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**ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND LOYALTY IN TOURISM SECTOR: THE CASE OF KYRENIA**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sualp DAVUT**

Faculty of business management (Assoc. Prof), Girne American University, Kyrenia North CYPRUS

**Asieh AKHLAGHIMOFRAD**

Faculty of business management (PHD Student), Girne American University, Kyrenia North CYPRUS



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**ABSTRACT**

Marketing for a tourism destination brand entails its own specific strategies and techniques, although the basic concepts of brand equity for a destination is not far from applying branding of any other goods or services. This study analyzes and tackles the marketing issues of a destination by evaluating the consumer's perception of a tourist destination called Kyrenia in the Mediterranean region. Consumer's perception of the brand image will lead to consumer brand loyalty, specifically in a service industry such as tourism where loyalty is a key issue to the success of any tourist destination. How tourists evaluate a destination's overall performance and properties through actually being present at the destination t, and their perceived image matching their expectations prior to their visit; leads to a judgment which creates brand loyalty regarding the destination. Therefore, this study is focused on some factors which may lead to customer's loyalty and impact the perceived image before and after the tourists receiving services at the destination. By examining the impact of service performance, and advertising on brand image and consequently the impact of brand image on brand loyalty; strategic insights on selecting and implementing better marketing tools for DMOs and tourism stakeholders are suggested.

**Key Words:** Brand Loyalty, Brand Image, Advertising, Service Performance, Kyrenia

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The concept of branding has become very popular in marketing tourism destinations for the past few decades; therefore, many researchers have turned their focus and attention on the concept of customer-based brand equity regarding tourism destinations. Since it is not so easy to customize the features of a destination to appeal to individual customers preferences as done with other manufactured products, branding is very critical for the field of tourism (Yan. Y, Liu. X, Li. J, 2015).

**1.1. Research Background**

Customer-based brand equity for destinations was first introduced by Konecnik & Gartner (2007) in their article *Customer-Based Brand Equity for a Destination*. Previous to their study destination image was mainly used as a vital element for evaluation of a destination, but their study suggested

that other brand equity dimensions such as brand quality, brand awareness, and brand loyalty should also be taken into consideration. Although Konecnik and Gartner did not consider any other factors influencing brand dimensions, many other researchers who were inspired by Konecnik and Gartner's work, have been testing the influence of other factors such as advertising, word-of-mouth, service performance, price, publicity, customer satisfaction, etc. on brand equity dimensions. Following the other researchers who have been contributing their new ideas to branding for destinations, this study is focused on the impact of advertising, and service performance on brand image and brand loyalty.

### **1.2. Study's Aim**

This study measures the impact of advertising and service performance on customer-based brand image and brand loyalty. Since advertising is related to the image formed in the customers minds prior to their visit and service performance is related with the image formation while being exposed to the tourism products and gaining personal experience, the study can evaluate the strength of the two factors influencing brand image. Whether Kyrenia is lacking a proper advertising strategy regarding its tourist attractions or its service performance is lower than the industry's standards are detected by the results of this study.

### **1.3. Branding & Customer based brand equity**

Branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand. It's all about creating differences between products. Branding creates mental structures that help consumers organize their knowledge about products and services in a way that clarifies their decision making and, in the process provides value to the firm (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Customer based brand equity is defined as the "differential effects of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (Keller, 1993).

### **1.4. Brand Image & Brand Loyalty**

Based on Aaker's (1991), and Keller's (1993) original brand equity dimensions followed by Konecnik and Gartner's customer evaluation of a tourism destination branding, there are four dimensions related with brand equity: brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness, and brand quality. This study focuses on two dimensions of brand loyalty and brand image following the previous studies by Konecnik and Gartner mention that "image is the core concept in brand, and the creative process of customer-based brand equity for a destination encompasses the formation of branding image.

