

**TC
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**



**EFFECTS OF BRAND CHARACTERISTICS ON CONSUMERS'
WILLINGNESS TO PAY (WTP) A PRICE PREMIUM: AN
ANALYSIS IN AUDIT AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES**

THESIS

Marwan Mohammed Abdullah Ghaleb

**Department of Business
Business Administration Program**

Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Burçin KAPLAN

March, 2019

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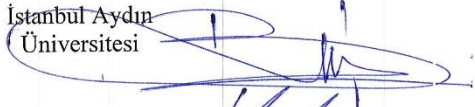


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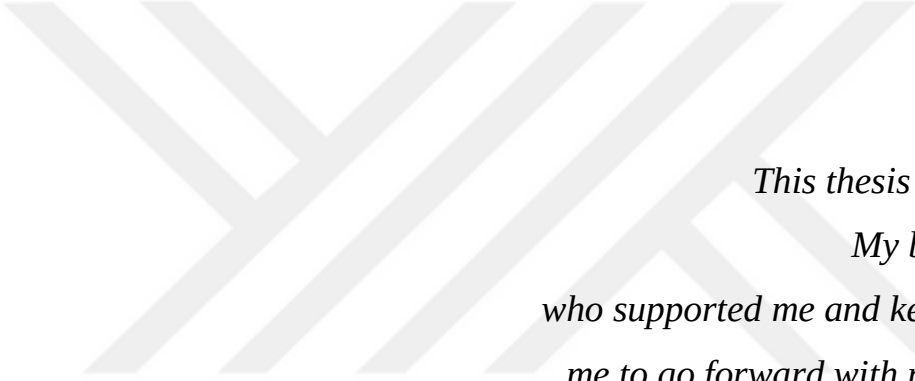
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*This thesis is dedicated to:
My beloved Parents
who supported me and kept encouraging
me to go forward with my master study*



FORWARD

When everything around suddenly changed, you find yourself having difficulties in adopting in the new situation, but now I realized that such changes were for the better, so thank you God for changing my path and plans and helping me assigning new targets in my life.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	: Analysis of a Moment Structures
AVE	: Average Variance Extracted
B2B	: Business to Business
BC	: Brand Competency
BCr	: Brand Credibility
BF	: Brand Familiarity
BMS	: Branding Management System
BP	: Brand Predictability
BR	: Brand Repetition
CBI	: Consistency of Brand Image
CFA	: Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	: Comparative Fit Index
CMIN/DF	: Chi-Square Mean / Degree of Freedom
CR	: Composite Reliability
DTT	: Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu
EY	: Ernst & Young
FSs	: Financial Statements
MSV	: Maximum Shared Variance
PcI	: Product Category Involvement
PCLOSE	: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation associated P-value
PoD	: Points of Deference
PU	: Perceived Uniqueness
P-value	: Probability value
PwC	: Price waterhouse Coopers
RMSEA	: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	: Structural Equation Modeling
SMC	: Squared Multiple Correlations
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
VIF	: Variance Inflation Factor
WOM	: Word Of Mouth
WTP	: Willing To Pay
Z-score	: Standard score



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TÜKETİCİLERİN DAHA YÜKSEK FİYAT ÖDEMEYE İSTEKLİ OLMALARINDA MARKA ÖZELLİKLERİNİN ETKİLERİ: DENETİM VE MUHASEBE HİZMETLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Marka, pazarlamada son derece önemli bir katma değer faktörüdür. Marka, kuruluşların bakış açısına göre kârlılık artırıcı ve tüketicileri daha yüksek bir miktar ödemeye istekli hale getirecek bir unsur olarak görülmektedir. Tüketici bireyler için uygulanan marka stratejileri aynı şekilde şirketlere de uygulanabilir mi? Bu araştırma, marka özelliklerinin (Marka itibarı, Marka Öngörülebilirliği ve Marka Yetkinliği alt boyutları ile), gelişmekte olan piyasalarda denetim ve muhasebe hizmetleri için daha yüksek bir fiyat ödemeye yönelik tüketici istekliliği üzerindeki doğrudan etkisini incelerken; diğer taraftan Marka Güvenilirliği ve Algılanan Özgünlük boyutlarının dolaylı etkilerini araştırarak sorunun cevabını bulmaya çalışmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında, incelenen şirketlerin markalı (4 Büyük Denetim şirket) ve markasız denetim ve muhasebe hizmetlerine yönelik tutumları iki gelişmekte olan ülke –Türkiye’de ve Yemen’de (Dünya Bankası değerlendirmesi 2018 – 2019)- karşılaştırılmaktadır. Burada seçilen ülkeler; Yemen’de savaş dolayısıyla düzensiz ve istikrarsız yapı örneği olarak seçilirken; karşılaştırma yapılan diğer ülke konumunda Türkiye ise gelişmekte olan istikrarlı ülke profili örneği olarak alınmıştır.

Her iki ülke mevcut koşulları altında incelenmiş olup; son iki yılda denetim hizmeti almış 200 Yemen ve 200 Türk şirketten toplanan veriler incelenmiş ve veriler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi ile analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre; Yemen ve Türkiye gibi gelişmekte olan pazarlarda faaliyet gösteren şirketler, markalara karşı farklı tutumlar sergilemektedirler. Marka özelliklerinden marka güvenilirliğinin daha yüksek bir miktar ödemede direkt veya dolaylı bir etkisi görülmemiştir; ama marka yetkinliği Türkiye’de doğrudan etkili iken; ve marka güvenilirliğinin Yemen’de fiyat güvenilirliği ile tüketici daha yüksek bir miktar ödemede arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiği görülmüştür. Diğer taraftan istikrarlı bir ülke örneği olan Türkiye’de faaliyet gösteren şirketlerin denetim firması

seimlerinde algılanan özgünlük boyutunun aracı etkisi olduđu görölmüştür. Algılanan özgünlük, burada marka özellikleri (Marka Öngörülebilirliği ve Marka Yeterliliği alt boyutları) arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık eder ve Türkiye'de denetim ve muhasebe hizmetleri için daha yüksek bir fiyat ödeme konusunda bir role sahiptir, Bu ilişki, Yemen'deki algılanan özgünlük ve tüketicinin daha yüksek bir fiyat ödeme istekliliği arasında dengesiz bir ülke durumunda faaliyet gösteren şirketler için kısmen mevcuttur. Bu rol ilişkiyi güçlendirdiği için ürün kategorisinin katılımı ile yönetilir. Bu ilişki, dönemsel olarak düzensiz ve istikrarsız yapı örneği olarak alınan Yemen'de faaliyet gösteren şirketler için geçerli değildir.

Bu araştırma, diğer pek çok sektör için geçerli olan marka özellikleri-daha yüksek fiyat ödeme ilişkisinin, karşılaştırma yapılan ülkelerde denetim ve muhasebe endüstrisi için geçerli olmadığı sonucuna varılmasını sağlamıştır. Çalışma, marka yönetimi, fiyatlandırma stratejisi ve denetim şirketlerinin yönetimi alanlarına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Araştırma gelişmekte olan piyasalardaki, düzenli ve istikrarlı ve düzensiz ve istikrarsız yapı örneği ülke durumundaki denetim şirketlerinin yönetim pratiği için farklı bakış açıları hakkında fikir vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Marka Özellikleri, Daha Yüksek Fiyat Ödeme İstekliliği, Denetim Şirketleri*

EFFECTS OF BRAND CHARACTERISTICS ON CONSUMERS' WILLINGNESS TO PAY (WTP) A PRICE PREMIUM: AN ANALYSIS IN AUDIT AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES

ABSTRACT

Brand is considered as an adding value factor in the consumer market. It is considered as a profitability enhancing factor from the organizations' points of view and an element that will make consumers willing to pay a price premium. What is applicable for consumer individuals is it applicable on consumer companies? This research is working on finding an answer for such question by studying the direct effect of Brand Characteristics (including Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand competency) on consumer WTP a price premium for audit and accounting services in emerging markets and their indirect effects through Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness. It compares the companies' attitude toward branded (Big 4) and non-branded audit and accounting services in an unstable country situation in Yemen and a better stable one in Turkey according to the world bank evaluation 2018 - 2019. The data was collected from 400 company in Yemen in Turkey, that were audited in the last two years, and the structural equation modeling analysis lead to conclude that: Companies operating in emerging markets, such as Yemen and Turkey, has different attitude toward brands as generally there is no direct effects or indirect effects mediated by Brand Credibility of Brand characteristics to the consumer WTP a price premium for audit and accounting services except that Brand Competency has that direct effect in Turkey and Brand Credibility mediates the relation between Brand Credibility and consumer WTP a price premium in Yemen. However, Companies operating in a better country situation has a positive attitude toward the audit firm Perceived Uniqueness as it mediates the relation between Brand Characteristics (including Brand Predictability and Brand competency) and consumer WTP a price premium for audit and accounting services in Turkey. This role is moderated by the product category involvement as it strengthens that relation. This relation is

partially available for companies operating in an unstable country situation in Yemen between perceived uniqueness and consumer WTP a price premium. This research leads to conclude that what is applicable for other industries is not applicable for auditing and accounting industry. It contributes to the field of brand management, pricing strategy and, audit firms' management. It presents insight from a different point of view for audit firms' managerial practice in emerging markets and unstable country situation.

Key Words: *Brand Characteristics, Consumer (WTP) a price premium, Audit firms*



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

An organization is defined as: “a group of individuals with a common set of goals and objectives, who comes together to achieve them”, organization can be divided in to two types: the first one is business organizations that sell goods, products or provide services for profits, and the second one is the non-business or non- profit organizations that are established to meet various social needs and does not have profitable goals. (Dauderis & Annand, 2014, p. 2).

Each and every organization or commercial project must have financial transactions, that translate the daily work into numbers language, these transactions must be recorded in an accounting system according to the company’s accounting and documenting process.

Accounting is defined as: “a set of procedure that identifies, measures, records and communicates financial information to several users, such as management of the company, stockholders, creditors, financial analysts, and government agencies” (Porter & Norton, 2011, p. 11), from this definition it is concluded that accounting provide financial information to its users as such information helps them to make decisions.

Accounting information users are Internal users who are working for the organization and have responsibilities of the entity operations, organization, decision making, and future plans, and such as general management, upper-level management or shareholders. External users such as investors, creditors, government, or customers, these users do not work for the organization. (Dauderis & Annand, 2014, p. 2). This can lead us to a short definition of accounting which is “Providing information about business organizations to interested parties” (Association of Accounting Technicians; Willis, David , 2011, p. 5).

Collective accounting steps starting from identifying the accounting event going through the analyzing and recording till the financial information is presented in the financial reports can be called as the: Accounting cycle, which follows each and every event till all the results of these events are shown in the company's financial statement.

Financial statements (FSs) includes:

- Statement of financial position, which shows what the organization own and what it owes for others at the date of the report.
- Statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income, which shows the organization's revenue and expenses and the profit of the period that is covered by the report, (usually one year).
- Statement of equity, which shows the movement of capital, retained earnings and partners or owner current accounts.
- Statement of cash flow, which shows the movement of liquid cash and how it was spent between operation, investing and financing activities.

These reports are the main input for any decision-making process done by any financial information user whether he is an internal or an external user but are these reports reliable and accurate enough for decision making, here come the job of audit firms and audit industry.

Financial statements must be audited and reviewed by an independent third party, in order to become more reliable and trustworthy.

Auditing of financial statements is defined as: “a systematic procedure that obtains and evaluates in an objective way the evidence related to assertions about financial actions and events to determine the degree of correspondence between those assertions and audit criteria established and planned, then communicates the results to the interested parties” (Soltani, 2007, p. 4).

The main goal of auditing is giving an opinion that the financial statements are fairly stated and no sign of fraud and errors are there according to the sample selection of the accounting transactions of the company related to the financial year under audit. (Ajao, et al., 2016, p. 033).

This opinion must be documented in an audit report which communicates the audit findings, results, and recommendations to the users of accounting information, the audit report concludes that the Financial statements are fairly stated or not. This report must communicate the correspondence degree between the audited information and the audit criteria established to its readers. (Arens, et al., 2012, p. 5).

In addition to the above definition and goal of audit: The auditor main objective when conducting an audit to a financial statements is: “to obtain reasonable assurance whether they are free from material misstatements, either due to fraud or due to error, this will enable the auditor to express an opinion whether the financial statements are fairly presented or not”, and to present and communicate a report on the financial statements expressing his opening, audit results and findings to the financial information users. (Lessambo, 2018, p. 7)

Like any other information, structure audit has three steps of operations input, process and output, the input is represented by the planning level, the process is represented by the testing level and finally, the output is represented by the reporting level.

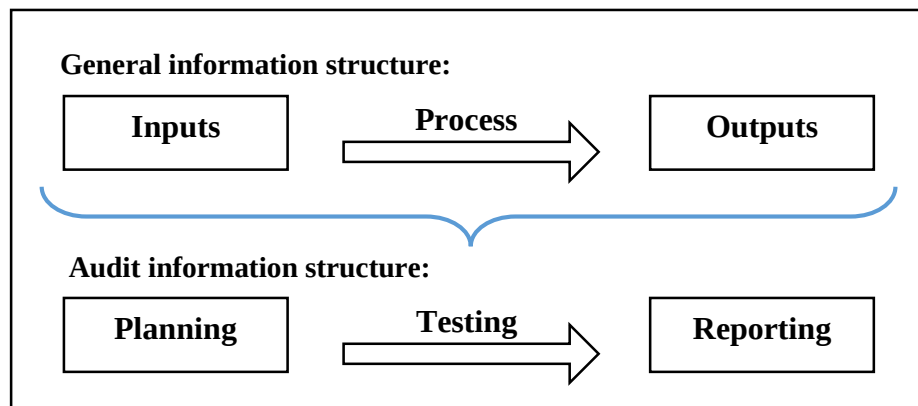


Figure 1.1: Audit information structure

First step of auditing is Planning: the main goal of this step is to make sure to develop an appropriate to the important areas, to identify the potential problems and to establish the audit criteria, this is done by taking into consideration the organization size and nature of work and nature of its industry, how strength its internal controls, and the auditor previous experience with the organization and industry.

Second step of auditing is Substantive Testing: According to the audit plan and the audit criteria identified in this step an examination of the financial statements including the related supporting documentation will be done by the auditor to check if they include errors according to the sample size calculated, these tests are considered as an evidences to support the opinion of the auditor on the financial statements, also give a conclusion that the financial transaction of the organization is completed, valid and accurate.

