Discovering the Relationships Between Perceived Emotional Value, City and Friend Attachment, School ID, WOM and Educational Satisfaction: A Structural Research for University Students

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Abstract

Rapid transformations in higher education in recent years have made deeper researches about student-university relationship mandatory. Regarding the subject, Anderson, Sullivan, and Swidler (1993) stated that students who are the consumers of universities will have very important benefits for higher education institutions in determining the factors related to education satisfaction. So, the aim of this research is designed to determine the relationships between university students' satisfaction with education, the emotional value they perceive, school identity, city attachment and positive WOM behavior. For the relevant purpose, 366 university students were reached online. The empirical data obtained were analyzed with a two-step approach (measurement and structural) in line with the basic methodological principles of SEM. Acceptance of all hypotheses created within the scope of the structural model proved empirical relationships between the related structures. The research has provided new perspectives to the ongoing discussions in the related literature by proving the direct or indirect effects of structures such as city attachment, emotional value, and school identity on university satisfaction. The results provided tips for professionals in the field to create educational satisfaction.

Keywords: city attachment, educational satisfaction, perceived emotional value, school ID

1. Introduction

In recent years the Turkish higher education system has been making various structural changes in order not to stay behind the current approaches as in the rest of the world. Quantitative increases in the number of students in the university and thus bring many questions about the quality of education. Especially, determining the different structures that affect the satisfaction levels of the education the students receive will provide important advantages in this regard. Regarding the issue, Anderson, Sullivan, and Swidler (1993) stated that perceived satisfaction with education can be much more useful than expected. In contrast, Wiese (1994) found that possible educational dissatisfaction will have high adverse effects for higher education institutions. Kasiri, Cheng, Sambasivan, and Sidin (2017) conceptualized consumer satisfaction as a consumer response to the ability of a product or service to meet a need. Many researches have been carried out in many different disciplines, especially marketing, in relation to consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction, which is one of the most important cases of modern marketing understanding, is expressed as one of the key variables in marketing activities to be developed (Singh, 1991). Quality is considered as one of the basic elements in the steps towards increasing the quality of education, especially started in higher education institutions. Allen, Bourhis, Burrell, and Mabry (2002) found that education satisfaction is an important predictor of perceived quality. Despite the fact that the steps taken towards the targets in the state-financed institutions are considered to be more cumbersome, Lin (1997) stated that especially universities should take effective measures in this regard. On the subject, Alves and Raposo (2007) stated that universities should establish positive relations with their students who are accepted as the target market. It is important to identify the structures that affect students' educational satisfaction. Therefore, it is very important for potential and current students to develop positive WOM behaviors.

Although there has been a lot of research on consumer satisfaction, especially in the marketing literature, it has been determined that there is not enough research in the literature for a number of different structures that affect student satisfaction in public higher education institutions. This research, which will be carried out to close this

deficit, will be a pioneer in terms of its results. Especially, determining the direct and indirect relationships with educational satisfaction of certain structures such as friend attachment, school ID, city attachment and perceived emotional value will be a pioneer for new researches that will be carried out while contributing to the discussions in the literature. For all these research purposes, this research was designed in three main stages. First, six different hypotheses have been developed in the context of the relevant theoretical framework in the context of ongoing research in the relevant literature. First, six different hypotheses have been developed in the context of the relevant theoretical framework in the context of ongoing research in the relevant literature. Data collected for research purposes were analyzed in line with the basic methodological principles of SEM (structural equation modeling). The results obtained in the last stage have been presented controversially in the context of the relevant literature and suggestions have been made for the field professionals.