Destination image is defined as a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from various sources over time that result in a mental representation of the attributes and benefits sought of a destination (Crompton,1979; Gartner, 1993). Destination brand loyalty is represented by repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations (Pike, 2007). According to (Reichheld, 1996), retention and maintenance of existing customers cost less than acquisition of new customers. A study done by Bain&Co (Reichheld and Teal, 2001) showed that a 5% increase in customer loyalty can increase a company's profitability by 40% to 95% and an increase in customer loyalty of 1% is the equivalent of 10% cost reduction. Zeithmal et al (1996) stated that satisfied customers demonstrate more loyal behavior .When customers are satisfied with the products/brands they are more likely to repeat purchase (Bennett and Rundle-Thiele, 2005). Anderson & Fernell (1994) found that satisfaction is the most significant factor leading to customer loyalty. On the other hand, empirical studies have confirmed that image impacts satisfaction which in turn leads to loyalty in many industries (Bloemer & Ruyter,1998).

According to Johnson et.al (2001), corporate image is considered as an attitude that must affect behavioral intentions such as customer loyalty; Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) stated that in three

business sectors (telecommunication, retailing, and education) corporate image and customer loyalty are positively related.

### 1.5. Advertising & Service Performance

Past studies have shown that two factors that can directly influence a destination's image are: advertising and service performance. Berry (2000) stated that customers who have had direct experiences with the service evaluate the brand mainly based on their perceived service performance; hence, service performance disproportionately influences service brand building. Berry also mentions that the direct contact refers to direct interactions with front line staff and is measured by perceived destination service performance; on the other hand, advertising can increase an individual's perception of a brand via indirect contact between customers and a firm.

Advertising can influence the brand image attributes of a destination's physical appearance, name, logo, facilities, history, and culture. Therefore, a destination's perceived image might be related to the functions of advertising campaigns indirectly, whereas service performance is a factor which might directly influence the perceived destination image through close contact with the service providers.

### 1.6. Objectives

This study's objectives are to find out about the competitive advantages of Kyrenia, North Cyprus as a tourist destination. Kyrenia is a city located in the northern part of the island of Cyprus and features many touristic attractions with various tourism products.

Kyrenia being located in the Mediterranean region is facing a tough marketing competition. Many other destinations in the region offer similar tourism products, therefore its market position need to be tackled and studied. According to the material covered in a brief literature review, a few questions regarding Kyrenia's competitive advantage need to be answered and these questions are related with the two variables of advertising and service performance influencing the image of the destination and consequently its brand loyalty. The study questions are as follows:

1. Does the customer's perceived image of Kyrenia influence the customer's brand loyalty?
2. Does advertising have any impacts on the perceived image of Kyrenia?
3. Does service performance have any impacts on the perceived image of Kyrenia?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Brand and Brand equity

Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these that identifies the products or services of one seller or group of sellers and differentiates them from those of competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014), and once customers have made a decision about a brand and its associations, they are often loyal to that brand, continue to buy it in the future, recommend it to friends, and choose the product over others, even those with better features or lower prices (Assel, 1991). Regarding the concept of brand equity, Kamakura and Russell (1991) suggested that the brand name of a product adds a value to it and that added value is called brand equity. Brand equity can also be defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991). Brands with high levels of equity are associated with outstanding performance including sustained price premiums, inelastic price sensitivity, high market shares, and successful expansion into new businesses, competitive cost structures and high profitability all contributing to companies' competitive advantage (Keller and Lehmann 2003).

### 2.1.1. Customer-based brand equity and Customer-based brand equity for a destination

Customer based brand equity is defined as the “differential effects of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993). Keller later noted that customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in their memory. Positive customer-based brand equity has many advantages like long term revenues, customers’ willingness to seek out for themselves new channels of distribution, the ability of firms to command higher prices and the effectiveness (Keller, 2003). In terms of measuring brand equity, Aaker (1991) presented an extensive model for brand equity which consists of five different dimensions that are the source of the value creation. The dimensions are: brand loyalty; brand name awareness; perceived brand quality; brand associations; and other proprietary brand assets. Keller (1993; 1998) refers to consumer perceptions of brands as brand knowledge, consisting of brand awareness (recognition and recall) and brand image. Keller defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. These associations include perceptions of brand quality and attitudes toward the brand. Since brand image is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory, and brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller, 1993).. Washburn and Plank found a significant correlation between brand equity dimensions and re-purchase intention in a co-branding context (Washburn and Plank, 2002). Consequently, Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) incorporated four constructs (brand awareness, brand image, brand associations, and brand loyalty) as the dimensions of tourist destination brand equity (Yoo, et.al, 2000).

