an item's factor loadings across factors should exceed 0.1, and factor loadings should not be negative. The scale should not contain any overlapping items. Item Q31 (I value clothes made by traditional techniques.) was removed from the scale as it was an overlapping item. The scale consists of 14 items and three sub-dimensions, explaining 59.815% of the total variance. Although the slow fashion orientation scale was theoretically conceptualized with five sub-dimensions, the exploratory factor analysis results indicated a three-factor structure in this sample. Items originally representing equity, authenticity, and functionality loaded on a single factor, suggesting that these dimensions were not empirically distinguishable. This combined factor was labeled as 'Conscious Consumption' to reflect its underlying value-oriented consumption characteristics.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value was 0.903, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 2117.459, $p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis. According to the Tukey additivity test ($F=33.030$; $p<0.001$), the scale does not exhibit additivity; therefore, each sub-dimension should be evaluated independently rather than computing a total scale score.

4.2.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results for the Slow Fashion Orientation Scale

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Slow Fashion Orientation Scale

Items		Factors	β^1 (%95 CI)	β^2 (%95 CI)	S.E.	p-value	R^2	AVE	CR
Q28. Fair compensation for apparel producers is important to me when I buy clothes.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,266 (1,055 : 1,566)	0,738 (0,675 : 0,793)	0,117	**<0,001**	0,545	0,462	0,872
Q29. I am concerned about fair trade when I buy clothes.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,247 (1,021 : 1,56)	0,725 (0,662 : 0,779)	0,116	**<0,001**	0,525		
Q30. I am concerned about the working conditions of producers when I buy clothes.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,135 (0,934 : 1,411)	0,649 (0,579 : 0,714)	0,114	**<0,001**	0,422		
Q32. Craftsmanship is very important in clothes.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,314 (1,093 : 1,626)	0,727 (0,669 : 0,78)	0,123	**<0,001**	0,528		
Q33. Handcrafted clothes are more valuable than mass-produced ones.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,296 (1,071 : 1,634)	0,691 (0,623 : 0,751)	0,125	**<0,001**	0,477		
Q34. I often enjoy wearing the same clothes in multiple ways.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,125 (0,915 : 1,388)	0,622 (0,543 : 0,692)	0,116	**<0,001**	0,386		
Q35. I tend to keep clothes as long as possible rather than discarding quickly.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1,321 (1,101 : 1,638)	0,703 (0,646 : 0,756)	0,126	**<0,001**	0,494		
Q36. I prefer simple and classic designs.	<---	Conscious Consumption	1 (1 : 1)	0,562 (0,469 : 0,645)		---	0,316		
Q40. I enjoy having clothes that others do not.	<---	Exclusivity	0,859 (0,721 : 1,029)	0,677 (0,591 : 0,757)	0,074	**<0,001**	0,458	0,553	0,787
Q41. I am very attracted to rare apparel items.	<---	Exclusivity	1,018 (0,885 : 1,18)	0,801 (0,728 : 0,868)	0,083	**<0,001**	0,642		
Q42. Limited editions hold special appeal for me.	<---	Exclusivity	1 (1 : 1)	0,748 (0,66 : 0,826)		---	0,559		

Q37. We need to support Turkish apparel brands.	<---	Localism	1,33 (1,088 : 1,675)	0,808 (0,747 : 0,863)	0,126	**<0,001**	0,652		
Q38. I believe clothes made of locally produced materials are more valuable.	<---	Localism	1,117 (0,929 : 1,377)	0,665 (0,577 : 0,745)	0,114	**<0,001**	0,443	0,481	0,732
Q39. I prefer buying clothes made in Turkey.	<---	Localism	1 (1 : 1)	0,589 (0,488 : 0,684)	**---**	---	0,346		

β_1: Unstandardized beta coefficient; β_2: Standardized beta coefficient; CI: Confidence Interval; S.E: Standard Error

For Maximum Likelihood (ML) to be used as a method in confirmatory factor analysis, the data must conform to a normal distribution. While a critical value below 10 is considered an excellent result in the assumption of multivariate normality, studies have shown that values up to 20 generally do not pose a problem (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In the multivariate normality test performed, the critical value was found to exceed 20 (critical value = 24.537). Since the assumption of multivariate normality was not met, the Bootstrap Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method was employed. Standardized path coefficients for all items in the model were found to be statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

A first-order confirmatory factor analysis was performed with a total of 14 items and 3 factors, and the fit values were obtained as follows: CMIN/DF (114.927 / 74)=1.553, GFI=0.962, IFI=0.980, CFI=0.980, TLI=0.976, RMSEA=0.037, SRMR=0.035.