1.1 Hypotheses Related to the Research Model

Hernández, Hidalgo, and Ruiz (2007) define city attachment in the literature as the bond that people establish in certain environments, where they tend to stay and feel comfortable. In their study, Casakin, Hernández, and Ruiz (2015) stated that city attachment shows significant differences in terms of education and age. They also underlined that city attachment develops emotional commitment. The concept of emotional commitment manifests itself especially in adulthood, which includes the last years of adolescence when social development continues. Developing adults, defined as university students stated that they often establish new friendship ties in their schools, jobs or cities (Arnett, 2001). Low and Altman (1992) explained the concept of place attachment with emotional experience regarding the concept of human bonds. Especially in universities where social capital is very high, one of the most important factors creating this attachment is friendship established (Casakin, Hernández, & Ruiz, 2015). Similar orientations, expectations, cultures in activities enable students with identities to establish friendship bonds within the university (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Friend attachment, which can be evaluated within the quality of the social capital produced in the cities, arises from the interaction produced in the university activities for students. Regarding the subject, Ma (2014) determined that friend attachment is a very important variable in university selection in a study conducted with international students. It shapes the choices of university students in cities with rich social capital in the context of different cultures. In line with this information, the first two hypotheses of this research are formed as follows.

H^1 *There is a positive relationship between city attachment and friend attachment.*

H^2 *There is a positive relationship between friend attachment and perceived emotional value.*

In the context of this research, identity was examined within the scope of the social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) to examine the differentiation between groups. Hogg and Vaughan (2002) stated that the individual with a social identity explains his/her identity with the membership of any social group. Based on this concept, Jiménez-Castillo, Sanchez-Fernandez, and Iniesta-Bonillo (2013) expressed their university ID as a sense of in-group belonging that students feel towards their universities. Individuals tend to favor the groups they define their own identity from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This interaction within or outside the group enables the individual to form an identity (Festinger, 1954). Initial studies of perceived value Zeithaml (1988) made a general definition of assessment of what is given in exchange for the perceived functional benefit from the product or service. This is related only to the functional value of the product. On the subject, Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) revealed that people perceive the product or service not only with their functional values but also with their social and emotional values. When analyzed in the context of the research, they defined emotional value as the ability of the product or service to evoke emotions. Social identity theorists argue that identification with social groups derives from the group that meets the important needs of members (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). In other words, members identify with the group because they can gain value from the group. Students who interact with the university and feel that their emotional needs are met will begin to identify themselves with the university. This situation will increase the emotional value that students perceive from the university and help students define themselves with their schools. In parallel with the statements the third hypothesis is formed.

H^3 *There is a positive relationship between perceived emotional value and school ID.*

On the basis of a theoretical basis in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), marketing researchers in particular studied the impact of identity among consumers on various goals (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). It is an active, selective and temporary action motivated by meeting the needs based on the central, distinctive and permanent characteristics of the identification and the object of identification (e.g. a brand) (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In addition, in many studies on identity and satisfaction in the context of different disciplines, significant relationships were identified between the two structures. Pérez, Cromley, and Kaplan (2014) stated that individuals are more likely to be satisfied with the products and services they receive from the

institutions they identify themselves with. In the context of the expectation disconfirmation theory, it has been reported that satisfaction levels are positively affected if individuals exceed their expectations from the institutions. Regarding the issue, He, Li, and Lai (2011) stated that if the institutional performance exceeds expectations, it will contribute positively to the satisfaction as it will provide significant assurance on the psychological commitment of individuals with institutions. In line with all this information, the fourth hypothesis of this research is as follows.

H^4 *There is a positive relationship between school ID and education satisfaction.*

Examining the relationships between identity and positive WOM behavior has developed in the context of brand identity in general, with a focus on marketing literature. On the subject, Brown, Barry, Dacin, and Gunst (2005) also found that consumer identity directly affects positive WOM intent and positive WOM behavior. Especially in the marketing literature, consumer identity has been found to be effective in creating positive WOM behavior through a number of different structures (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Brown et al., 2005). The coherence of the opinions of individuals with any organization, in other words, identifying the identity of individuals with an organization will cause them to develop positive WOM behavior related to that organization (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This provides evidence that university students' identification levels with their schools may have a positive effect on positive WOM behavior. In this context, the fifth hypothesis of this research is created as follows.

H^5 *School ID has a significant impact on positive WOM behavior.*

Many studies have been conducted in the literature that examine positive WOM behavior from different perspectives (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995). Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between satisfaction and positive WOM behavior, which is considered important especially in the field of marketing (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Maru-File, Cermak, & Prince, 1994; Söderlund, 1998; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2002). Walker (1995) found that, on the contrary, unsatisfied customers show negative WOM behavior. This provides evidence that there may be a relationship between university students' educational satisfaction and positive WOM behavior. Within this information, the sixth hypothesis of this research has been formed as follows.