Among all of these dimensions, Konecnik and Garner (2007) suggested that brand image was the most critical component of customer-based brand equity for a tourism destination. Brand image deals with what comes to mind in term of city attributes given the city name and general image have been created. This study focuses on the relation between brand image and brand loyalty in Kyrania as tourism destination. Furthermore, the impact of advertising and service performance on the brand image component of customer based brand equity is evaluated.

### 2.2. Brand Image and Destination Brand Image

According to Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), image is a perceptual phenomenon that takes shape through consumer’s emotional interpretation with cognitive and affective components. Brand image is a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by brand associations in consumer’s memory (Keller, 1993). Brand image can generate value in terms of helping customer to process information, differentiating the brand, generating reasons to buy, give positive feelings, and providing a basis for extensions (Aaker, 1991).

Gartner (1993) suggested that destination image is generally interpreted as a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from various sources over time that result in a mental representation of the attributes and benefits sought of a destination. Sirgi and Su (2000) suggest that a closer match between destination image and self-image of a tourist would increase the likelihood of visitation. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) have recognized the image’s important role in tourists’ destination behavior, specifically regarding the evaluation and election process; furthermore, Bianchi and Pike (2011) believe that destination brand image has a positive effect on brand loyalty. Tasci and colleagues (2007) argue that destination image should have cognitive, affective, and conative components. In this regard, destination image is defined as “an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations, and intentions toward a destination”. Jashi and Yadav (2017) mention that destination image refers to a tourist-based subjective impression of a given destination.

### 2.3. Brand Loyalty and Destination Brand Loyalty

Customer satisfaction is essential in order to build brand loyalty, although satisfaction does not necessarily generate or increase loyalty. Some authors emphasize an asymmetric relationship between loyalty and satisfaction (Waddell, 1995). Schultz (2000) outlines the importance of satisfying a customer in order to create behavioral loyalty. Thus, a satisfied customer tends to be more loyal to a brand over time than a customer whose purchase is caused by other reasons such as time restrictions and information deficits.

Brand loyalty is a deeply held psychological commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior "(Oliver, 1999). Keller (2003) suggests that the ability to create customer loyalty is a major goal of brand management. Brand loyalty has been considered a consequence of multi-dimensional cognitive attitudes towards a specific brand (Back & Parks, 2003). Traditional marketing literature generally emphasizes two different dimensions of the concept of brand loyalty – behavioral and attitudinal. On one hand, attitudinal brand loyalty includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral intent dimensions, while, on the other hand, behavioral loyalty reflects the repeat buying behavior (Dick and Basu, 1994).

Oliver (1999) has mentioned four ascending brand-loyalty stages according to the cognition affect conation pattern. The first stage is cognitive loyalty. Customers are loyal to a brand based on their information on that brand. The next phase is affective loyalty, which refers to customer liking or positive attitudes toward a brand. The third step is conative loyalty or behavioral intention. This is a deeply held commitment to buy a "good intention" This desire may result in unrealized action. The last stage is action loyalty, where customers convert intentions into actions. Customers at this stage experience action inertia, coupled with a desire to overcome obstacles to make a purchase. Although action loyalty is ideal, it is difficult to observe and is often equally difficult to measure. Lasser et al. (1995) points that, consumers who have greater confidence in a brand instead of its alternatives, are more loyal towards it and are also willing to pay a higher price for it. Among all, brand loyalty is the most important dimension and the core of a brand's equity, being, in some authors' views, the ultimate objective and meaning of brand equity (Travis, 2000). Traditionally, among the advantages of a high degree of brand loyalty, the branding literature includes the ability to apply premium pricing policies, the greater negotiation power in relation to distribution channels, the reduced selling costs, the higher barriers to potential new entries into the product category, and the increased success potential of brand extensions to related product categories (Reichheld and Teal, 1996).