Third and final step of auditing is Reporting: In this step the final result of the work is documented in the audit report which is presented to the financial information users whether they are internal or external users, the report includes the final opinion if the financial statements are fairly stated or not, also auditor observations and recommendations are presented in this step, these reports can be considered as the final products of an audit firm.

In order for the audit reports to be valuable audit must be done by an independent audit firm (third party) that is fully independent from the organization under audit or the owners of this organization. “Auditing must be done by someone who is experienced enough and independent” (Arens, et al., 2012, p. 4). The more experience, good reputation, strong branded or international branded the auditor, the more reliable and credible the audit report and financial statements will be.

Getting audited by a well-known audit firm will provide the organization more credibility and reliability, from marketing and branding point of view this can come under the Leveraging with a secondary brand which is defined as: “Connecting the brand to some other entity in order to: establish a new set of associations from the entity to the brand which will affect the existing brand associations” (Keller, 2013, p. 261).

Leveraging with a secondary brand main target is “to create a brand equity by connecting the brand to other information in the consumers memory that expresses a meaning to them” (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 334), this will help to take advantage of the secondary brand associations that are already in the consumer mind and link them with our brand to find a place for our brand in the consumer mind.

The secondary brand is called a Master Brand which is “a dominant established brand in customers' minds that holds some particular associations.” (Farquhar, et al., 1992, p. 32),

mentioning a related product, product category, product attribute or related benefits will directly bring a master brand to mind, so linking our brand to a master brand will allow us to borrow the advantages of that brand and support our brand associations in the consumers' minds.

To have a successful leveraging, "the master brand awareness, meaning and ability to transfer knowledge are important to predict the leverage extent which can be created" (UGGLA, 2004, p. 107). So it is important to select a master brand that consumers have some or even a great amount of similar associations.

According to (Keller, 2013, p. 260) leveraging a brand can be done in several ways such as:

- Linking a brand to a company or a corporate or family brand.
- Linking a brand to a country of origin or geographic location.
- Combining a brand with another brand under a co-branding strategy.
- Taking permission to use strong brand names, logos, and characters under a licensing contract.
- Connecting the brand to several sources third-parties.

One way of connecting the brand or the organization with a third-party source is getting audited by a well-known branded international audit firm, as a well-known name in the financial industry is always linked with credibility, accuracy, honesty, and trust, this what shapes the image of the audit firm and give an advantage to any organization that use an audit services presented by a well-known audit brand, as this will lead to share the credibility, accuracy, honesty values of the audit firm with the organization and give trust to its financial statements and numbers in front of the financial statements and financial information users.

Generally, a Brand is defined as: "a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, or a design, or a combination of them, created to identify the goods and services of a single seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from the other competitions goods or services" (Keller, 2013, p. 30). Reflecting this definition on the audit industry will lead us to understand that each audit firm has its own combination of brand elements that create its own brand

personality and differentiate it from other audit firms and create an amount of awareness and reputation for the audit firm in the market.

Brand Awareness: “represents the brand node strength or trace in the memory, which can be measured as the consumer’s identifying ability of the brand under different conditions” (Keller, 2013, p. 72), this does not necessarily mean that the brand is preferred, a high value attached to, or any superior attributes are associated with the brand by the consumer, it just means that they recognize the brand and they can identify it under any condition, or “to what level the brand identity serve its function?” (Keller, 1993, p. 3), so awareness of an audit brand name is related to the probability that a branded audit name coming to mind when an organization needs audit services and how easy that will happen.

Working side by side with brand awareness is Brand Image which is “the brand perception according to its reflection done by the brand associations available in the consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p. 3), on the other hand brand associations which considered as “the heart and soul of the brand” (Till, et al., 2011, p. 92) are defined as “anything connected in memory to a brand which creates meaning for a consumer” (Till, et al., 2011, p. 93), also they are “the other informational nodes connected to the brand node in memory that include the brand meaning for a consumer” (Keller, 1993, p. 3), so a branded audit firm has a strong and favorable brand associations as a branded audit firm will satisfy the needs of an organization in respect to quality of work, accurate results and good leveraging, which give the audit firm a competitive advantage in the market and maintain a good image in the organization memory.

The below figure represents the possible brand associations for an audit firm according to (Deloitte , 2016, pp. 3-4) one of the worldwide big 4 audit firms and summaries the relation between them, brand awareness and brand image and between the organization leveraging target.

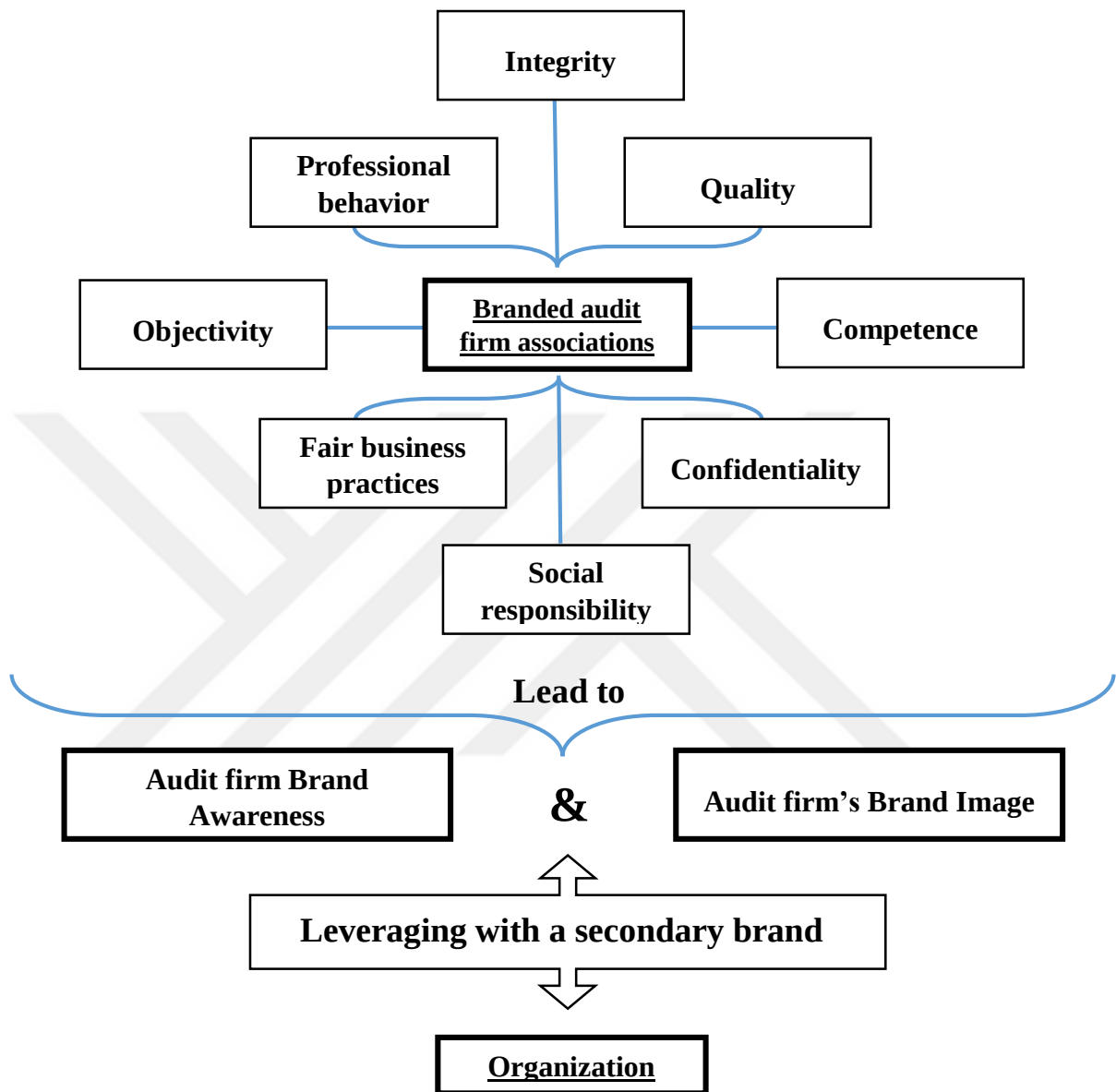


Figure 1.2: Relation between brand associations, brand awareness, and brand image and leveraging.

1.2. Problem Statement

“An aura of excellence and a set of obligations are given to a brand when it is marketed around the world” (Holt, et al., 2004, p. 1), a worldwide brand is considered as a sign of quality, responsibility and trustworthy, according to (Holt, et al., 2004, p. 5) 44% of variation in brand preferences worldwide is based on quality. As explained previously

dealing with an international brand will add value to the organization and give it a leveraging advantage and one way doing that is getting audited by a worldwide international branded audit firm.

The stronger worldwide brand (name) of the audit firm, the better the leveraging effects, for example: there are the big 4 audit firms: Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and EY, which are international strong brands in the audit industry, however as a result of such strong international brand name: the company have to pay a high amount of audit fees, the more the benefits from the brand the more fee will be paid, which may be less if the company get the audit service from a local or unknown audit firm.



Figure 1.3: Big 4 branded audit firms

Source: Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and EY websites.

Previous literature shows that there is a relation between the branded audit firm and the amount of audit fee it asks for, as the stronger and worldwide the brand name is the higher fee the audit firm will ask. For example, in Malaysia “Big 5 (branded Name) audit firms earn audit fee premiums of about 9.4 per cent over the non-Big 5 ones” (Rahmat & Iskandar, 2004, p. 20), this research also indicated that industry specialization firms does not generate audit fee premiums as same as branded industry specialization firms, another research done in Australia concluded that “that the audit fees of Big 8 (branded Name) auditors in Australasia includes a premium related to general brand name and industry specialization” (Craswell, et al., 1995, p. 319), a third research done in Taiwan linked the strong audit branded name with the quality of work and audit investigations as it concludes that “Big 5 (Branded Names) auditors are linked to (fewer earnings for management) concept in Taiwan, as having an industry specialist auditors leads to fewer income earnings for management” (Chen, et al., 2006, p. 1).

This will lead us to conclude that any organization wants to be served by an international branded audit firm must pay more audit fee or price premium, but if most of the organizations want to have an international branded audit firm to audit their financial

statements, are they willing to pay a high audit fee or a high price premium for taking the leveraging advantage of that international brand name?

Generally, “when, a high-quality products seller, can charge a higher price than the minimum average price of any similar high-quality product, the variance between such high price and a competitive price is called a price premium” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 101), this research discusses the consumer willing to pay (WTP) a price premium. WTP can be explained as the maximum amount that a consumer is willing to pay or spend to buy a product or service.

According to (Dwivedi, et al., 2018), willing to pay such high price is not a cause of strong brand name only as there are some other factors that affect the Consumer Willing to Pay (WTP) such as Brand credibility and Perceived uniqueness professional audit firm must work on these factors in order to have a competing advantage and gain the trust of the companies and make them its regular clients.

The above factors could be a result of Brand Characteristics as it plays a main role in determining whether the consumer will observe the brand uniqueness and consider its credibility or not, also Brand Characteristics has main role in shaping the brand associations in the consumer mind.

In Yemen most of the organizations, commercial organizations or not for profit organizations are looking for audit services for deferent purposes, such as board of directors annual financial statements approval, tax filing, putting the company shares for public investment, bank loans, or getting fund from international fund organizations (for not for profit organizations and public service), getting their financial statements audited by international branded audit firm, however due to the unstable country situation due to war and related crises of Yemen in 2018-2019 and the fact that it's a country under development (The World Bank, 2018) it is not easy to pay high audit fees, this research is investigating the willingness of Yemeni organizations to pay more audit fee or price premium for an international branded audit services and comparing it with the Turkish organizations which are considered as according to the world bank evaluation Turkey is considered as an emerging market and has a better situation in 2018-2019 than Yemen (The world Bank, 2019).

1.3. Purpose and Objective

The primary purpose of this research is to determine if there is a direct effects of Brand Characteristics on Consumers' Willingness to Pay (WTP) a Price Premium, or not, and to find out if there is an indirect effect of the Brand Characteristics on the Consumers' Willingness to Pay (WTP) a Price Premium with the mediating roles of Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness.

This research has an objective to be implemented in audit and accounting industry to determine if the organizations are Willing to Pay a Price Premium for a Branded audit firms services or not in Yemen and comparing that with Turkey.

1.4. Research Questions

- Is there a direct effect of Brand Characteristics on consumers' WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services?
- Does Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness play a mediating role between Brand characteristics and WTP a Price premium?
- Is there an indirect effect of Brand characteristics on consumers' WTP a Price premium with the mediating roles of Brand credibility and Perceived uniqueness, for audit and accounting services?

1.5. Significant and Implications of Research

Audit and accounting services are important for each and every organization as it gives credibility to its financial statements form an independent third party. This research presented the concept of branding throw brand characteristics and discuss it from the point of audit and accounting firms and the added value to the audit firm of having an international brand, and its effects on the organizations that use the services of such branded audit firms.

Most of the relevant empirical literature related to the Brand studies have discussed the effect of brand variables such as Brand Characteristics, Brand Experience, Brand Trust or Brand Loyalty on consumer behavior in consumption industries such as food, automobiles or hotels and hospitality, on the other hand some empirical literature related to the Audit

studies has partly discussed the effect of a strong brand name on the audit fee taking the research from the audit firm side.

This research will combine the two fields, the Brand filed and the Audit filed by studying the effect of some brand variables on consumer behavior in a specialized service industry which is Auditing and Accounting industry, the research will concentrate on the effect of Brand variables from the consumer side.

This will add value to the Brand research filed as the research is implemented in a different industry and will add value to the Audit research filed as the research is fully discussing the effect of Brand variables from the consumer side.

Furthermore, this research may be the first research to be implemented in Yemen, as Yemen is a country under development and in need for such research to add value and help in developing the Marketing and Brand knowledge and also will help the audit firms' management to understand the consumer behavior more and more.

This research will also be implemented in the Turkish market in order to compare the results between an underdevelopment country and a developed one and take the advantages of the Turkish experience in the Branding industry and try to benefit from in Yemen.

Table 1 presents a summary of some relevant literature as an example of the impact of some Brand variables on consumer behavior and impact of a brand name on audit firms, taking in consideration bought fields the Brand filed and the Audit filed.