The confirmatory factor analysis results confirmed that the structure, which was theoretically conceptualized with five sub-dimensions, operated as a three-factor model in this sample. The high correlations observed among items originally representing separate sub-dimensions indicate that these items do not function as empirically distinct structures within the measurement model, but rather represent a common underlying conceptual structure together.

Therefore, the model did not empirically support the separation of these sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions of 'Equity', 'Authenticity', and 'Functionality' combined and grouped under a unified factor called 'Conscious Consumption'. Thus, the three-factor structure was retained in the CFA, and the model fit indices (CFI, TLI, RMSEA) demonstrated a substantial improvement.

4.2.5. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the Brand Loyalty Scale

Table 6. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Brand Loyalty Scale

Items	Factor 1	Extraction	Anti-image Correlation Coefficient
Q43. I will continue to use this brand because I am satisfied and acquainted with the brand	0,789	0,622	0,774
Q44. I will use this brand in spite of competitors' deals	0,749	0,562	0,836
Q45. I would buy additional products and service in this brand	0,723	0,523	0,846
Q46. I prefer the brand to others	0,574	0,330	0,880
Q47. I would recommend the product or service to others	0,796	0,634	0,773
Eigenvalue	2,671		
Explained Variance (%)	53,417		
Cronbach's Alpha	0,778		

K-M-O=0,810; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2= 517,744; p<0,001)

In the exploratory factor analysis, the principal components analysis method was used for factor extraction and the Varimax rotation method was applied. For the anti-image correlation matrix, all diagonal values are required to exceed 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007), and this criterion was met for all items. Extraction values are expected to be greater than 0.3 (Nunnally, 1978), and all items satisfied this requirement. Factor analysis requires that the difference between an item's factor loadings across different factors be greater than 0.1, and that factor loadings are not negative. The scale does not contain any overlapping items and consists of five items loading on a single factor, explains 53.417% of the total variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.810, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value was 517.744 ($p<0.001$). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of scale was obtained as 0.778, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency.

4.2.6. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results for the Brand Loyalty Scale

Table 7. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Brand Loyalty Scale

Items		Factors	β^1	β^2	S.E.	p-value	R^2	AVE	CR
Q43. I will continue to use this brand because I am satisfied and acquainted with the brand	<---	F1	1,113	0,748	0,087	**<0,001**	0,560	0,426	0,782
Q44. I will use this brand in spite of competitors' deals	<---	F1	0,869	0,648	0,076	**<0,001**	0,420		
Q45. I would buy additional products and service in this brand	<---	F1	0,884	0,613	0,081	**<0,001**	0,375		
Q46. I prefer the brand to others	<---	F1	0,585	0,443	0,074	**<0,001**	0,196		
Q47. I would recommend the product or service to others	<---	F1	1,000	0,759	---	**<0,001**	0,577		

β_1: Unstandardized beta coefficient; β_2: Standardized beta coefficient; S.E.: Standard Error

For Maximum Likelihood (ML) to be used as an estimation method in confirmatory factor analysis, the data are required to conform to a normal distribution. Previous studies indicate that while a critical value below 10 represents an excellent result in the assumption of multivariate normality, values up to 20 generally do not pose a problem (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In the Multivariate Normality Test conducted, the critical value was found to be below 20 (critical value = 4.612). Since the assumption of multivariate normality was satisfied, Maximum Likelihood was used as the estimation method. Standardized path coefficients for all items in the factor were found to be statistically significant ($p<0.05$). A first-level confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with a total of five items loading on a single factor. The model fit indices were as follows: CMIN/DF (10.124 / 5)=2.025, GFI=0.989, IFI=0.990, CFI=0.990, TLI=0.980, RMSEA=0.050, SRMR=0.024.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales

	Mean ± Standard Deviation	Median (Minimum - Maximum)
Brand Image	3,37 ± 0,75	3,29 (1 - 5)
Conscious Consumption	3,58 ± 0,78	3,63 (1 - 5)
Exclusivity	3,26 ± 0,94	3,33 (1 - 5)
Localism	3,38 ± 0,89	3,33 (1 - 5)
Brand Loyalty	3,45 ± 0,74	3,4 (1 - 5)

The average score for the Brand Image scale was 3.37, with a median value of 3.29. Conscious Consumption had a mean score of 3.58 and a median of 3.63. The mean scores for Exclusivity and Localism were 3.26 (median = 3.33) and 3.38 (median = 3.33), respectively. Finally, the Brand Loyalty scale yielded an average score of 3.45, with a median score of 3.40. Overall, the mean and median values indicate moderate to moderately high levels across all study variables measured on a five-point Likert scale.