### 2.4. Advertising

According to Agrawal (1996), advertising can be seen as a "defensive" strategy used to build brand loyalty, which helps in retaining the loyal consumers, and price promotions as an "offensive" strategy used to attract the loyal consumers away from the rival brand. Advertising has an important effect in reinforcing perceived performance and usage experience of a particular brand (Kirmani and Wright, 1989; Moorthy and Hawkins, 2005)

Advertising is a form of persuasive communication designed to form a positive attitude towards a particular product or change attitudes in a positive way by delivering persuasive messages (Brucks & Zeithmal, 2000)

Furthermore, since advertisements can transfer information and the image of the brand to many people in a short amount of time, many companies prefer to communicate through advertising (Tsai et al., 2013)

Many researchers acknowledge that a company's presented brand has a positive effect on brand equity building (Berry, 2000). Customer familiarity with the brand is promoted, which ultimately leads to higher brand awareness and more impressive brand meaning. Similarly, advertising efforts significantly contribute to brand equity in the tourism context (So & King, 2000; Xu & Chan, 2010)

### 2.5. Service Performance

Employees constitute the interface between a brand's internal and external environments and can have a powerful impact on consumers' perceptions of both the brand and the organization (Schneider and Bowen, 1985; Balmer and Wilkinson, 1991)

A brand's emotional values are communicated not just by advertising, but also through employees' interactions with different stakeholders. Employees represent a source of customer information and action needs to be taken to ensure this is compatible with the way senior management wishes the organization to be perceived (Kennedy, 1977).

Service performance creates holistic experiences between customers and the company that allow the differentiation of one brand from another. Customers who have had direct experiences with the service evaluate the brand mainly based on their perceived service performance, hence service performance disproportionately influences services brand building (Berry, 2000).

## 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to the study's literature review and research background, there are a few elements which may directly impact customer loyalty for a destination. Anderson and Fornell (1994) found that satisfaction is the most significant factor leading to customer loyalty. Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000) suggested that empirical researches have proposed service quality as one of the main antecedents of customer satisfaction which is also treated as a primary source of loyalty. On the other hand; Royle, Cooper & Stockdale (1991) suggest that when the company on the basis of its view of the market creates a brand and translates this brand into the brand image as perceived by customer, this strategy develops greater customer satisfaction furthermore greater brand loyalty. Furthermore, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) argue that the destination image affects tourist's subjective perception, consequent behavior, and destination choice. Destination image exercises a positive influence on perceived quality and satisfaction. A positive image deriving from positive travel experiences would result in a positive evaluation of a destination (Chi & Qu, 2008). Cretu and Brodie (2007) suggested that brand image may have an influence on customer loyalty. Previous studies have suggested that the post-consumption behavior of tourists can be influenced by the image they perceive of the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). If tourists hold high evaluations of a destination where they experience desirable emotions, find match in self-congruity, or obtain a good overall impression, it is likely that they will take the action of visiting or revisiting the place. Otherwise, there will be little or no visit or revisit intention (Zhang et.al, 2014). Tourists holding a positive destination image tend to demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction and perceived value, and then more likely to revisit the destination in the future and recommend it to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

By following the previous studies' guidelines and footsteps, an evaluation of customer's brand image and brand loyalty related to Kyrenia as a tourist destination is done in this study. The study has focused on brand image and factors which can impact brand image and consequently brand loyalty. The other factors which may impact brand image are advertising and destination service performance. The study questions have led us to the following hypotheses:

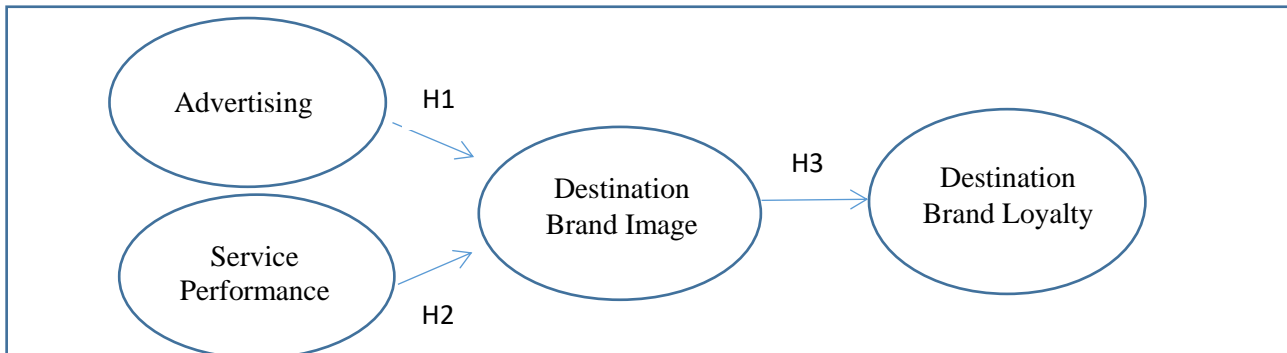
### 3.1. Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* The destination brand image is positively influenced by advertising factors in tourism sector of Kyrenia.