1.6. Limitations of this research

- This research is limited to the Yemeni and the Turkish market only in 2018-2019.
- This research is limited to the audit and accounting industry only.
- The Brand Characteristics discussed in this research are only Brand Reputation, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency.
- This research assesses the direct and indirect effect of brand characteristics on consumer (WTP) Willingness to Pay a Price Premium for branded audit and accounting services.
- Indirect effect of Brand Characteristics in this research is taking in consideration the mediating role of Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness only.

Table 1.1: Summary of impact of some Brand Variables: Relevant researches.

Study:	Input variables:	Output variables:	Context:	Key findings:
A. Dwivedi, T. Nayeem & F. Murshed (2018)	Brand Experience	Consumers' WTP a price premium	New automobile	Brand experience has an influence on consumers' WTP a price premium this effect is to some extent is mediated by brand credibility and perceived uniqueness.
J. Anselmsson, N. V. Bondesson & U. Johansson (2013)	Price premium determinants	Price premium	Food brands	Social image, uniqueness, home country origin, and quality are the strongest determinants of a price premium, in addition to some other significant determinants which are corporate social responsibility (CSR) and awareness.
G. T. Lau, S. H. Lee (1999)	Brand Characteristics	Brand Loyalty	Consumers goods.	Brand characteristics influence Brand Trust which is a significant and main factor of Brand Loyalty development.
J. Kang, A. Manthiou, N. Sumarjan & L. Tang (2017)	Brand Experience	Brand Trust	Hotel & Hospitality.	The relationship between brand experience and brand knowledge, brand attachment, brand trust is Significant and positive relationship.
M. M. Rahmat & T. M Iskandar (2004)	Brand Name	Audit fee	Audit	Big 5 (Branded Names) audit firms earn higher audit fees than non-Big 5 (Branded Names), and industry specialization firms do not generate audit fee premiums as same as branded industry specialization firms.
A. T. Craswell, J. R. Francis (1995)	Specialized Brand Name	Audit fee	Audit	Industry expertise is a dimension of the demand for a higher quality Big 8 (Branded Names) audits and a basis for product differentiation within Big 8 (Branded Names).
K. Y. Chen, S. Wu & J. Zhou (2006)	Brand Name	Earning management.	Audit	Big 5 (Branded Names) auditors are related to the less earnings management concept in Taiwan, industry specialist auditors are related to less income earnings for companies management.
The current research	Brand Characteristics	Consumers' WTP a price premium	Audit	Brand Characteristics may have an influence on consumers' WTP a price premium and the effect may be mediated by brand credibility and perceived uniqueness.

1.7. Chapterization plan

The following is the contents overview of the presented chapters in this research:

- Chapter one: Is, the introduction, which presents the main idea of this research; the accounting and auditing concepts and why audit services are needed and the leveraging with a secondary brand and its relation with audit services, then some general concepts of some branding terminologies and how it can be related to audit services and audit firms.

It includes the research problem statement, aims and objectives, research questions, significance and Implications, limitations, and the chapter contents outline.

- Chapter two: Contain the literature review which discusses the relevant previous literature and studies related to “Brand Characteristics, Brand Credibility, Perceived Uniqueness and consumer Willing to Pay a Price Premium, Brand Familiarity, Product category involvement and Consistency of Brand image” generally and from audit firms point of view.

In addition to that this chapter describes more about Brand Characteristics according to previous literature, and its relation with the Price Premium and the mediating role of Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness between Brand Characteristics and Willingness to Pay a Price Premium.

Also, this chapter gives an idea about moderating variables that may affect the Willingness to Pay a Price Premium including Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement, and Consistency of Brand Image, the chapter goes forward to discuss the Brand Management System concept with its tools that help manage branding in organizations.

At last, this literature review chapter presents the conceptual framework of the research and its hypothesis.

- Chapter three: Is the part of the research methodology, it gives an overview of the research design, research population sampling plan.

It presents the data collecting methods including the research survey design, data analysis statistical techniques and the software used for the research analyzing.

At the end of this chapter the ethical consideration that was taken while implementing this research, was presented.

- Chapter four: Shows in details the research analysis, as each step of analysis, was explained with its results and related conclusion which lead to the findings of the conceptual framework for “Effects of Brand Characteristics on Consumers' Willingness to Pay (WTP) a Price Premium: An Analysis in audit and accounting services”.
- Chapter five: Is the final chapter which includes the research conclusion, which summarized the results and findings that was gotten from the analysis chapter and presents the final closing conclusion with some recommendations and suggestions proposed for future research in the same field.
- References: This part lists all resources materials used as a reference in the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

An overview on the Brand Characteristics and its relation with the Consumer WTP a Price Premium is provided in this chapter, starting from the importance of having a strong Brand Name for a service organization giving examples of the essence and importance of Big Four audit services firms brand names.

In this chapter a detailed discussion is provided about the Brand Characteristics in general and the Brand Characteristics related to this research which are the Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competence, explaining the nature of these characteristics and giving examples from the Big Four firms in the audit industry.

This chapter also discuss the impact of Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness as mediators between the Brand Characteristics and the Consumer WTP a Price Premium and how they are presented in audit firms by giving examples from the Big Four audit firms, leading us to talk about the concept of Consumer WTP a Price Premium and the reasons of paying more for a branded goods or services.

Additional moderating variables including Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement, and Consistency of Brand Image are explained in this chapter giving examples from the audit industry, also an explanation about the Brand Management system (BMS) with its tools is presented with implementation examples from the audit firms

Finally, this literature chapter also proposes the conceptual framework for the Effects of Brand Characteristics on Consumer WTP a Price Premium for audit and accounting services.

2.2. The importance of having a strong Brand Name for a service organization

A name which is given by the producer to a product or a group of products and becomes a trademark is a Brand name, “such name is used to differentiate a retailer from its competitors and that will make it much more than just a name or a symbol” (Park & Lennon, 2009, p. 149), so “a brand has some dimensions which are differentiating somehow from the other products that are made to satisfy the same needs” (Keller, 2013, p. 31), these dimensions may be related to the brand performance or related to what the brand represents, and will help in shaping the final Brand Personality, so “a Brand Name may be considered as a starting point of Brand Personality creating” (Klink & Athaide, 2012, p. 109).

From a consumer point of view, according to (Keller, 2013, pp. 34-35) a strong brand name is important because it:

- Identifies the responsibility of the manufacturer or provider of the product as the brand name may be a sign to the product source.
- Help in the products selection decision making due to previous experiences with the brand name and related marketing program that makes consumers find what satisfies their needs which will lead to lower the searching costs of the needed products.
- Shape the expectation boundaries of what to expect from the product and what not to expect, according to the experience of the consumer with the brand name.
- Dealing with a specific brand name choice will give an idea about the consumer choices and characteristics, so a brand name choice can be an indicator of the consumer identity.
- A strong brand name can be an indicator of the quality of the product or service provided.

From an organization point of view, according to (Kapferer, 2008, p. 24) a strong brand name is important both externally and internally, externally it is important because it:

- Guarantee the trust and loyalty of the consumer which will lead to a long term sales sustainability, as a strong brand name is a source of products demand.

- Considered as a reference in its related category for the consumers which give the organization a competitive value in the market.

According to (Keller, 2013, p. 35) a Brand name helps the organization internally by:

- Helping in simplifying the internal tracing and handling of products which will lead to appropriate product management and decision making.
- Help in the financial process by participating in organizing the inventory and accounting records.
- Giving the organization legal protection and copyrights due to the unique characteristics of its products.

A strong Brand Name has an effect on consumer choices, product selection and perceptions as, according to (Park & Lennon, 2009, p. 156): “A well-known Brand Name is a strong factor that directly influences consumers’ perception of a store image and has an effect on their purchase intention”, in addition to that (Srinivasan & Till, 2002, p. 417) found that “brand name work on increasing consumers perception of experience, credibility attributes and performance evaluation”, not only a strong Brand Name has such an effect as according to (Lee & Baack, 2014, p. 521): “A higher brand recall is led by a more fluent brand names” which is leading to a more willingness to buy a product.

Branding plays an essential role in services organizations, as services are more intangible and the quality of a service varies according to the person providing it, even it may be different if the same person provided it in deferent time, so a Brand Name can address the variability issue as it shapes the expectation of the service that the consumer expects to get and can be considered as a point of difference between the same service providers and provide the service organization a competitive value in the same service market.

Part of the service organizations are the professional service organization which provides specialized expertise and support to other organizations such as financial consulting, and low organizations usually provide the same concept of services by a professional people, branding for professional service organizations is considered as combining between B2B branding and typical consumer service branding. Brand Name plays a main role for a consumer to select the professional service organization as such services are difficult to

be standardized as it depends on the exact need of the consumer so such services must be reshaped to satisfy that needs and a strong Brand Name also is a single of the ability of getting the satisfaction needed (Keller, 2013, p. 42).

According to (Moorthi, 2002, p. 263) “a service provider cannot be separated from his services as he is considered as a problem solver” so he must understand the consumers’ needs appropriately.

(Marquardt, et al., 2011, p. 47) found that in order to have a successful service brand “Managers should work on: developing some compelling and differentiated value assumption connected with their B2B service brands, investing in communicating their brands’ value to internal and external audiences and providing resources to ensure consistency and favorability of the customer experiences with the brand, such three steps will affect the strength of the brand and support the brand awareness and brand meaning”.

(Skaalsvik & Olsen, 2014, p. 1219) concluded that “at the firm level, focusing on the requirement of developing a high degree of service orientation, and quality dimensions linked to customers, service leadership and service employees, will lead to a successful services brand development”.

(Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003, p. 1095) explained that for greater services brand consistency “positioning and the corporation’s genuinely felt values must be clear. when everyone internally believes in their brand’s values it is more likely to achieve Success. shared values are more likely to be adopted when management behavior is based on genuine conviction. Through shared values, there is a greater possibility of commitment, internal loyalty, clearer brand understanding, and consistency in brand delivery across all stakeholders”.

One of the important services organizations is financial service organizations (Saunders & Watters, 1993, p. 38) explained from a historical point of view that: “Financial services companies came late to branding but has grown fast, they used their corporate identity to promote their products” and taking advantage of the intangible nature of the services “it was easy for a financial services company to swap and change their products and so they treat brands elements in the same way” in order to meet the consumer needs “as research indicates that the most critical ingredient is not the brand name but what lies behind it.”

They predicted that “Over the next ten years the rate of technological, social and political change will force product and services including financial services changes even more quickly than in the past”.

(Chernatony & Cottam (née Drury), 2006, p. 611) founds that the internal factors which drives the success of financial services brands are: “a full, consistent and integrated attitude to branding, a focus on excellent and personalized customer service, a spirit that is challenging the usual, a responsiveness to change, a high degree of brand knowledge, and an interaction between the brand and organizational culture”.

Leaders of financial and audit services around the world are Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, and EY, these four names are the strongest brands in the audit industry below are examples about the essence and importance of their Brand Names:

- When you speak about Deloitte as a brand you speak about “more than 150 years of hard work and commitment, a growth in scale and diversity - approximately 245,000 people in 150 countries and territories, audit & assurance, tax, legal, risk and financial advisory and consulting services with the same culture around the world, many specific examples of where Deloitte has helped its member firm clients, its people, and sections of society to achieve remarkable goals, solve complex problems, or make meaningful progress” (Deloitte, 2018).
- When you come across KPMG you come across “a member firms operate in 154 countries, collectively employing more than 200,000 people, serving the needs of business, governments, public-sector agencies, not-for-profits and through member firms' audit and assurance practices, the capital markets, a member firms that is committed to quality and service excellence in all that it does, bringing its best to clients and earning the public's trust through its actions and behaviors both professionally and personally” (KPMG, 2018).
- When introducing PwC, you introduce an audit firm that has “offices in 158 countries and more than 250,000 people, it is among the leading professional services networks in the world. It helps organizations and individuals create the

value they're looking for, by delivering quality in assurance, tax and advisory services" (PwC, 2017 - 2018).

- EY is single for "Building a better working world. The insights and quality services it provides help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. It develops outstanding leaders who team to deliver on EY promises to all of their stakeholders. In so doing, it plays a critical role in building a better working world for its people, for its clients, and for our communities. Through EY four integrated service lines: Assurance, Advisory, Tax and Transaction Advisory Services, and its deep sector knowledge, it helps its clients to capitalize on new opportunities and assess and manage risk to deliver responsible growth" (EY, 2018).

The above detailed four examples lead us to conclude that a strong Brand Name is the one who has been considered as a market leader in his categories for decades and this comes from a continues brand building and management over years.

2.3. Brand Characteristics and their nature in audit firms

The Brand Characteristics are "the essential values and fundamentals that presents the true essence of the brand. They are a group of attributes that are identified as the physical, distinctive, and personality traits of the brand similar to that of an individual." (Bhasin, 2018), accumulating the characteristics of a product or a service perceived by a user will lead us to the main Brand Characteristics (Chaffey, 2015, p. 378).

A brand must stand for something that is special, unique and representative, in order to do that a set of Brand Characteristics must be defined by the organization marketing and branding department as part of the entire brand management process.

Having a standard and consistent Brand Characteristics for an organization is important as:

- It creates a point of deference (PoD) for the brand and gives it a competitive value in the market and give the consumers the ability to recognize the brand and be aware of it.

- It also connects with the targeted consumers emotionally and leads them to become loyal consumers to the brand as recalling it from the consumer mind will be much easier, which will lead to higher level of sales and increasing the organization profit on the long term.

Branding is all about “taking a common thing and work on its improvement and make it more valuable and meaningful, create its own personality, to capture the hearts and minds of its customers” (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006, pp. 3-4) and to achieve that a brand must have a specific, unique, meaningful and consistent characteristics that lead to strong brand associations in the consumer mind.

(Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 345) explained that: “Consumers judge the brand before deciding if they are going to build a relationship with it” as “the Brand Characteristics has a main role in determining if a consumer is going to trust it or not”. Confirming this idea (DelVecchio, 2000, p. 457) found that: “Characteristics of the brand has a significant role in affecting consumer impressions of brand reliability”, which lead us to conclude that Brand Characteristics are the main object to enter to the consumer mind.

Each branded audit firm has its own style in shaping its characteristics for example:

In Deloitte, Brand Characteristics are driven by their Principles of Business Conduct, for example, Deloitte describes its own characteristics as shown in (Deloitte , 2016, p. 3):

- Integrity: “We are straightforward and honest in our professional opinions and business relationships.”
- Quality: “We are committed to providing quality services by bringing together the breadth and depth of our resources, experience, and insights to help clients address their needs and problems.”
- Professional behavior: “We comply with applicable professional standards, laws, and regulations and seek to avoid actions that may discredit ourselves or our professions”.
- Objectivity: “We are objective in forming our professional opinions and the advice we give.”
- Fair business practices: “We respect our competitors and are committed to fair business practices.”