H^6 *Education satisfaction has a significant effect on positive WOM behavior.*

2. Method

2.1 Data Collection and Sample

Within the scope of the research, 366 students from Sports Science Faculty of Eskişehir Technical University were reached through online Google forms. Online forms were sent to students via e-mail and detailed information about the research was given. In order to prevent one participant from responding more than once to a questionnaire, online forms had IP restrictions. It was observed that the sample created within the scope of the study was closely similar to the faculty student profile (gender, age, etc.). This information provides indications that the research sample is distributed similarly to the universe (Table 1.)

Table 1. Demographics of students

Sex	N	%	Living in Eskisehir	N	%
Male	196	53.5	*Yes*	103	28.1
Female	170	46.5	*No*	263	71.9
Age	N	%	Department	N	%
17 – 22	119	32.5	*Phy. Ed. and Sports Teaching*	54	14.8
23 – 24	192	52.4	*Sport Management*	138	37.7
25 and up	55	15.1	*Coach Training in Sports*	85	23.2
			Recreation and Sports	89	24.3

N=366.

2.2 Measuring Instruments

In order to determine the emotional value that students perceive from the university, the measuring instruments developed in the literature were examined and the perceived emotional value structure of the "PERVAL scale" developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) was used. The measuring instrument used by Wang (2010) and revealed that the measuring instrument had a sufficient level of validity and reliability, which is similar to the current study.

For the structure of friend attachment, the measuring instrument developed by Funk, Ridinger, and Moorman (2004) "Team Sport Involvement (TSI)" scale was used. Neale and Funk (2006) used the scale in another research by reaching a sufficient level of reliability. Unfortunately, no research has been found in the literature measuring the school ID structure. In this context, the measuring instruments related to place attachment, which were put forward in the literature in the social identity theory, were examined and the items used in the researches of Casakin, Hernández, and Ruiz, (2015) and Hernández, Hidalgo, Salazar-Leplace, and Hess (2007). In order to measure the city attachment structure, the items of Casakin, Hernández, and Ruiz (2015) and Belanche, Casalo, and Orus (2016) were used. Finally, in order to measure education satisfaction and WOM behavior structures, many measuring instruments developed in this sense in the literature have been examined and revised for the purposes of the research. Measurement of all structures within the scope of the research was prepared in a five-point Likert scale (5-Strongly Agree; 1-Strongly Disagree).

All of the stated measuring instruments have been published in English language. In the context of the research in which Turkish students are involved in the research, the measurement equivalence of the research expressions should be revealed. For this purpose, back-translation approach was applied. The items of the questionnaire were translated into Turkish by researchers, and then translated back to English to prevent possible language problems. This indicates that all the translated items in the original language can be regarded as representatives of the relevant items. It is suggested by Babbie (1998) to check the items in the questionnaire form for clarity and understandability, especially by a group in the sample of the research, to ensure control before starting the research. Thus, the questionnaire form prepared in this context was sent online to twenty people in the sample of the research and necessary arrangements were made in line with the feedback received.

2.3 Data Analysis

In the current research, SPSS and AMOS programs were used to analyze the data. Within the scope of the research, basic methodological principles of structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to identify causal relationships for multiple structures. In this context, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to the research data within the scope of the measurement model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In order to test the hypotheses, the structural model has been created and tested (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

3. Results

3.1 Measurement Model

CFA was applied to reveal the validity of the data obtained within the scope of the research. As a result of the analysis, it was observed that the fit indices were found to be above the threshold values expressed in the literature (Hair et al., 2010). (X^2=307.014, p=0.000, $X^{2/}$SD=1.838, GFI=0.90, AGFI=0.86, CFI=0.98, TLI=0.97, IFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.056). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values of all structures were calculated to determine the reliability levels of the research structures. As a result of the analysis, all values (Table 2) were found to be above the values expressed in the literature (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Nunnally, 1978). AVE (average variance extracted) was calculated to determine whether the structures were above the compliance values (0.5) expressed by Byrne (1998). In this context, AVE values of all structures were calculated and all were found to be between .71 and .89.