*Hypothesis 2:* The destination brand image is positively influenced by service performance factors in tourism sector of Kyrenia.

*Hypothesis 3:* The destination brand loyalty is positively influenced by the destination brand image of Kyrenia.

The study's model or framework is shown in the following figure:



## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Method of data collection

The quantitative data collection method and analysis was used in this study through using five-level Likert scale questionnaires distributed among foreign tourists visiting Kyrenia. The questioned asked meant to figure out tourists' perception of the destination's image, the tourists' loyalty to the destination, the service performance of the destination according to tourists, and the adequacy of advertising for Kyrenia as a tourist destination. There are four main topics which the related questions are grouped in: destination image, destination loyalty, service performance, and advertising.

#### Destination image

1. Does Kyrenia fulfill your needs as a destination?
2. Do you get the sense of being at the right destination?
3. The image of this destination is consistent with my own self-image
4. Did the real image of Kyrenia match to what you expected?

#### Destination brand loyalty:

1. Would you consider visiting Kyrenia again in the future?
2. Kyrenia is my preferred choice for a destination.
3. Do you advice others to visit Kyrenia, North Cyprus as a destination?

#### Destination service performance:

1. Do you think you are receiving proper services for the price you are paying?
2. Do you think that the natural environment of the surrounding area is clean relative
3. to the other destinations that you have previously visited?
4. To what extent do you rate the infrastructure facilities of the region relative to
5. other destination?
6. The service provided by the destination is in good order

**Advertising**

1. Do you think there are adequate advertising for Kyrenia as a destination?
2. Did you become aware of this destination through advertising?
3. There are many campaigns advertising for this destination.

The five level Likert scale questionnaires were arranged in the following order to determine the level of participants' agreement

To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	to a small extent	Not at all
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**4.2. Sample size and population**

The population of the study was the number of tourists visiting Kyrenia during Dec2107 till January2018. The sample size was 200 and the participants were chosen randomly among tourists visiting Kyrenia without considering their gender, age, or nationality.

**4.3. Limitation**

The only limitations regarding data collection was related with the language barriers. Since the questionnaires were prepared in English language and many participants were not fluent in English, an interpreter was occasionally used to ease the situation.

**4.4. Method of analysis**

The collected data was analyzed in the SPSS software version 23. The analysis tool used was multiple linear regression analysis to draw the correlations between the dependent and independent variables and test the null hypothesis. A 95% confidence interval of freedom for the sample mean was used. The reliability coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha for each correlation was calculated, and the range of achieved results indicated a high degree of reliability (advertising-brand image, 0.66; service performance-brand image, 0.768; brand image-brand loyalty, 0.796). The validity of the questionnaires was tested previously by Yang et al., (2015).

The multiple regression analysis tool in SPSS, has drawn two tables which this study used for data analysis, one is the correlations table and the other coefficients table. The correlations table shows the strength of the relationship between the two variables. The coefficient table shows the lower and upper bond B value for the 95% confidence interval; The B and Beta value; T value; and the P value or sig. which shows how two variables interact and if the association between the two variables is statistically significant.

**5. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected was analyzed is the SPSS software as was mentioned in chapter 4. The following tables show the results of the correlations' analyses used for testing the study's hypotheses.

**5.1. Brand Image-Advertising**

To test the Hypothesis 1: The destination brand image is positively influenced by advertising factors in tourism sector of Kyrenia; a multiple linear regression analysis was performed and the following results were drawn:

Table1. the descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
brand_image	2.4133	.88049	200
advertising	3.1475	1.12397	200



Table2. (Brand image - advertising) Correlations

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
brand_image	2.4133	.88049	200
Service_performance	2.6700	.82126	200

Table3. B, Beta, T value, P value, lower and upper bound intervals for B.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	1.831	.181		10.132	.000	1.475	2.188
	advertising	.185	.054	.236	3.417	.001	.078	.292

a. Dependent Variable: brand\_image

The tables above indicate that there is a positive relation between brand image and advertising, but the correlation is not very strong one due to the lower value of t and Beta, although the P value is still significant and in the 95% interval range.