4.4. Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables

Table 9. Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables

	1		2		3		4	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
1-Brand Image	---	---						
2-Conscious Consumption	0,617	**<0,001**	---	---				
3-Exclusivity	0,360	**<0,001**	0,328	**<0,001**	---	---		
4-Localism	0,402	**<0,001**	0,593	**<0,001**	0,229	**<0,001**	---	---
5-Brand Loyalty	0,747	**<0,001**	0,656	**<0,001**	0,327	**<0,001**	0,453	**<0,001**

r = Spearman's rho correlation coefficient; p = significance level

There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the brand image scale and conscious consumption scores (r=0.617; p<0.001). A statistically significant weak positive correlation was found between the brand image scale and exclusivity scores (r=0.360; p<0.001), while a statistically significant moderate positive correlation was observed between the brand image scale and localism scores (r=0.402; p<0.001). Moreover, the relationship between the brand image scale and brand loyalty scale scores was positive and strong (r=0.747; p<0.001). Regarding the relationships among slow fashion orientation dimensions, conscious consumption was found to be weakly and positively correlated with exclusivity (r=0.328; p<0.001) and moderately and positively correlated with localism (r=0.593; p<0.001). In addition there is a statistically significant strong positive correlation between conscious consumption and brand loyalty scale scores (r=0.656; p<0.001). A statistically significant weak positive correlation was also observed between exclusivity and localism scores (r=0.229; p<0.001), as well as between exclusivity and brand loyalty scores (r=0.327; p<0.001). Finally there is a statistically significant positive correlation of moderate strength between localism and brand loyalty scores (r=0.453; p<0.001).
In order to test the proposed hypotheses and to examine the mediating role of slow fashion orientation in the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed.

4.5. Mediation Analysis Results

Table 10. Mediation Analysis Results

			β^1 (%95 CI)	β^2	S.E.	p-value	R^2
Conscious Consumption	<---	Brand Image	0,625 (0,544 : 0,706)	0,602	0,041	**<0,001**	0,363
Exclusivity	<---	Brand Image	0,436 (0,320 : 0,552)	0,346	0,059	**<0,001**	0,120
Localism	<---	Brand Image	0,478 (0,371 : 0,586)	0,400	0,055	**<0,001**	0,160
Brand Loyalty	<---	Brand Image	0,559 (0,484 : 0,634)	0,562	0,038	**<0,001**	0,641
Brand Loyalty	<---	Conscious Consumption	0,286 (0,205 : 0,367)	0,298	0,041	**<0,001**	
Brand Loyalty	<---	Exclusivity	0,019 (-0,031 : 0,069)	0,024	0,026	0,461	
Brand Loyalty	<---	Localism	0,019 (-0,042 : 0,080)	0,023	0,031	0,545	
Indirect Effects							
			β^1 (%95 CI)		β^2		
Brand Image --> Conscious Consumption --> Brand Loyalty			0,179 (0,104 : 0,270)		0,180 (0,106 : 0,265)		
Brand Image --> Exclusivity --> Brand Loyalty			0,008 (-0,016 : 0,037)		0,008 (-0,016 : 0,037)		
Brand Image --> Localism --> Brand Loyalty			0,009 (-0,029 : 0,050)		0,009 (-0,029 : 0,050)		

β_1: Unstandardized beta coefficient; β_2: Standardized beta coefficient; CI: Confidence Interval; S.E: Standard Error

The brand image variable has a statistically significant effect on the conscious consumption variable ($\beta = 0.625$, $p<0.001$), such that an increase in brand image is associated with an increase in conscious consumption ($p<0.001$). Similarly, brand image has a statistically significant effect on exclusivity ($\beta = 0.436$, $p<0.001$) and localism ($\beta = 0.478$, $p<0.001$). Brand image also exerts a statistically significant direct effect on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.559$, $p<0.001$). Conscious consumption has a statistically significant positive effect on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.286$, $p<0.001$). In contrast, exclusivity ($p=0.461$) and localism ($p=0.545$) do not have statistically significant effects on brand loyalty. The mediating effect of conscious consumption on the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty was found to be statistically significant. The indirect effect of brand image on brand loyalty through conscious consumption was significant ($\beta = 0.179$). These results indicate a partial mediation effect of conscious consumption, suggesting that brand image influences brand loyalty both directly and indirectly through conscious consumption. On the other hand, the mediating effects of the exclusivity and localism on the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty were not statistically significant. The significance of the indirect effects was assessed using bootstrap confidence intervals.