Table 2. Structures related to measurement model and items about structures

Structures	Factor Loading
Perceived emotional value (CR: .93), (Cronbach's alpha: .94), (AVE: .87)	
I enjoy being in this school	.93
Being in this school makes me feel comfortable	.92
Being in this school makes me feel good	.96
Being in this school gives me pleasure	.93
School ID (CR: .93), (Cronbach's alpha: .94), (AVE: .80)	
I feel identified with this school	.88
This school is a part of my identity	.87
I feel belonged to this school	.92
This school helps me express myself	.91
Friend attachment (CR: .91), (Cronbach's alpha: .92), (AVE: .78)	
School gives me a chance to spend time with my friends	.86
I enjoy time with my friends at school	.94

One of the reasons for going to school is having good time with my friends	.86
Educational satisfaction (CR: .96), (Cronbach's alpha: .95), (AVE: .84)	
I am satisfied with the education I have in this school	.93
The education I received at this school is useful	.94
The education I got from this school contributed to my educational development	.92
I received a quality education in this school	.88
WOM (CR: ,94), (Cronbach's alpha: .95), (AVE: .89)	
I will recommend this school to people around me	.92
I tell people positive things about this school	.94
City attachment (CR: .90), (Cronbach's alpha: .91), (AVE: .71)	
I love living in this city	.81
I feel like I'm attached to this city	.73
I feel sorry if I need to move to another city	.91
I miss this city when I'm somewhere else	.88

CR: Composite Reliability, AVE: Average Variance Extracted.

Breckenridge (1989) stated that in order to ensure external validity within the scope of measurement models, the correlation coefficients of all structures in the model should not be statistically significant but above .85. In this context, it has been determined that all the structures evaluated within the scope of the research have significant relationships with each other and no coefficient is over .85 (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation matrix of structures

	1	2	3	4	5	6
School ID	1.000					
Friend attachment	.626**	1.000				
Educational satisfaction	.732**	.518*	1.000			
WOM	.752**	.527**	.807**	1.000		
City attachment	.406**	.194**	.268**	.357**	1.000	
Perceived emotional value	.888**	.671**	.720**	.778**	.398**	1.000
Mean	3.55	3.88	3.77	3.91	4.17	3.88
SD	1.19	1.13	1.07	1.17	.99	1.13

**p<0.01.

3.2 Structural Model

The structural model created in the context of the research hypotheses has been demonstrated in the context of fit index values, which are the result of the analysis performed in accordance with the empirical data. (X^2=395.481, p=0.000, X^2/SD=2.197, GFI=0.876, AGFI=0.841, CFI=0.969, TLI=0.964, IFI=0.969, RMSEA=0.067).
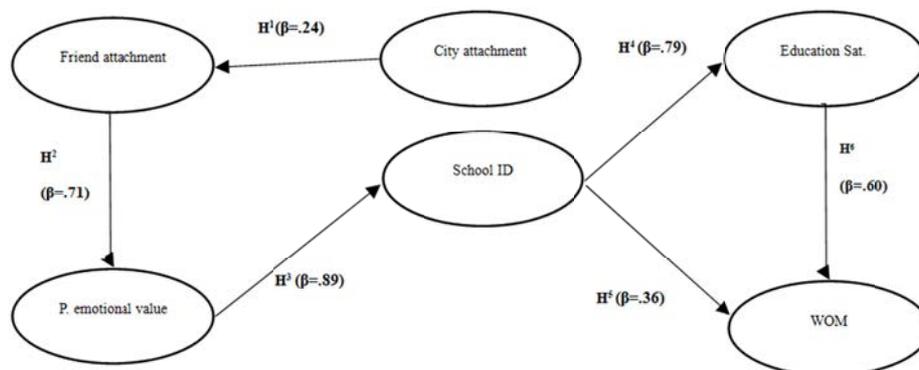

Figure 1. Structural model

Hypotheses formed in the context of the research model have been tested within the scope of SEM. As a result of the analyses, all hypotheses were accepted (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of path analysis