### 5.2. Brand image-Service Performance

To test the hypothesis 2: The destination brand image is positively influenced by service performance factors in tourism sector; a multiple regression analysis has drawn the following tables which can indicate the strength of the correlations between the two variables. The following results were drawn:

Table4. The Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
brand_image	2.4133	.88049	200
Service_performance	2.6700	.82126	200

Table5. (Brand image - Service Performance) Correlations

		brand_image	Service_perfor mance
Pearson Correlation	brand_image	1.000	.527
	Service_performance	.527	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	brand_image	.	.000
	Service_performance	.000	.
N	brand_image	200	200
	Service_performance	200	200

Table6. B, Beta, T value, P value, lower and upper bound intervals for B.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.905	.181		5.003	.000	.548	1.261
	Service_performance	.565	.065	.527	8.726	.000	.437	.693

a. Dependent Variable: brand\_image

The tables above indicate that there is a positive relation between brand image and service performance, and the correlation is a very strong one due to the higher value of t and Beta, with the P value showing a significant value of 0.000 and in the 95% interval range we can conclude that

there a positive strong relationship between the two independent and dependent variable. The null hypothesis is accepted for stating a positive strong relation between brand image and service performance.

**5.3. Brand Image- Brand Loyalty**

To test the Hypothesis 3: The destination brand loyalty is positively influenced by the destination brand image; a multiple regression analysis has drawn the following tables which can indicate the strength of the correlations between the two variables. The following tables were drawn:

Table7. The descriptive Statistics

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
brand_loyalty	2.2175	.92505	200
brand_image	2.4133	.88049	200

Table8. (Brand Image – Brand Loyalty) correlations

**Correlations**

		brand_loyalty	brand_image
Pearson Correlation	brand_loyalty	1.000	.557
	brand_image	.557	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	brand_loyalty	.	.000
	brand_image	.000	.
N	brand_loyalty	200	200
	brand_image	200	200

Table9. B, Beta, T value, P value, lower and upper bound intervals for B.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.804	.159		5.051	.000	.490	1.118
	brand_image	.586	.062	.557	9.448	.000	.463	.708

a. Dependent Variable: brand\_loyalty

The tables above indicate that there is a positive relation between brand image and brand loyalty, and the correlation is a very strong one due to the higher value of t and Beta, with the P value showing a significant value of 0.000 and in the 95% interval range we can conclude that there a positive strong relationship between the two independent and dependent variable. The null hypothesis is accepted and the values obtained show a strong positive relation existing between the two variables.

**6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

High customer based brand loyalty which is related with attracting and retaining customers in the long run, has become the center of attention of many destinations nowadays. Offering high service quality, meeting customers’ expectation, and moreover exceeding their expectations are under the service providers’ focus. In order to evaluate a tourist destination’s brand loyalty attributes, this study has focused on the destination’s image, service performance and advertising. Service performance is one factor which impacts the tourists’ image perception while being present at the destination and experiencing the tourism products; while advertising may create an image of the destination prior to the tourists actually visiting and experiencing the destination’s facilities and products.

This study has determined that the Kyrenia’s tourist brand loyalty is highly related to the image perception of it in tourists. Therefore, the destination brand loyalty is highly related to the brand image. On the other hand among the two factors impacting the brand image of Kyrenia as a tourist

destination, service performance shows a high degree of correlation with the brand image; whereas advertising does not seem to be as highly related with the image of Kyrenia.

There is of course a positive relationship between the brand image and the advertising, but their relation is not as strong as the image and service performance.

In order to increase the destination's brand loyalty, Kyrenia needs to focus on its service performance and enhance the service quality offered to foreign tourists. Service performance includes whatever the tourists experience during their visit and stay. It could cover the pleasing and comfortable atmosphere or surrounding environment; the consistent high quality services received; the socio-cultural impression tourists perceive; and in general the impression the destination makes on the tourists.

## 7. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Improved human resource management strategies with better training programs, enhanced incentives and compensation packages to increase the employees' job satisfaction could make a big difference in improving service performance in general.

Paying more attention to the city cleanliness; restoring the historical sites; providing more interesting tourism products and being more innovative with tourists' activities besides what already exists; could be some alternative ways to improve the service performance of the destination and consequently the destination image.

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