Based on the results of confirmatory factor analysis and mediation analysis, the initially proposed theoretical model was partially revised. Accordingly, the final structural model reflects the empirically supported relationships among brand image, conscious consumption, and brand loyalty, as well as the revised dimensional structure of slow fashion orientation.

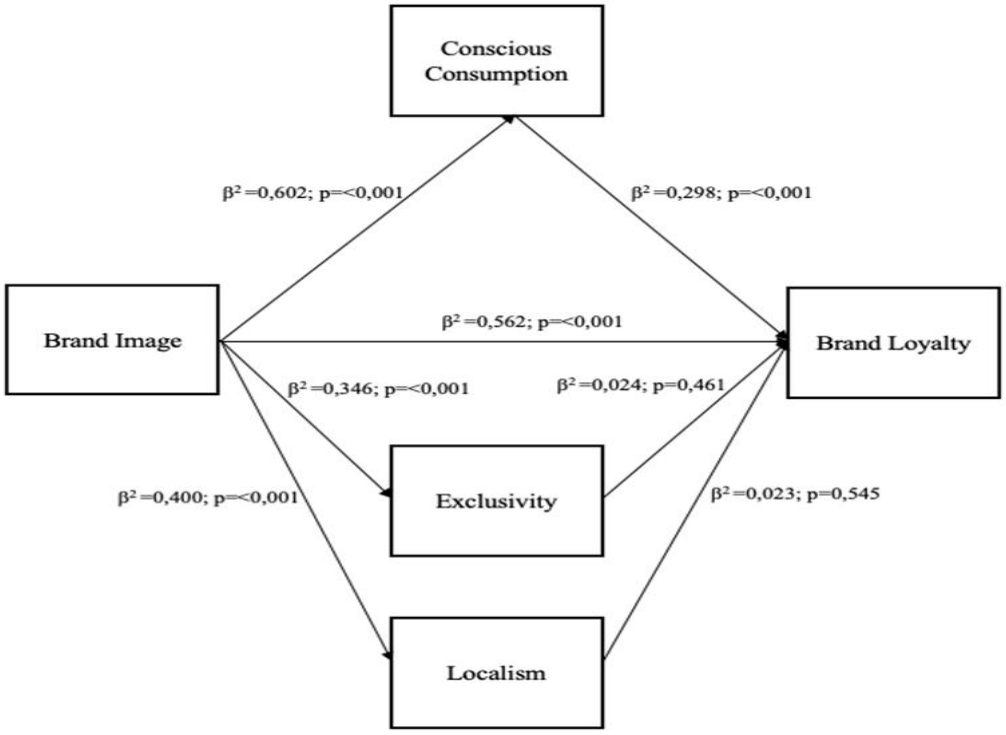

Figure 2. Final Structural Model (Standardized Path Coefficients)

4.6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

After conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on the slow fashion orientation scale, the dimensions of equity, functionality, and authenticity were found to load onto a single factor. Although the scale was originally theorized as a five-dimensional construct—including equity, functionality, authenticity, localism, and exclusivity—the CFA results indicated a three-factor structure within the present sample. The combined dimensions were interpreted as reflecting a broader value-oriented consumption perspective and were labeled as "conscious consumption."

Consequently, the hypotheses related to slow fashion orientation were revised in line with this empirically supported structure rather than the original theoretical classification.