KPMG's Core Values represents their Brand Characteristics, according to (KPMG, 2005, p. 4) for example they say:

- “We lead by example, at all levels acting in a way that exemplifies what we expect of each other and our member firms’ clients.”
- “We respect the individual, respecting people for who they are and for their knowledge, skills, and experience as individuals and team members.”
- “We seek the facts and provide insight, challenging assumptions, pursuing facts, and strengthening our reputation as trusted and objective business advisers.”
- Above all, we act with integrity, constantly striving to uphold the highest professional standards, provide sound advice, and rigorously maintain our independence.

Four dimensions represent PwC Brand Characteristics according to (PwC, 2011, p. 2) they are:

- Identity: “We invest in relationships.”
- Experience: “We share and collaborate.”
- Culture: “We put ourselves in each other’s shoes.”
- Capabilities: “We enhance value.”

EY has five principles represent their brand characteristics, according to (EY, 2017, p. 4) these principles are:

- “Working with one another.”
- “Working with clients and others.”
- “Acting with professional integrity.”
- “Maintaining our objectivity and independence.”
- “Respecting intellectual capital.”

From a general point of view and according to the Brand Characteristics' definition and examples above, such characteristics include many dimensions and take deferent formats according to each brand and each firm, this research adopted three dimensions of Brand Characteristics from (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 345) which are: Brand Reputation, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competence.

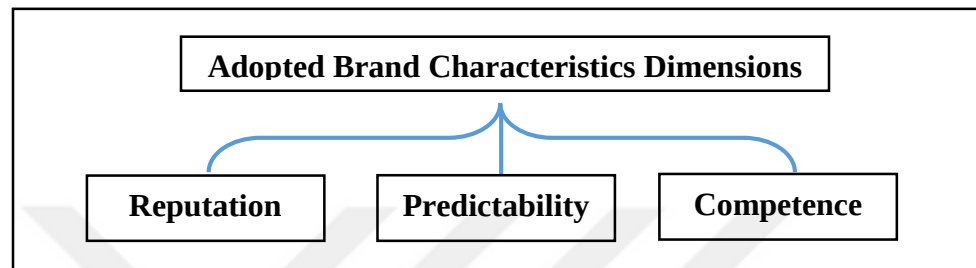


Figure 2.1: Adopted Brand characteristics dimensions

2.3.1. Brand reputation

How a brand is viewed by customers, stakeholders and the market in general, is a simple explanation of Brand Reputation, such view is a result of the ideas, feelings, and experience of the consumers when purchasing the brand or using it, a positive view will lead to a favorable Brand Reputation means that the customer gives his trust to the brand and fell proud of purchasing and using it and spread a positive word of mouth (WOM) about it, successful organizations consider the Brand Reputation “ as demand a source and permanent attractiveness, superior quality image and an added value that justifies a price premium” (Keller, 2013, p. 24).

As explained by (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 346): A development of Brand Reputation can be done by advertisements and public relation so that a positive expectation about the brand can be developed, taking in consideration the influence of the product quality and performance, so that it can achieve the consumer expectations, conforming this explanation (Corkindale & Belder, 2009, p. 249) found that: “Brand Reputation and other elements of the marketing mix are interacting together to make an influence such as the response of consumers to advertising” and “from the firm’s point of view, a good reputation not only increases perceptions of its quality, but it also can improve the effectiveness of marketing strategies and enable charging a price premium”, this will lead to the findings of (Koh, et al., 2009, p. 620) which says that generally, brand reputation

has a positive influence on firm's value performance, on the other hand, a positive brand reputation is the cause of brand loyalty as conformed by (Zulganef, 2017, p. 1).

Other literatures show the sensitive side of the Brand Reputation, (Fan, 2005, p. 344) explained that: "A brand reputation which is created with millions of pounds of investment over many years could be easily damaged or even destroyed overnight," but according to (Sengupta, et al., 2015, p. 655) "Brand Reputation has a moderating role in the relationship between coping strategies, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions and between severity of service failure", adding value to these findings (Jung & Seock, 2016, p. 1) found that: "Marketing managers need to carefully manage a negative reputation, as it exaggerates consumers' cognitive process negatively. However, a company can minimize the negative impact of their negative reputation by another type of positive reputation as consumers are not influenced by a specific type of negative information."

Audit firms deal with Brand Reputation as a sensitive asset of the firm for example:

- Deloitte believes that they should never take the trust placed by their clients and the capital markets for granted, the integrity of Deloitte people and the quality of the services provided to the organizations and companies are the main part of their reputation foundation. (Deloitte , 2016, pp. 8, 11) .
- KPMG "Preserving its brand and reputation as trusted and objective business advisers by avoiding any action that may lead to discrediting the KPMG organization or its clients" (KPMG, 2005, p. 5) and make sure that all firms' principles are adopted by KPMG partners and employees in their daily activities.
- In a simple way, PwC says that: "Their professional competence and integrity, qualities that underpin their reputation are the basis of their clients and colleagues trust and as PwC they uphold that reputation" (PwC, 2011, p. 6).
- According to EY principles they say "the ethics, integrity, and reputation of EY are the most important, as no client or external relationship is more important than that" (EY, 2017, p. 7).

2.3.2. Brand predictability

A brand is predictable, “when the user is able to anticipate, with reasonable confidence, the brand future performance at each usage instance” (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 346), it comes from a repeated interaction with the brand, it also enhances customer confidence of the brand as he knows that no unexpected things will happen while using it, which will lead to a positive expectation about the brand, this will lead us to define Brand Predictability as “the level of accuracy that a consumer can anticipate a consistent degree of product quality or service” (Kim & Jones, 2009, p. 283), “in order to make customers know what to expect from a company or a brand there must be a good and consistently high-quality marketing strategies, that will lead to customers trusting them, so they are likely to turn to these companies or brands more often when solving their problems and to learn more about the new products and services presented by them.” (Stevenson & Moldoveanu , 1995, p. 6).

One way to increase Brand Predictability is according to what (Mosavi & Kenarehfard, 2013, p. 75) explained that: “Sharing and distributing information about different elements of the brand will decrease the asymmetry and uncertainty of information, and increases Brand Predictability”, this is also discussed by (Laroche, et al., 2012, p. 1758) as they explained that “passing information among members about branded products and how to better use them will transfer it to personal information and stories about the brand and its related experience. sharing such information will reduce information asymmetry and uncertainty, and will lead to increases predictability of brand actions”.

Another way to increase Brand Predictability is participating in the brand community as explained by (Coelho, et al., 2018, p. 102) “Participation of the consumers’ in the community is a possible way to increase the general knowledge consumers have about the brand, reduce uncertainty and increase the brand behavior predictability”.

(Hegner & Jevons, 2016, p. 59) found out that Brand Predictability in one influencer of overall brand trust as “Predictability helps reducing initial uncertainty by defining what is usually expected of a trustee acting in good faith, this predictability may be due to a consistent level of product quality or/and a consistent and continuous brand positioning, it reflects not only a short-term consistency in brand appearance but also the long-term continuity of all brand identity elements”.

As a consumer of audit services some expectations are developed and predicted to be found in a Branded audit firm, so audit firms stress on some points that their clients are predicting from them such as:

- In Deloitte they attempt to develop outcomes which create an impact that matters for their clients, they protect and take measures to safeguard the confidential and personal information that they hold, collecting and handling it in compliance with applicable laws, professional obligations, and their own data management policies and practices (Deloitte , 2016, p. 4).
- KPMG delivers quality service to its clients in line with qualifications, professional commitments, and engagement terms, maintains independence and objectivity, and avoids conflicts of interest or undue influence and preserves client and business confidentiality and privacy (KPMG, 2005, p. 5).
- To maintain a positive expectation and predictability from its clients PwC works on “delivering what they promise and adding value beyond what is expected and achieving excellence through innovation, learning and agility” (PwC, 2011, p. 5).
- Also to meet the client’s predictions EY are “committed to delivering quality services that reflect their professional capabilities and are appropriate to the specific issues and needs of their clients” (EY, 2017, p. 7).

Finally, there are some points that organizations must take care of which are “too much repetition of the same creates boredom and too much predictability is considered as a drawback in modern markets” (Keller, 2013, p. 271) there must be a touch of renovation.

2.3.3. Brand competence

Competence is one of the Brand Characteristics dimensions and a component of the brand personality, which can take the form of human characteristics, it indicates the knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in any situation.

“A competent brand is the brand that is able to solve a consumers’ problems and meet their requests and needs. Consumers may found about such competencies through direct usage or word of mouth communication, once they found about the brand ability of solving their problems they may be willing to rely on that brand” (Lau & Lee, 1999, pp. 346-347), “Brand Competence is important for creating, developing and protecting brands

that have its own identity” (Urde, 1999, p. 117), In addition to that “Previous experience of brand usage with positive perception could strengthen brand competence” (Setyawan, et al., 2015, p. 44).

(Sung, et al., 2009, p. 5) found that Brand Competence as a component of brand personality “has an influence on brand trust and the effect of the brand itself, which in turn lead to increase the brand loyalty level.” Adding to this finding (Thaichon & Quach, 2015, p. 202) explained that it is “developed and maintained in the consumer mind as a reflection of the brand perception and it is able to have a significant and meaningful influence on brand trust”.

Also (Khan, et al., 2010, p. 43) found that Brand Competence works with Brand Reputation, Brand Predictability as “a factors that are affecting consumer’s trust on the brand, having a good brand, the predictability of customer will be achieved and it has competency of satisfying the customer’s needs, it helps in developing customer trust on brand, so brands must work on building their own competencies in order to satisfy the customer needs.”

Supporting that with examples from the Big Four audit firms:

- Investing in their employees as a brand representatives Deloitte “works on matching client needs with practitioners who have the competence required for their assignments and support innovation and new ideas that improve the services value and performance that is presented to their clients” (Deloitte , 2016, p. 3).
- Supporting their overall Brand Competence through their employees each KPMG employee is responsible for “legal, professional, and ethical standards related to his or her level of responsibility and job function which will lead to acting with integrity” (KPMG, 2005, p. 6).
- PwC considers their professional competence and integrity as sours of the client’s trust and quality that underpin their reputation. (PwC, 2011, p. 6).
- EY is also supporting the professional development of their employees, recognize individuals achievements, and take care of continuous learning as a leveraging source of their employees’ competencies which will affect the overall firm competence positively (EY, 2017, p. 6).

From the previous dissection, it is concluded that Brand Characteristics are an important factor for each and every organization and leads to several branding factors such as brand trust and brand loyalty, in this research, their relation will be examined with the WTP a price premium going through the Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness.

2.4. Brand Credibility and its importance in the audit industry

Brand Creditability is defined by (Keller, 2013, p. 118) as: “what is describing the level of customers seeing the brand as credible in according to these dimensions:

- Perceived expertise: Competent, innovative, and market leader.
- Trustworthiness: Dependable and keeping customer interests in mind.
- Likability: Fun, interesting, and worth spending time with (brand likability)?

In other words, credibility works on measuring if consumers see the company or organization behind the brand is good at what it does, concerned about its customers, and just plain likable or not”.

A credible brand is the brand that: “is able (expertise) and willing (trustworthiness) to stay true and is committed to performance-enhancing” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 101), it can be gain by repeated satisfying interaction with the brand by the consumer, as a predictable and a reliable performance form the brand over time will lead to the Brand Credibility.

Each brand has its own characteristics, the more it shows such characteristics in its products and attitude, the more consumer will believe in the brand and the more credible the brand will be, as “connecting to a high perceived value will improve consumer perceptions of brand attributes, will influence the brand choice and create a strong effect on the consumer purchase intention” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 102) . Brand Credibility is the main issue of customer acquisition and retention, as if there is no credibility, he/she is not going to purchase the product or use the service, which will affect the organization’s sales, reputation and business growth, as “brands with credibility work on minimizing risk and increasing consumer confidence, as when they believe that a brand has credibility and purchase it repeatedly, a commitment to the brand can be developed” (Kemp & Bui, 2011, p. 429).

According to the research done by (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 102) and (Erdem, et al., 2002, p. 1) they found that: “Brand Credibility may play a role in consumers’ price perception, as it can decrease their price sensitivity, increase acceptance of price changing and enhance consumers’ WTP a higher price”, as it “effects brand image and purchase intention positively” (Martín-Consuegra, et al., 2018, p. 237) and (Xuehua & Yang, 2010, p. 177).

In order to improve and support the Brand Credibility organizations can: support their marketing strategies with statistics as consumers trust numerical data more than descriptions or general information, take the advantage of customers positive reviews and work to improve the negative once to keep them happy.

(An, et al., 2018, p. 1) found out that “the credibility of a brand is of paramount importance for the customer in developing a sense of oneness with the brand as well as a sense of affinity with other users of the brand”, in addition to this finding (Erdem & Swait, 2004, p. 191) found that “Brand Credibility works on increasing the probability of a brand to be included is consideration, which will lead to increase the brand choice according to that conditional consideration”.

From another point of view Brand Creditability has a relation with brand trust, and other branding dimensions, as according to the finding of (Alam, et al., 2012, p. 583): “there are significant and positive relationships which were observed between brand credibility and trustworthiness, brand credibility and perceived quality, brand credibility, and customer loyalty. It also mediates the relationship between trustworthiness, perceived quality, and customer loyalty”, also “Brand Credibility has a significant and positive impact on brand preference, information cost saved, brand prestige in addition to a positive impact on behavioral intention” (Jin, et al., 2015, p. 354).

There is a unique role of Brand Credibility as it “has a defensive role that serves the brand itself, as it enhances word of mouth significantly and work on decreasing the switching behaviors between brands among customers” (Sweeney & Swait, 2008, p. 179), such role can be supported by “the effective and positive handling of complaint as it affects satisfaction with complaining and overall satisfaction as it services the brand credibility” (Bougoure, et al., 2016, p. 62), this will lead to a generally positive effect on brand

commitment and more enhancing Word of mouth communication (Sallam & Sefnedi, 2017, p. 227).