Analysis	Coefficient	T-value	Result
H[1] Friend attachment <--- City attachment	.24	3.60	Accepted**
H[2] P. emotional value <--- Friend attachment	.71	12.75	Accepted **
H[3] School ID <--- P. emotional value	.89	19.78	Accepted **
H[4] Educational satisfaction <--- School ID	.79	15.02	Accepted **
H[5] WOM<--- School ID	.36	6.81	Accepted **
H[6] Behavioral loyalty <--- Place attachment	.60	10.44	Accepted **

As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that city attachment has a significant effect (β=.24; p<0.01) on friend loyalty. In this context, the H1 hypothesis was accepted. While friend attachment structure is an important predictor of emotional value (β=.71; p<0.01), it was determined that perceived emotional value has a high positive significant effect on school ID (β=.89; p<0.01). Thus, H[2] and H[3] hypotheses were accepted. Also, it was revealed that school ID is an important predictor of education satisfaction (β=.79; p<0.01) and positive WOM (β=.36; p<0.01). In this context, H[4] and H[5] hypotheses are accepted. Finally, it was determined that the education satisfaction structure had a positive effect on positive WOM behavior (β=.60; p<0.01) and the H[6] hypothesis was accepted.

4. Discussion

From a theoretical point of view, this article presented different perspectives on the discussions about educational satisfaction in the literature. In particular, the discovery of empirical relationships between education satisfaction and city attachment, friend attachment, school ID, perceived emotional value and positive WOM behavior. Although Casakin, Hernández, and Ruiz (2015) states that city attachment can improve emotional attachment, direct relationships between friend attachment, city attachment and perceived emotional value have not been adequately discussed even in the context of different disciplines. Empirical proof of direct relationships expressed in the current research will create a theoretical background for new researches to be carried out in the context of different disciplines in the literature. In this context, it can be stated that the educational satisfaction of university students who tend to establish social and emotional bonds especially to their developmental periods is not only related with the functional feature of the product. The support of universities to public services to increase social capital in the city may be important in the context of indirectly creating university identity and educational satisfaction. Besides, interaction-based activities will be important in the development of friend attachment, which is also the predictor of school identity and education satisfaction. In the literature, studies on the study of the behavior of social groups are based on the theory of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Self-confidence based behaviors of belonging to a group lead the individual to define himself/herself in the context of the group (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). In the social sciences literature, it has been determined that the identity structure constitutes a central structure, which is the predictor of many different behaviors (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Abrams & Hogg, 1988). In this study, it was determined that the school ID levels of university students are an important predictor of perceived emotional value, education satisfaction and positive WOM behavior. Especially, determining the perceived emotional value as an important predictor of school ID (β=.89; p<0.01) is a serious result that needs to be examined in more detail in the context of the literature. The perceived value expresses much more than the functional benefit that the consumer pays in return for what he/she pays (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). In this sense, it can be stated that only the functional improvement of the education perceived by university students will not be sufficient enough. Especially performing activities that will create social and emotional benefits will provide important advantages to higher education institutions.

Many researches in the social sciences, especially in the marketing literature, have been conducted in a number of studies that reveal the relationships between identity, positive WOM behavior and satisfaction (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Brown, Barry, & Gunst, 2005; Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995). It is likely to differ from higher education satisfaction results with perceived satisfaction from other sectors. Non-profit discriminating features of government services can be expressed as the main cause of this situation. Therefore, it is important to empirically prove factors affecting education satisfaction in higher education. The results revealed within the scope of the research showed an empirical parallelism to the relevant literature in the context of higher education institutions. The positive WOM behavior demonstrated by satisfied students will significantly affect the direction of the

behavior of potential students by current students. Especially activities that increase university ID should be designed. At this point, it will be very important to carry out studies on students' attachment to the university.

5. Limitations and Future Studies

Although this research is important in terms of its results, it has several limitations in the nature of all scientific research. The results obtained from the research are only for Eskisehir Technical University students. In this context, generalizable results can be obtained from new researches that will be developed in the context of different sample groups. In the context of the research, quantitative research methodologies were used. More detailed results can be obtained from new researches to be carried out especially by using qualitative research methodologies. In addition, in the light of the literature current relationships from different models with new structures can be identified.

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