Table 11. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Results
Direct Effects	
H1: Brand image significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.	**SUPPORTED**
H2: Brand image significantly and positively influences slow fashion consumer orientation.	**SUPPORTED**
H2a) Brand image significantly and positively influences conscious consumption.	**SUPPORTED**
H2b) Brand image significantly and positively influences localism.	**SUPPORTED**
H2c) Brand image significantly and positively influences exclusivity.	**SUPPORTED**
H3: Slow fashion consumer orientation significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.	**PARTIALLY SUPPORTED**
H3a) Conscious consumption significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.	**SUPPORTED**
H3b) Localism significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.	**NOT SUPPORTED**
H3c) Exclusivity significantly and positively influences brand loyalty.	**NOT SUPPORTED**
Indirect Effects	
H4: Slow fashion consumer orientation mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.	**PARTIALLY SUPPORTED**
H4a) The conscious consumption mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.	**SUPPORTED**
H4b) Localism mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.	**NOT SUPPORTED**
H4c) Exclusivity mediates the relationship between brand image and brand loyalty.	**NOT SUPPORTED**

5. Discussion

This study investigated the relationships between brand image, slow fashion consumer orientation and its sub-dimensions, and brand loyalty. The results indicate that brand image has significant and positive effects on both brand loyalty and the sub-dimensions of slow fashion consumer orientation. In particular, the strong and direct influence of brand image on brand loyalty is consistent with previous studies (Sekmen, 2019; Özdemir, 2025; Ledikwe, 2020).

An examination of the sub-dimensions of slow fashion consumer orientation shows that conscious consumption dimension had a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty; the localism and exclusivity dimensions, however, did not have a statistically significant effect on brand loyalty. These results suggest that consumer values based on

sustainability and ethical sensitivity strengthen the brand-consumer relationship, while elements such as local production or exclusivity may not be loyalty-creating factors for all consumer segments. Similarly, Noh and Johnson (2019) and Park and Kim (2016) emphasize that when the perceptions of sustainability is internalized by the consumers, they contribute to brand loyalty.

The mediation analysis have shown that conscious consumption plays a significant mediating role in the effect of brand image on brand loyalty, whereas the dimensions of localism and exclusivity do not have a mediating function in this relationship. This finding highlights that brand image strengthens brand loyalty not only directly but also indirectly through consumers' value-based perceptions. This result is consistent with previous studies showing that brand image affects loyalty through indirect mechanisms (Dilek and Çatı, 2023; Altun and Çağlıyan, 2023).

Another significant contribution of this study is that the slow fashion consumer orientation scale exhibits a three-dimensional structure in this sample. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses revealed that the dimensions of equity, functionality, and authenticity converge under a single structure, which is termed conscious consumption. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that the conceptualization of slow fashion may be perceived differently depending on cultural context, period conditions, and sample characteristics (Karaca, 2019; Seock et al., 2024).

From all these perspectives, the findings suggest that brand image strengthens brand loyalty through sustainability-based consumer values, and that the impact of slow fashion orientation on brand loyalty is not one-dimensional but shaped through a value-based structure.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the relationships between brand image, slow fashion consumer orientation, and brand loyalty within the framework of a structural model. The study focuses on examining how brand image influences brand loyalty and how slow fashion consumer orientation shapes this relationship. The study addresses an underexplored area in the existing literature by integrating the slow fashion literature with the brand image and brand loyalty research.

The results indicate that brand image has a significant and positive effect on both brand loyalty and slow fashion consumer orientation, including its sub-dimensions. This finding highlights the role of brand image as a key determinant of consumers' long-term relationships with brands. However, the effect of slow fashion consumer orientation on brand loyalty was found to be only partially significant. Specifically, it was observed that only the conscious consumption dimension had a significant and positive effect on brand loyalty; whereas the localism and exclusivity dimensions did not have a significant effect.

Furthermore, it was determined that the influence of brand image on brand loyalty occurs not only directly but also indirectly through the slow fashion consumer orientation. In this regard, it was concluded that the slow fashion consumer orientation plays a partial mediating role, but this mediating effect is only significant through the dimension of conscious consumption.

An important contribution of this study lies in the re-evaluation of the slow fashion scale developed by Jung and Jin (2014) using a contemporary consumer sample. The findings revealed that the dimensions of equity, functionality, and authenticity converge under a single factor, and this structure can be explained by the concept of conscious consumption. This indicates that the slow fashion concept can be perceived differently depending on culture, time periods, and samples, and suggests that the scale should be reconsidered in future studies.

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer relevant insights for apparel brands operating in Turkey. The findings suggest that sustainability-based strategies, particularly those built around conscious consumption values, are more effective in creating brand loyalty. Conversely, localism and exclusivity do not create the same level of loyalty for all consumer segments. The main limitation of the study is its focus on Turkey; future studies could enhance the generalizability of the model by considering different countries and cultures.

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