Brand Creditability plays an important role in service organizations as according the research of (Leischnig, et al., 2012, p. 44) “it significantly support and has effects on other brand functions, such as information efficiency and risk reduction, lead to customers repurchase intentions”, doing research on the same point (Baek & King, 2011, p. 260) found that “Brand Credibility have a strong effect on purchase intention as it increases the perceived quality and the perceived value for money and information costs saved, it also decreases the perceived risk across multiple service categories.”

From a leveraging point of view an organization can increase its credibility by linking itself with one that is already considered credible in the market, one way of doing that is getting audited by a well-known branded audit firm, it is important for an audit firm to show credibility in its operation and behavior with its clients to maintain a good reputation and gain trust as those are the main components of the intangible capital of an audit firm, each and every audit firm works in strengthening the Brand Credibility for example:

- Deloitte works on the quality of services that they present to go side by side with the applicable professional standards, make sure that the professional advice and conclusions presented to clients are independent and objective, encouraging their employees to take professional certifications, insist on accuracy in all the client's reports issued. (Deloitte , 2016, p. 11).
- To maintain their Brand Credibility KPMG, “seeks the facts and provides insight, challenges assumptions, follow the facts, and strengthen their reputation as trusted and objective business advisers, they communicate openly and honestly, share information, insight, and advice frequently and constructively, and manage tough situations with courage” (KPMG, 2005, p. 4).
- PwC goal is to “provides industry-focused assurance, tax and advisory services to build public trust and enhance value for its clients and their stakeholders” In order to achieve success they say “they have to grow and develop, both as individuals and as a business adopting core values of excellence, teamwork and leadership

help them to achieve their growth.” (PwC, 2011, pp. 4-5), working to achieve that goal is part of how PwC supports their Brand Credibility.

- EY says that “The insights and quality services they deliver helps building trust and confidence in the capital markets around the world” (EY, 2017, p. 16), to prove that they personally and professionally committed to do the right thing and commit themselves, as professionals, to uphold the trust placed in them.

Creditability doesn’t come in a short time as it needs years for a brand to be considered credible in the consumer’s eyes but it takes a short time to be ruined, so maintaining such thing is not an easy job to be done.

2.5. Perceived Uniqueness and how it is presented in audit firms

Perceived Uniqueness is defined as: “The special element of a brand which makes it different from other brands” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 102). This means that the brand must have a strong point of deference that shows how much the brand is noticed, recognized and recalled comparing to other brands, this can be achieved by creating and sustaining unique associations with the consumers, this will separate the brand from competition by providing an added value to the consumer which will lead to affect their WTP a price premium positively as Perceived Uniqueness is a key reason for which consumers may pay the price premiums (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 102), in other words, “by creating uniqueness, brands have the chance to create an emotional connection, and make a difference” (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006, p. 319), as “the actual brand choices made by consumers usually made according to the perceived uniqueness of such brand associations” (Keller, 2013, p. 83).

From the consumer point of view the need for uniqueness is defined as “an individual’s pursuit of differentness comparing to others, which is achieved by the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods in order to develop and enhance a unique personal and social identity” (Tian, et al., 2001, p. 50), this will “affects consumer behaviors such as the desire for or customized scarce products, the pursuit of innovative consumption, and a preference for unique shopping venues” (Ruvio, et al., 2008, p. 34).

Previous researches showed that “Perceived Uniqueness impacts perceived value significantly and positively which will lead to enhancing purchase intention” (Chen & Sun, 2014, p. 232).

Providing an audit or a financial service may be the same to consumers as it depends on the standard audit procedures and standard financial processes so each and every audit firm is working on having its own unique identity even in the brand visual appears, for example:

- Among all audit firms, worldwide black and green are referring to Deloitte they have their own brand identifiers that are used as a marketing tool, and a visual identity that will bring their positioning to life (Deloitte, 2017, p. 23).
- Other Big Four audit firms have also their own visual identity which is noticeable in their logos, website, written communication, and represent their brand.

Perceived Uniqueness is not only represented by the visual identity as audit firms are working to be unique by their attitude with their clients the professionalism of their employees and the professional certifications that they have, and overall the high quality of the services they provide,

- Working toward uniqueness Deloitte says that “they work on developing a culture of appropriate professional skepticism and personal accountability which supports clients and drives quality in the services they provide” (Deloitte , 2016, p. 3).
- One way of being unique according to KPMG is commitment to community as they say that “they are committed to their communities by acting as responsible corporate citizens and increase their experience, skills, and perspectives for providing better services to their communities” (KPMG, 2005, p. 4).
- Working on being a leader in what they do is what PwC does to reach uniqueness, they “Inspire leadership, leading with clients, leading with people and thought leadership with courage, vision, and integrity” (PwC, 2011, p. 3).
- Having a commitment toward high-quality standards is what EY do to prove uniqueness as they say that “they are committed to deliver quality services that

reflect their professional capabilities and they are appropriate to the specific issues and needs of their clients” (EY, 2017, p. 7).

Being unique is the one important target of each and every audit firm, so they are presenting the unique culture of their brand to the clients in everything they do.



Figure 2.2: Visual identity examples of the Big Four audit firms.

Source: Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and EY websites.

2.6. The concept of Willing to Pay (WTP) a price premium

“when a seller, usually of high-quality products, can charge a higher price than the minimum average price of smellier high-quality product, the variance between the high price and the competitive price is called as a price premium”, this will lead us to define the WTP as the maximum amount a consumer is willing to spend for a product or service. (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 101) or “the preparation and desire of a consumer to pay more for a particular service brand instead of a comparable alternative brands” (Casidy & Wymer, 2016, p. 190).

When consumers observe added value in a products or a services they will be willing to pay a premiums (Keller, 2013, p. 196), as willing to pay a price premium is considered as a result of a strong brand as from a consumer point of view it removes the risk, provide certainty and guarantee, for a supplier point of view these benefits are included in branded product price (Kapferer, 2008, p. 23), a strong and smart brand is the one that is “utilizing

strategies that create and sustain a meaningful difference which helps consumers to justify paying more” (Hollis , 2014, p. 1), this is done by appropriate identifying of the audience, good understanding of the competition and well knowing the brand meaningful difference, to make sure that the consumers perceive the brand and worth more to pay for.

One example of identifying the audience is “consumers who demand high quality should value it more than consumers who do not care about quality. Consequently, a consumer who is more concerned about quality should be willing to pay a higher price premiums to assure quality” (Rao & Monroe, 1996, p. 516), which will lead us to the conclude that “generally, high-quality brands are less affected by the negative consequences of price increasing” (Sivakumar & Raj, 1997, p. 80).

As a results of previous researches (Anselmsson, et al., 2014, p. 90) found out that: “the quality is a significant determinant of price premium, however when adding other brand image dimensions, that will doubles the understanding and predictability of a price premium, social image, uniqueness, and home country origin are considered as the strongest determinants of price premium”.

One more example about service industries is airlines as research revealed that consumer is willing to pay more for better and more improved services during their flights (Garrow, et al., 2007, p. 271) and (Kuo & Jou, 2017, p. 134).

This research investigates the effect of another attribute of brands which is the Brand Characteristics on the consumer WTP a price premium which will add value to the previous researches and open the way for more researches to study more about the branding effects on the WTP price premiums.

2.7. Additional Moderating Variables

While testing the effects of brand experience on consumer WTP a Price Premium, (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 103) took in consideration that there may be some other possible moderating variables that may also affect the consumer WTP a Price Premium, these variables were Brand Familiarity, Product category Involvement and Consistency of Brand Image, adopting the same method this part will discuss the concept of these three variables.

2.7.1. Brand Familiarity

Brand Familiarity is defined as “The amount of time spent by a consumer processing information related to the brand, regardless of the processing content or type that was involved” (Baker, et al., 1986, p. 637), this means that when a consumer is familiar with a brand, that he has a strong brand association in his mind, has a previous experience with its products, so this will lead to more brand awareness and usually more usage of its products “I know it well; I use it a lot” (Kapferer, 2008, p. 26), “it is reflecting the consumer ‘share of mind’ that is attained to the particular brand and the extent of direct and indirect consumer’s experience with a brand” (Mikhailitchenko, et al., 2009, p. 932).

According to the previous research study done by (Kim & Chung, 2012, p. 205) they found out that brand familiarity is important as when evaluating a brand “it has a positive influence on brand preference, brand trust, brand satisfaction, brand attitude, and purchase intention”, this is confirmed by (Sheau-Fen, et al., 2012, p. 49) as they found that brand familiarity is significantly affecting perceived quality and purchase intention, and by (Das, 2015, p. 180) as he found that “perceived quality and brand familiarity positively influence purchase intention”, also (Park & Stoel, 2005, p. 148) found that “brand familiarity and previous experience are significantly affecting perceived risk and purchase intention”.

One more effect of Brand Familiarity toward price is what (Vaidyanathan, 2000, p. 607) explained that “a consumer who is familiar with a brand may not be influenced by external reference prices as he has specific price standards for purchasing such brand”.

The findings of (Delgado-Ballester, et al., 2012, p. 31) show that consumer brand associations must be revitalized by various consistent messages, as they said that: “moderately consistent messages of familiar brands work on improving consumers awareness (recall), enriching their network of associations and generating more favorable responses attitudes toward the brand”, this is confirmed by (Martí-Parreño, et al., 2017, p. 55) as they found that “consumers are recalling familiar brands better than unfamiliar ones, also familiar brands are performing better in a brand recognition measure than unfamiliar ones”, also the familiar brands have advantages in advertising as a consumer is more likely able to recall the advertising information of a such familiar brands than the

unfamiliar once (Kent & Allen, 1994, p. 97), this is confirmed by (Rhee & Jung, 2018, p. 1) as they find that “consumer attitude toward advertising work on predicting consumers attitude toward the brand as Brand Familiarity has a moderating role in the relationship strength between advertising attitude and brand attitude”, this will lead us to an additional role of Brand Familiarity as “it plays a buffering role against the negative information adverse impact on brands” (Dawar & Lei, 2009, p. 510).

One more finding by (Hardesty, et al., 2002, p. 1) shows that high familiarity with the brand can lead to high invoice price expectation and more skepticism toward the advertising of that brand.

For service brands especially financial service brands, Brand Familiarity has an important role on other brand factors such as brand experience as (Bapat, 2017, p. 637) found that “improving brand familiarity will positively improve emotional, sensory, relational and behavioral brand experiences for service brands”.

Anyone working in the finance industry is familiar with the big four audit firms and realize the leveraging benefits that his organization may get, if it get audited by one of these firms, as they are familiar with there integrity, quality, professional behavior, objectivity, and professional support, also big four audit firms are familiar with fair business practices as they respect each other as competitors and committed to fair business attitude, and calculating thire fees fairly in a way that is reflecting the services value provided and assumed responsibilities.

This is not only applicable to big four audit firms, as all audit firms are implementing the same practice to get a positive familiarity effect.

2.7.2. Product Category Involvement

Product Category Involvement is defined as the level of consumer’s interest and commitment to purchase a certain product type from a given brand, it shows the degree to which a consumer is engaged with a product category. A product involvement can come from consumer’s interest, knowledge, attention, and needs of a certain product, in other words, Product Category Involvement “refers to the enduring perceptions of consumers

to product importance, depending on their inherent values, needs, and interests” (Belanche, et al., 2017, p. 78).

According to the study of (Park & Keil, 2017, p. 1) they explained that “Product Category Involvement is considered as a significant factor that can affect an individual’s purchase decision”, same point was found by (Liang a, 2012, p. 325) as they found that “the more the consumer is involved with a product, the more he/she will have a product knowledge and the more he/she has an impulse buying behavior”, this is confirmed by (Drossos, et al., 2014, p. 423) as they found that “product involvement and impulsiveness are significantly affecting purchase intentions”, another study done by (Lee, et al., 2017, p. 223) found that Product Category Involvement with product attributes and word of mouth has positive benefits to customers’ purchase intention.

Product Category Involvement also has an influence on brand loyalty, this influence is mediated by price perceptions (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015, p. 349), this is confirmed by (Park & Yoo, 2018, p. 1) as they found that “high product involvement consumers have a high brand attachment, attitudes toward the brand, and high loyalty intentions”.

Product Category Involvement also has an influence on consumer satisfaction as “satisfaction is depended on the degree of product involvement” (Calvo-Porrall, et al., 2018, p. 134), it also affects advertising as “Product Involvement is leading to more effectiveness and less avoiding of advertising” (Broeck, et al., 2018, p. 472).

Another effect of Product Category Involvement is what (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 505) explained that “only people that have a higher income and higher product involvement are willing to pay more for additional features, quality, added convenience, customer service, and the brand name”, this is also found by (Campbell, et al., 2014, p. 39) as they found that “product involvement, price consciousness, and price/quality inference has a significant relationships with willingness-to-pay a price premium”.

Accounting and finance department is directly involved with auditors and audit services as they directly deal with them in providing the data they need, also other departments may be involved, top management deals with auditors as they receive the final audit report and have several meeting with auditors to discuss their working plan and results, such involvement with auditor will provide the organization a full idea about the audit firm

characteristics, credibility and uniqueness all this is taken into consideration when selecting the audit firm as such decision is taken by the organization board of directors taking into consideration the finance department and top management feedback.

2.7.3. Consistency of Brand Image

Brand Image is “consumers’ perceptions about a brand, according to the reflection of the brand associations they held in their memory” (Keller, 2013, p. 73) it is considered as an emotional and rational tool to make a connection between customers and a company, product or service (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006, p. 65). On the other hand, Brand Consistency is how to get the attention of consumers and how to keep things tight and tied in order to create a consumer recall in order to influence their buying habits, “a consistent brand image has many advantages, such as increased brand awareness, efficiencies marketing communication scale, and an overall high brand equity” (Bengtsson, et al., 2010, p. 520).

In order to have a Consistent Brand Image an organization must have a brand guideline to ensure all messaging and brand asset use is on-point and consistent, work on internal branding as the organization employees are the organization brand ambassadors, marketing activities of the organization must be shaped according to the brand guidelines, this will move the organization marketing strategies to a higher level and make the brand more recognized and enable the organization to step forward to gain the consumer trust as communicating with consumers by a consistent brand image will build a specific identity for the organization that consumers can recognize and “better understand and predict what the brand stands for” (Navarro-Bailón, 2012, p. 189), it makes “brand more familiar to consumer which will help the organization in hosting new brands and increase the sales of current brand” (Sasmita & Suki, 2015, p. 278).

Consistency of Brand Image “is important for developing a quality control measures, so that organizations and consumers will be able to monitor if a product or a service will meet certain quality expectations or not” (Nansen, et al., 2016, p. 37).

In the study done by (Roy & Banerjee, 2014, p. 208) they explained that “ the most efficient to communicating way with a consumer is Brand Image, as it helps to reveal the

brand identity significance, having an appropriate harmonization between brand image and brand identity is an important tool of brand marketing and is a key factor for the success of any brand, this is called as Brand Image Consistency”.

Previous research found that “Brand Image has a positive effect on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand awareness” (Ansary & Hashim, 2018, p. 969), it also found that “brand image positively impacts customer expression of commitment and loyalty to market offering” (Ogba & Tan, 2009, p. 132), not only brand image but also the “Consistency of a brand influence consumers’ evaluations and attitude toward the brand” (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012, p. 1108).

Each and every audit firm provides the same service which is audit and review of financial statements and accounting consulting services, however each one of them has its own image, they are working in their Brand elements including the Brand Image to make themselves unique from other competitors, even in their logos, written communication style and fonts, color palette and special to their visual assets and a unique filter for their branded images, for example, KPMG always uses blue color as a firm representative in all its visual communication and activities, taking concern of this small things, has a big influence on the Brand Image and its associations in the consumers’ minds, as “Visual identity offers a solid, distinctive set of images that reinforce and complement brand positioning” (Deloitte, 2017, p. 4), such visual identity “complement the firm positioning and draw in viewers by encouraging them to look again” (Deloitte, 2017, p. 25).

Referring to Deloitte code of ethics, in order to confirm this idea, they say as an employee in Deloitte you are “responsible for maintaining and enhancing Deloitte’s public image and of using all its communications systems in a professional and productive manner according to the firm’s policies” (Deloitte , 2016, p. 22).

PwC has a branding image policy to show their identity (How we present ourselves), experience (What’s it looks like to work with us), capabilities (What we are good at) and culture (How we believe), such policy is important to manage how PwC looks like and maintain its uniqueness (PwC, 2007, p. 1).

Not only the visual identity is important for a brand image but also the wording is important in communication such image and strengthen the brand associations in the

client's mind EY for example insists on building a better world as EY as firm believes that "the better business works, the better world works" (EY, 2013, p. 2), this slogan is available as part of the overall image of EY.

2.8. Branding Management System (BMS)

Working on brands is not a random activity, as the brand must be understandable inside and outside the organization, as the Characteristics and Uniqueness of the brand must be visible and obvious in the market and consumers must feel the Brand Credibility, so that the brand will have a competitive advantage among the other brands that will lead in a way or another to brand preferences and WTP a price premium, as "Brand Management is not just a marketing issue it has a direct effects on the profitability of an organization" (Rajagopal, 2008, p. 29).

In order to achieve that, most of the big organizations have a Brand Management System that is controlled by a Brand Management Department (or section), such department works on planning, implementing brand activates follow up the progress of the branding targets internally and externally.

BMS is defined as: "a group of organizational processes that is designed for improving the understanding and use of the concept of brand equity within a firm" (Keller, 2013, p. 60), in other words, it is a group of any organizational structure, system or culture that supports the branding building activities.

It provides brand owners and their staff, the managing, protecting and sharing tools of the brand structure, brand identity, and brand standards, with the required people of implementing the brand inside and outside the organization in order to achieve the branding targets.

It also represents how firms should work on developing their brand's internal management to help creating and maintaining strong brands associations in the consumers' minds, combine and harmonize between the organization's culture and brand-building activities, as the brand is considered as a reflection of the organization's culture.

According to the findings of (Santos-Vijande, et al., 2013, p. 154): “BMS seeks to help managers gaining a clearer picture of the best way of managing the brand internally so that its value and the firm's long-term competitiveness can be maximized, it constitutes the basic internal management infrastructure that sustains the brand-building activities at the first point, then the brand equity creation”.

It helps to coordinate the employee behavior with the brand meaning and value which can be called as internal branding, and guarantees an appropriate resources allocation in its long-term management which can be called strategic brand management.

According to the finding of (Dunes & Pras, 2017, p. 294) having a strong BMS in an organization affects the perceived brand performance which in turn will affect the objective financial performance of the organization, this is also applicable for business to business environment as “organizations which possessing a well-organized BMS are dramatically enhancing their brand performance” (Lee, et al., 2008, p. 848), also having such a strong BMS will give the organizations a competitive advantage against rivals and stimulates the competition between them (Likoum, et al., 2018, p. 2).

Branding is a key asset in audit firms as it's what encourage clients to ask for their services, in audit firms there is a Brand Management System which deal with all the matters that relates to the firm brand including the visual identity then, brand characteristics and all related activities that will strengthen the brand associations in their clients minds, it depends on the audit office size (which is under the main audit firm) to have a separate brand department or only a brand responsibilities manager, however such department main task is to make sure of internal branding as all the auditors are the audit firm brand ambassadors and make sure that they represent the brand appropriately while dealing with the clients, and work on external branding activities that are reflecting the brand value and the services which the audit firm provides.

For improving the firm branding strategy understanding, strengthening the brand culture within the firm, the brand department must measure the brand understanding among the employees and outside the organization, and have some tools for the BMS that helps to reach the target of such system, which are: Brand Charter, Branding Reports, Distribution of Branding Responsibilities.

2.8.1. Brand Measuring

Brand Measuring is “to track consumer brand knowledge structures and his responses to respond to different aspects of the brand marketing” (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 337), it’s all about: what a customer is currently believing about the brand and what he/she is going to value in the brand, also from the organization side, what it is saying currently about the brand and where it would like taking it in the future (Keller, 2013, p. 300).

Also, one way to measure the brand is the organization’s sales numbers and are the consumers WTP a price premium to their branded products or services, this will help the Branding department to “adjust their strategies correspondingly” (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006, p. 196).

It is recommended that organizations measure their brand equity association on a regular basis, “in order to enable them to evaluate their brand marketing programs and to get further feedback from consumers”, such feedback will help identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the brand, also organization’s employees feedback is important (Lassar, et al., 1995, p. 16).

2.8.2. Brand Charter

A Brand Charter one of the BMS tools, it is defined as a documented overall brand strategy of the organization including all brand elements, “it is providing relevant guidelines to company marketing managers and the main marketing partners outside the company such as advertising agencies or marketing research suppliers” (Keller, 2013, p. 307). The word (Charter) is used to reflect how important this strategic document is, as it is like a contract between the brand and its stakeholders, and audience, it helps to identify the long-term goals of the brand and how it will interact with and overcome the challenges of its marketplace.

A Brand Charter “provide the company’s general philosophy related to its brands, for example: what a brand is, why brands matter, and why brand management is relevant to the company, it also includes a summary of the activities related to the brand progress tracking and brand research procedures, it also presents the expected outcomes of such researches and includes their latest findings” (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006, p. 192).

As explained in (Keller, 2013, p. 307) a Brand Charter has to include:

- The organization view of the Brand and its importance and its scope.
- Set up the brand targets and comparing it with the actual one, and how these targets are measured and what tracking studies are used.
- Steps suggested for marketers to work on brands managing with some general strategic guidelines, stressing innovation, clarity, and consistency in marketing thinking over time.
- Describe the appropriate brand characteristics in respect to trademark usage, design considerations, communications, and packaging.

Having a Brand Charter “works on encouraging managers to keep thinking about different aspects of brand management, it helps to create and communicate the brand, direct and structure the brand and manage the brand organization” (Macrae & Uncles, 1997, p. 67).

According to (Macrae, 1996, p. 284) he explained that: “The Brand Chartering Handbook’ is priceless for its purposes at presenting business to the brand management, it recommends a very detailed step-by-step approach, in order that everyone in the business team will be having a shared understanding of the brand unique purpose that they work for, it is a living scripts upon which everybody in the organization agrees and which specify brand identity”.

An audit firm relays on its brand to get more clients and their WTP a price premium, all audit firms have their brand policies and most of them document each and everything related to their brands in their firms Brand Charters such as their brand positioning, core message, visual identity and responsibilities to the brand, each one of the big 4 audit firms is committed to its brand and this is shown in their Brand Charters for example:

- It is written in Deloitte Branding code that: it reflects the expectations for all Deloitte personnel and their duties toward the brand as a Deloitte Brand representations in order to sustain the public trust (Deloitte , 2016, p. 9).
- KPMG says that their Branding code is “designed for providing a basic understanding of the KPMG branding standards they have around the world” (KPMG, 2005, p. 5).

- The PwC Branding code defines: “how they should behave and conduct a branded business in a wide range of settings and situations” (PwC, 2011, p. 14).
- EY “is promoting and supporting their global branding code in their daily business activities, through both personal leadership and business practice” (EY, 2017, p. 5).

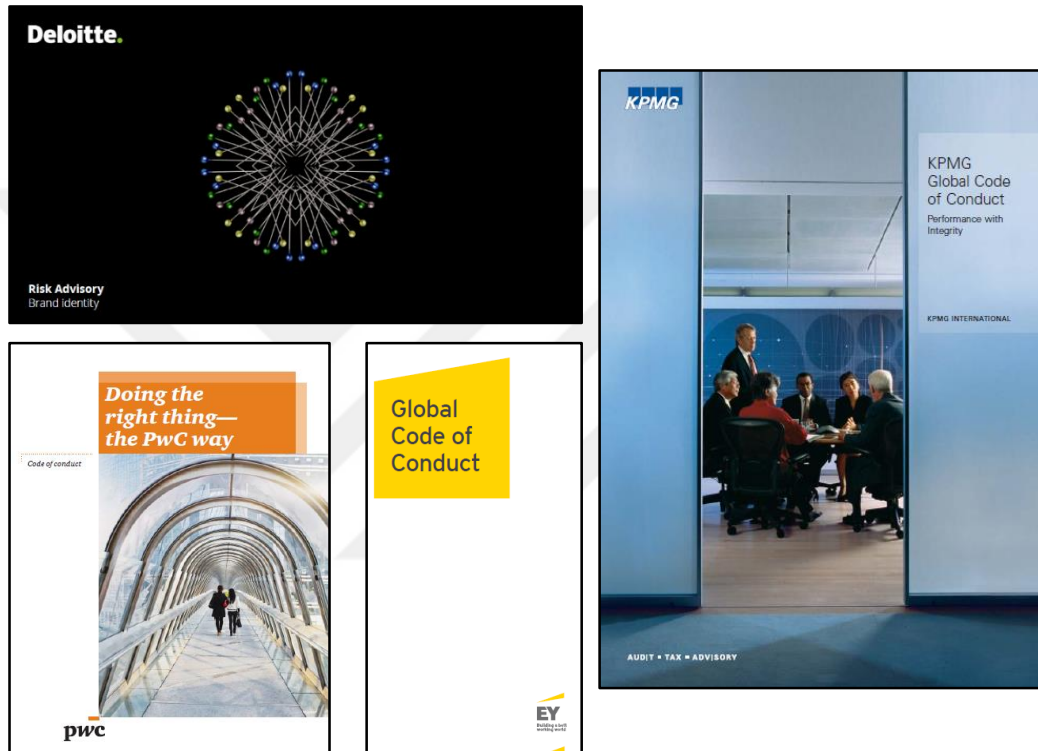


Figure 2.3: Brand Charter examples of the Big Four audit firms

Source: Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and EY websites.

2.8.3. Branding Reports

A Brand Report is a detailed report that explains what is happening with the brand and why it is happening, describing the current position of the brand and why it is in that position.

It provides “a comprehensive and actionable summaries information related to the brand, it shows the results of the tracking serveries and other performance Brand Measuring activities” (Keller, 2013, p. 308).

It is used by the organizations as a brand audit tool to see its strengths and weakness of their product characteristics and compares them with other strong competitors' brands in the same category, in order to help management to assess the current level of the brand and plan the future activities that will step forward the brand.

It contains consumers' perceptions of key attribute or benefit associations, preferences, and behavior toward the brand, also it includes more descriptive information from the market-level side.

By using a Brand Reports managers will be able to grade the performance of their brand by considering ten characteristics that the world's strongest brands share, as (Keller, 2000, pp. 4-8) explained in his article these characteristics are:

- The brand excels at delivering the benefits customers truly desire.
- The brand is staying relevant.
- The pricing strategy is according to consumers' perceptions of value.
- The brand is properly positioned.
- The brand is consistent.
- The brand portfolio and hierarchy are making sense.
- The brand makes use of and coordinates a full repertoire of marketing activities to build equity.
- The brand's managers understand the meaning of the brand to consumers.
- The brand gives appropriate support, and that support is sustained over the long run.
- The company is monitoring the sources of brand equity.

Audit firms including the Big four have an annual Reports related to performance, ethics, and risks, Branding issues are included in these reports which are a collective report of the audit firm offices around the world, information about the firm brand position can be found in these reports.

Statistics about the office performance including the number of new clients and continues clients are considered as and indicators about the satisfaction of the service they get and the value they give for the brand, feedback is also obtained from employees to find out to

which level they are attached to the brand and is the brand well-presented from their opinions or not.

Such reports include an evaluation of the office performance represented by the office financial results and its relation with the appropriate brand presentation, this evaluation will help plan the coming working season and set up the office next targets. (Deloitte, 2018), (KPMG, 2014) and (PWC, 2018).

2.8.4. Distribution of Branding Responsibilities

In order to develop a strong BMS organizations have to define clearly the responsibilities and processes related to the brand, it depends on the organization size to have a brand management department, a brand section under the marketing department or just responsibilities assigned to someone, such responsibilities are related to overseeing brand equity, organizational design and structures according to their brand value and managing marketing partners (Keller, 2013, p. 309).

Branding responsibilities are defined as: “type of a responsibility structure in where managers are assigned of brands or products and are responsible for their performance” (Low & Fullerton, 1994, p. 173).

According to (Keller, 2013, p. 311) there are many responsibilities related to the brand internally and externally such as:

- Monitoring, measuring and managing brand equity and strength.
- Increasing brand awareness, accessibility, value, relevant differentiation, and emotional connection.
- Developing a brand plan and monitoring any progress against that plan.
- Drive the brand understanding and support throughout the organization.
- Brand messaging – elevator speech, tagline, campaign themes, proof points, etc.
- Maintain and share the brand identity.
- Help to determine identities for new brands or sub-brands.
- Anticipating and accommodating new brand identity requirements.

Taking care of such responsibilities need to have for example a Brand Manager, Brand Coordinator and brand department staff as such team will work inside the organization to oversee the implementation of the brand charter and brand equity reports internally, between the organization employees and all of them, are reflecting the brand spirit in their daily work, also the brand team will work outside the organization to make sure that the product and marketing actions reflect the brand spirit, monitor the retailers and how are they representing the brand and analyzing consumers' behavior toward the brand.

Confirming the important of having responsibilities related to the brand and assigning them to the appropriate department and the appropriate person (Aimé, et al., 2018, p. 420) described Brand Managers as absolute experts of the organization brand, also according to (Wierenga & Van Bruggen, 2001, p. 128) they explained that "Brand Managers are working in a rich information environment and must constantly translate them into successful marketing actions which support the organization brand", on the other hand (Hankinson & Cowking, 1997, p. 259) recommended that Brand Manager should be well trained and have a greater understanding of the role of other marketing departments so that they can work side by side with them, better understanding of their role will help Brand Managers to "scan the market environment, implement brand programs and evaluate their brand performance" (Veloutsou, 2002, p. 452) and for global brands there must have "a global brand managers have a responsibility to create and support a global brand identity" (Louro & Cunha, 2001, p. 862).

Audit firms including Big Four (depending on the office size) have a Brand Manager or a Brand Coordinator who is dealing with the branding issues internally and externally and reports directly to the head office.

Generally, in any organization:

- A Brand Manager: is considered as guardians of the brand and responsible to ensure that the products, services, and product lines are under the brand guidelines and appropriate for current and potential clients, he works tirelessly with the marketing department on making sure that every aspect of the brand strategy is just right. He also needs to be in contact with other departments such as finance, sales, product development, and marketing communications to ensure a strategic

overview of the business and future market opportunities and be able to draw on the consumer research and monitor market trends to provide feedback and analysis on key brand activity.

- A Brand Coordinator: supports the Brand Managers with day-to-day client relationships and project management to ensure that projects are completed efficiently and effectively. Oversees the development of promotional activities and make sure that they are according to the brand standards. Updating employees with the brand standards and responsibilities toward the brand.

So successful organizations including audit firms consider Brand as an identity that should be available internally and externally as a strong well-managed brand could be a key for consumer WTP a price premium.

2.9. Terms Definitions List:

Table 2.1: Terms definitions list

Terms:	Definitions:
Brand:	“A name, a term, a sign, a symbol, or a design, or a combination of them, created to identify the goods and services of a single seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from the other competitors' goods or services” (Keller, 2013, p. 30)
Leveraging with a secondary brand:	“Creating brand equity by connecting the brand to other information in the consumers' memory that expresses a meaning to them” (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 334)
Brand Awareness:	“Related to the strength or trace in the memory, which can be measured as the consumer's identifying ability of the brand under different conditions” (Keller, 2013, p. 72)

Table 2.2: (Cont.) Terms definitions list

Terms:	Definitions:
Brand Name:	“Is a name which is given by the producer to a product or a group of products and becomes a trademark” (Park & Lennon, 2009, p. 149).
Brand Characteristics:	“The core values and fundamentals that presents the true essence of the brand. They are a group of attributes that are identified as the physical, distinctive, and personality traits of the brand similar to that of an individual” (Bhasin, 2018).
Brand Reputation:	“How a brand is viewed by customers, stakeholders and the market in general, it is considered as a source of demand and lasting attractiveness, the image of superior quality and added value justifies a premium price” (Keller, 2013, p. 24).
Brand Predictability:	“The level of accuracy that a consumer can anticipate a consistent degree of product quality or service” (Kim & Jones, 2009, p. 283).
Brand Competence:	“A competent brand is the one that is able to solve a consumer’s problems and meet his needs” (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 346).
Brand Creditability:	A credible brand is a brand that: “is able (expertise) and willing (trustworthiness) to stay true and has a commitment to performance-enhancing” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 101).
Perceived Uniqueness:	“The special element of a brand which makes it different from other brands” (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 102)

Table 2.3: (Cont.) Terms definitions list

Terms:	Definitions:
Willing to Pay (WTP) a price premium:	“A consumer being prepared to pay more for a particular service brand instead of a comparable alternative brands” (Casidy & Wymer, 2016, p. 190).
Brand Familiarity:	“The amount of time spent by a consumer processing information related to the brand, regardless of the processing content or type that was involved” (Baker, et al., 1986, p. 637)
Product Category Involvement:	“Refers to the enduring perceptions of consumers to product importance, depending on their inherent values, needs, and interests” (Belanche, et al., 2017, p. 78).
Brand Image:	Is “consumers’ perceptions about a brand, according to the reflection of the brand associations they held their memory” (Keller, 2013, p. 73)
Brand Consistency:	Is how to get the attention of consumers and how to keep things tight and tied in order to create a consumer recall in order to influence their buying habits.
Branding Management System:	“Is a group of organizational processes that are designed for improving the understanding and use of the concept of brand equity within a firm” (Keller, 2013, p. 60)
Brand Measuring:	“Is to track consumer brand knowledge structures and his responses to respond to different aspects of the brand marketing” (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 337)

Table 2.4: (Cont.) Terms definitions list

Terms:	Definitions:
Brand Charter:	A documented overall brand strategy of the organization including all brand elements, that “provides relevant guidelines to company marketing managers and the main marketing partners outside the company such as advertising agencies or marketing research suppliers” (Keller, 2013, p. 307).
Brand Report:	“Is a detailed report that explains what is happening with the brand and why it is happening, describing the current position of the brand and why it is in that position” (Keller, 2013, p. 308).
Branding responsibilities:	“Type of a responsibility structure in where managers are assigned of brands or products and are responsible for their performance” (Low & Fullerton, 1994, p. 173)

2.10. Conceptual Frame Work:

In (Dwivedi, et al., 2018) the direct effect of Brand Experience and its indirect effect through Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness on the consumer WTP a price premium was studied, this research adopted the same conceptual framework, but to test the direct effect of Brand Characteristics and their indirect effect through Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness on the consumer WTP a price premium, adopting the Brand Characteristics part as an independent variable from (Lau & Lee, 1999), this will lead us to the conceptual framework of this research as shown in figure 2.3.

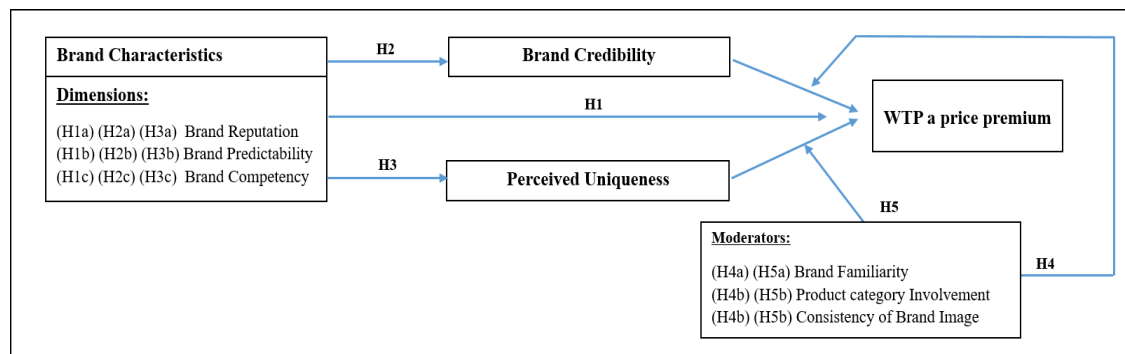


Figure 2.4: The research Conceptual framework

According to the research conceptual framework, the independent variable of this research is the Brand Characteristics including three dimensions according to (Lau & Lee, 1999), which are: Brand Reputation, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency, while the dependent variable of this research is the WTP a price premium. The Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness are playing a mediating role between the Independent variable, the Brand Characteristics and the dependent variable, the WTP a price premium, also Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement and Consistency of Brand Image are moderating the relation between the Brand Credibility, Perceived Uniqueness and the WTP a price premium.

The hypothesis states that the Brand Characteristics has a direct effect on consumer willingness to pay a price premium for branded goods or services, and there is an indirect effect of the Brand Characteristics as the more positive characteristics the brand have and the more these characteristics are shown in the brand behavior and the more these characteristics are visible to the consumer, the more the consumer will believe the Brand Credibility and its Perceived Uniqueness and finally the more he will be willing to pay a price premium.

This research will implement this framework on the Audit and Accounting services as the research case, by analyzing the responses of the survey adopted. According to the conceptual framework and previous research studies, the following hypotheses of this research were shaped as the following:

Hypotheses 1

- **H1.** Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) have a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- **H0.** Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) do not have a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Hypotheses 2

- **H1.** Brand Credibility significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:
 - Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) significantly influences Brand Credibility, and
 - Brand Credibility significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- **H0.** Brand Credibility does not significantly mediate the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:
 - Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) do not significantly influence Brand Credibility, and
 - Brand Credibility does not significantly influence Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Hypotheses 3

- **H1.** Perceived Uniqueness significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:
 - Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) significantly influences Perceived Uniqueness, and
 - Perceived Uniqueness significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- **H0.** Perceived Uniqueness does not significantly mediate the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:
 - Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) do not positively and significantly influence Perceived Uniqueness, and
 - Perceived Uniqueness do not positively and significantly influence Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Hypotheses 4

- **H1.** The moderating variables, (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image) significantly moderate the influence of Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- **H0.** The moderating variables, (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image) do not moderate the influence of Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Hypotheses 5

- **H1.** The moderating variables, (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image) significantly moderate the influence Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- **H0.** The moderating variables, (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image) do not moderate the influence of Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

This research is implemented in Yemen and Turkey to compare the results of the above hypothesis between the Yemeni environment and the Turkish environment.

2.11. Research Gap:

This research examines the direct effects of Brand Characteristics and their indirect effects through Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness, on consumer Wiliness to Pay a Price Premium. The research gap which is predicted in this research is that there are nearly no studies discussed such effects as most of them discussed the brand experience on the consumer WTP a Price Premium or discussed the relation between Brand Characteristics and brand trust or brand loyalty, so this research is combining two deferent parts of relations in order to create a new one.

Many researchers have focused on the WTP a price premium on the physical goods or general services such as hotels and airlines, but this research is focusing on a professional services industry taking the auditing and accounting services as a research case example.

This research may be valuable for researchers as it opens a new area for doing more studies related to the Branding and Marketing filed in a new industry which is the professional services industry and tests more Branding variables and their effects in such industry.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In order to have an appropriate methodology for any research, an appropriate research foundation, assessment, and development are needed, as the methodology selection decision should be “according to the research question, purpose, and context” as such method should serve the research and lead to the targeted results. (Venkatesh, et al., 2013, p. 22).

An appropriate research methodology will lead to a good data analysis which will bring us more valid and accurate output.

This chapter provides an explanation about the method and procedures of implementing this research. It includes the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collecting instrument and statistical techniques used.

3.2. Research Design

This research target is to determine if there is a direct impact of Brand Characteristics (which includes Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) on Consumer WTP a price premium for audit and accounting services and their indirect impact with the mediating roles of Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness.

In order to achieve this target: a quantitative research approach has been designed and implemented, as this research is formed “according to the meanings taken from numbers, results collected in a numerical standardized form and analysis directed by diagrams and statistics” (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 482), such numerical data was collected from a specific sample that represent the whole population in Yemen and in Turkey in order to generalize and compare the results in each country separately.

An online self-administered survey was used to collect part of the primary data, as surveys help collecting data from a large sample of individuals who are questioned about their opinions and views, online survey was used as it saves time and cost of collecting the needed data and helps to reach a wide audience wherever their geographical location is (Ilieva, et al., 2002, p. 363), this is supported by (Wright, 2005) as he explained that “online survey can be deferent from each other according to the available features, user costs, and limitations”, and conclude that an assessment of the research goals, timeline, and financial situation, should be done by the researcher before selecting the data collecting method.

In this research an online survey was supported by an offline one as some data was collected by hard copy questioners that were delivered personally by the researcher to the respondents, this helped to get more information from the discussion and interaction between the researcher and the respondent especially in Turkey, as using online and offline surveys “complete each other and they provide some increased advantages when using them together rather than applied separately” (Ilieva, et al., 2002, p. 362).

The survey participants were requested to respond to the two main parts of the survey, the first part was the demographics data part, which helps to understand more about the respondent and his/her relation with the survey topic. The second part was about the variables related questions that will help to test the research hypotheses, an explanation about the research topic, goals and research population and targeted sample with some guidelines was provided prior to the survey questions. The survey was approved from Istanbul Aydin University ethical committee.

As quantitative research approach has been designed and implemented for this research, the data was collected and converted to numbers and statistically analyzed so that the research results and conclusion can be formed.

As this research has a complex model, that study the direct and the indirect effects of the independent variables to the dependent variable including a mediators and moderators effects, all that in two groups of data sets, Structural Equational Model (SEM) is the most suitable statistical analysis technique to reach the research objectives as it “uses several types of models to show relationships between observed variables, providing a

quantitative analysis of the theoretical model designed by the researcher” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p. 2).

SEM can test and evaluate various and complex models, as it can provide analysis to various complicated hypothetical models “that study how a group of variables is defined constructed and how these constructs are connected to each other” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p. 2).

In addition to that the writer of the main adopted article (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 104) used SEM while testing the brand experience effects on consumer WTP a Price Premium, as it is the most appropriate “for regression analysis that tests indirect effects when involving mediators and moderators”, also SEM is appropriate for path exploratory and confirmatory analysis.

As variables in this research cannot be measured directly they can be considered as Latent variables, such variables are indicated by other observed variables which are responsible to designate them, all these variables are measured by means of surveys, tests and statistical analysis (Byrne, 2012, p. 4).

The research steps of this research started by finding the main idea and work on its development by reviewing the previous relevant studies and articles, till reaching the point of formatting the main research variables, according to the results of previous literature review the research questions and hypotheses with the research conceptual framework were shaped, according to that research was designed and the needed data was collected, in order to get appropriate answers for the research questions and perform the test of the research hypotheses, the collected data was measured and analyzed by the SEM which led us to the research results and their interpretation, finally the conclusion was formed and written.

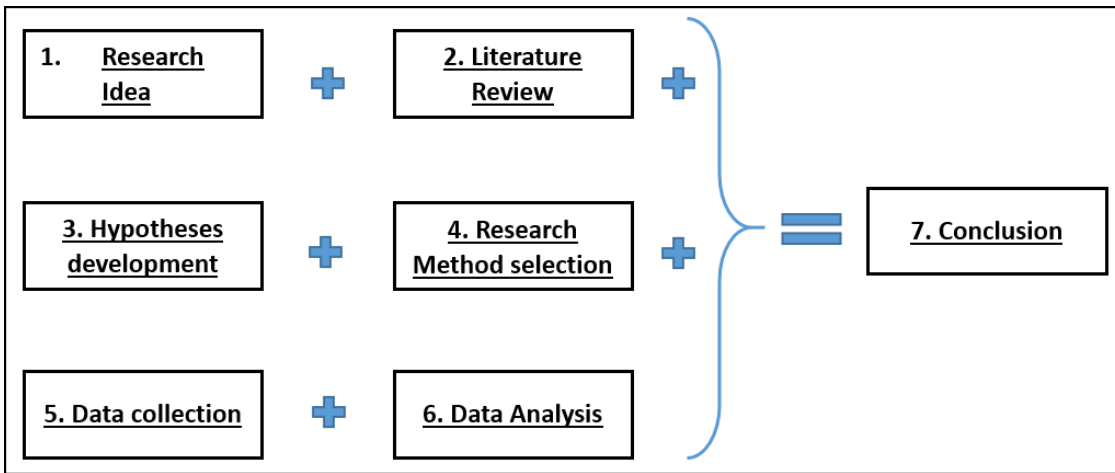


Figure 3.1: Summary of the research steps of the research

3.3. Population

As this research is analyzing the impact of Brand characteristic on consumer WTP a price premium for audit and accounting services the target was any organization that has been audited by any audit firm, that includes companies, nonprofit organizations, projects and foreign companies' branches, this research population includes more than 100 organizations so a sampling method will be used to select the targeted respondents as according to (Martínez-Mesa, et al., 2014, p. 611) "the smaller the targeted population, for example, less than 100 respondent, the greater the sample size will be".

In each organization the final decision of selecting the external auditor is taken by the board of directors, taking in consideration the opinion of the general management and finance department.

Financial departments represented by accountants of each organization are responsible for dealing with the auditors while auditing is done and they are representing the organization top management views and decision in front of the audit team.

According to that, the targeted population is top management, financial management, and accountants in organizations that get external audit and accounting services in Yemen and Turkey.

The Yemeni respondents are collected separately from the Turkish respondents in order to be able to compare the results between the two countries.

Only one response was obtained from each organization in order to cover deferent companies' opinions and experiences.

3.4. Sampling Method

In this research a convenience sampling method which is one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used to select the target respondents, according to (Etikan & Bala, 2017, p. 1) the non-probability sampling technique is done “according to the judgment of the researcher without the involve of any probability technique”, on the other hand according to (Etikan, et al., 2016, p. 2) convenience sampling method “targets respondents that meet certain practical criteria and considered as a convenient source of data for the research”.

In each country a target of 200 sample was determined as according to (Varoquaux, 2018, p. 72) “a 200 observation will leads to 7% errors in prediction accuracy” , following the same explanation method of (Thornton & Thornton, 2004, p. 133) this can be explained as “if the survey were to be repeated, in 93% of the cases the results would be the same as that found in the present sample”.

Margin of error can be calculated according to the formula: $Z * \sqrt{\frac{\hat{P}(1-\hat{P})}{n}}$ where “z = z-score corresponds to your desired confidence levels, n = sample size and $\hat{P}$ = sample proportion (“P-hat”).” (Surendran, 2019), the following graph and table explained in (Reyes & Ghosh, 2013, p. 576) shows the relation between the sample size and the margin of error, as when the sample size increases the margin of error decrease.

Table 3.1: Sample size & Margin of Error (Surendran, 2019)

Sample size	10	20	50	100	200	300	400	500	700	800	900	1000	2000
Margin of error	0.31	0.22	0.14	0.1	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.02



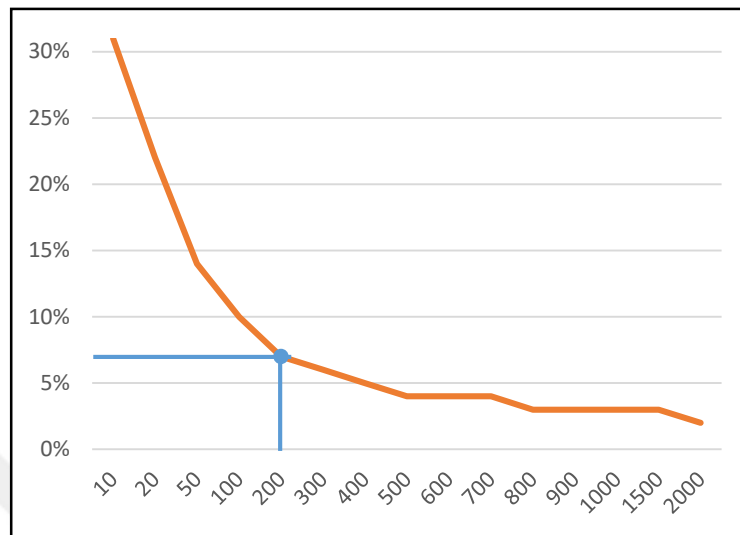


Figure 3.2: Sample size & Margin of Error (Reyes & Ghosh, 2013, p. 576)

In addition to that studying individual people's behavior is easier than studying companies' behavior in terms of collecting data as each company represent one participant in the study survey especially when asking something related to financial behavior, when studying the factors affecting audit fees in Kuwait (AL-Mutairi, et al., 2017, p. 333) targeted 100 company and accepted 80 responses for their study and (Siddiqui, et al., 2013) when studying Big-Four affiliates audit fee premiums earnings in Bangladesh as an emerging markets example targeted 112 company, however in this study 200 company was targeted.

According to (Iacobucci, 2010, pp. 94-95) he explained that “when having a strong measurement such as 3 or 4 indicators per factor and the structural model path is not complex, a 100 to 200 sample size can be plenty” this is confirmed by (Wolf, et al., 2013, p. 914) referring to (Boomsma, 1982, 1985) explained that “various rules-of-thumb have been advanced, including a minimum sample size of 100 or 200”, also (Nicolaou & Masoner, 2013, p. 269) referring to (Lomax 1989 and Hoogland 1999) recommendation of 100 or 200 observation for using SEM.

In Yemen 241 survey and in Turkey 222 was collected and an initial review and data screening was done in order to remove invalid responses, as according to (Dharmesti &

Nugroho, 2012, p. 42) this will help reducing the error that comes from memory which is named as the recall effect, the final sample number was 200 from Yemen as 41 responses was unaccepted and 200 response from Turkey as 22 responses was unaccepted. The 200 accepted response from Yemen includes 84 company that has been audited by a branded audit firm and 116 by non-branded audit firm, on the other hand the 200 accepted response in Turkey includes 73 company that has been audited by a branded audit firm and 127 by non-branded audit firm.

3.5. Data collecting Instrument

This research is considered as a quantitative research, so the collection of the data was done by a survey which was adapted from two articles, the independent variables questions (Brand Characteristics) was adopted from (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 364) while the mediators (Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness), Moderator (Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement and Consistency of Brand Image) and dependent variable (WTP a Price Premium) questions was adopted from (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 103), using a 5 point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree) such close-ended questions type was selected as it needs the minimum writing activity which makes it easy and less time consuming for the respondent.

The survey starts with an introduction about the researcher, the research main idea and goals and an explanation about the targeted respondents, the survey questions started with the demographic part to get an idea about the target respondent and how much he/she is related to the research, the second part of the survey includes the main variables measuring questions.

The questions adopted was in English language and translated to Arabic and distributed in Yemen in bought languages in the same form in order to give the respondent a clearer understanding reference of the questions in Arabic in case he/she didn't get the meaning from the English version of the question, the English questions are provided in Appendixes: A and the Arabic version of the questions are provided in Appendixes: B. In order to distribute the survey in Turkey the questions were translated to Turkish language, the Turkish version of the questions, are provided in Appendixes: C.

In order to get an accurate translation, the translation process took two steps the first step was translating the questions from English to the second language by an experienced native language speaker, the second step was to translate the questions from the second language back to English by a different person and compare it with the original English questions to make sure that they are the same in order not to create any semantic losses, which could lead to any changes in the original meaning of the measurement item.

It is important to be accurate when translating scientific research as according to (Olohan, 2007, p. 131) “a range of approaches, frameworks, and methodologies may be adopted, depending on the focus of research under translation” in order to deliver the same meaning and results of the research from its original language to the second language.

3.6. Statistical Techniques

The statistical techniques used for this research are Simple Percentage Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equational Modeling (SEM).

- **Simple Percentage Analysis:** This analysis is used on the analysis of the demographic part of the research survey for a better understanding of the targeted respondents. This analysis depends on the frequency distribution of the data collected and doesn't have a role in the hypothesis testing.
- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):** This analysis is considered as the first step of the SEM analysis as it confirms the reliability of the data collected and the validity of the measures, if confirms “to what extent, observed variables are linked to their underlying factors” (Byrne, 2012, p. 6).
CFA analysis measures the relation between the observed variables themselves (reliability) and their relation with their observed variable (validity).
- **Structural Equational Modeling (SEM):** This analysis helps to test “various theoretical models, that hypothesize how sets of variables define constructs and how these constructs are related to each other in a quantitative manner” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p. 2).
SEM tests the structural path between variables but CFA confirm the relation between latent and observed variables.

Analysis software used for this research is IBM SPSS version 23 and IBM SPSS AMOS version 22.

- IBM SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is one of the common software that is used in the social and behavioral sciences analysis with a lot of statistical techniques that help in analyzing surveys' primary data (Landau & Everitt, 2004, p. 1).

In this research, SPSS has been used to process and prepare the data for the CFA and SEM analysis.

- IBM SPSS AMOS: Analysis of moment structure (AMOS) can be used for CFA and SEM analysis as provides an ability to a path diagram and it helps reflect the estimates on the demonstrated graphs (Byrne, 2016, p. 16), AMOS is supported by the SPSS and bought of them are used when conducting a CFA factor or a SEM analyses.

3.7. Ethical consideration of the research

It is important for any research to be done and implemented with an ethical border, in order to be more credible and to get the support of the society, as according to (Sobočan, et al., 2018, p. 1) "Ethical dilemmas are inherent throughout the research process, from the choice about what to study and how to study it through to analysis and dissemination of findings".

Ethical considerations were followed in all the process of the research, the data collection process of this research was carried out by a high privacy and confidentiality procedure as the data was only used for the purpose of the analysis, as the data was not used for personal interest at any stage of the research implementation, the company and the participant privacy was considered as no company name or employee identity was requested in the survey.



4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter represents the analysis done for the collected data starting from the Simple Percentage Analysis of the demographic data and the CFA factor analysis till the SEM hypotheses testing, followed by explanation and discussions of the outcomes of each analysis.

4.2. Simple Percentage Analysis

For more understanding of the targeted respondents and their criteria that make them appropriate to participate in this research, some demographic questions were included in the survey. Simple Percentage Analysis gives an accumulated summary of the respondent's characteristics according to the frequency distribution of the demographic data collected, it is calculated by the following formula: $\text{Percentage} = (\text{Number of Respondents} * 100) / \text{Total Number of Respondents}$

As this research is comparing between two countries T-test is used to compare between the demographic results of both countries as according to (Janes, 2002, p. 469) it is used to compare between two independent groups by if there is a significant difference between their means, in this test if the P-value is less than 0.05 ($P\text{-value} \leq 0.05$), the groups are different from each other's otherwise there will be no deferent between the groups.

Demographic questions are divided in to two parts as below:

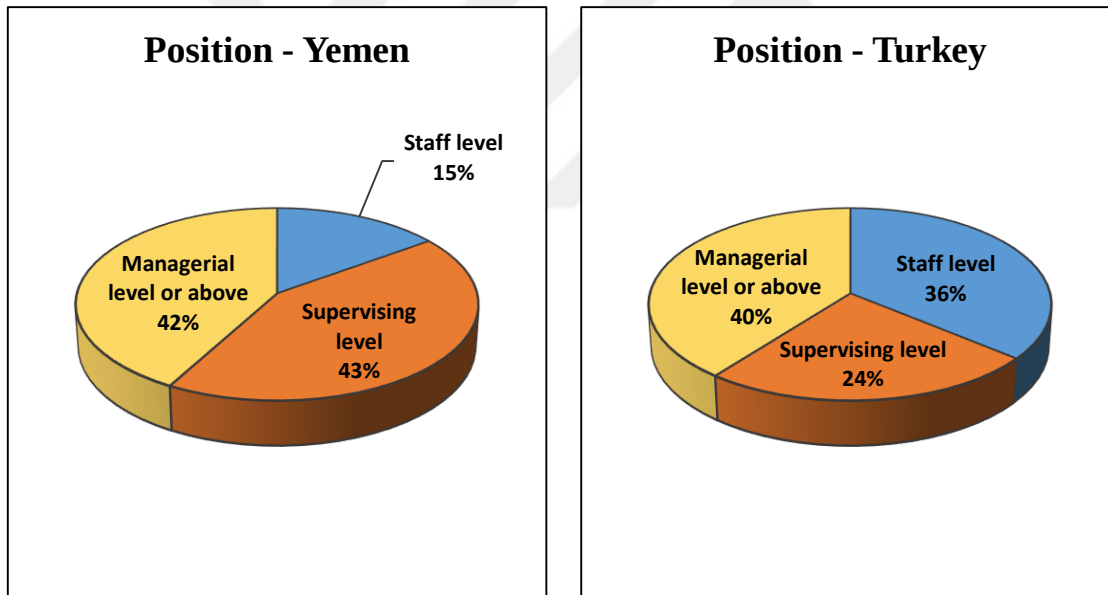
- First part of the demographic questions included two questions related to the position of the respondent and his/her years of experience, such questions will help to have an idea about how much the respondent is involved in the external auditor selecting decision and how much experience he/she has in the financial work, the results of these questions was as shown below:

Table 4.1: Respondents position percentage Q1 – Yemen

Position	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Staff level.	30	15%	15%
Supervising level.	86	43%	58%
Managerial level or above.	84	42%	100%
Total	200	100%	

Table 4.2: Respondents position percentage Q1 – Turkey

Position	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Staff level.	72	36%	36%
Supervising level.	49	24.5%	60.5%
Managerial level or above.	79	39.5%	100%
Total	200	100%	

**Figure 4.1:** Respondents position percentage - Yemen & Turkey

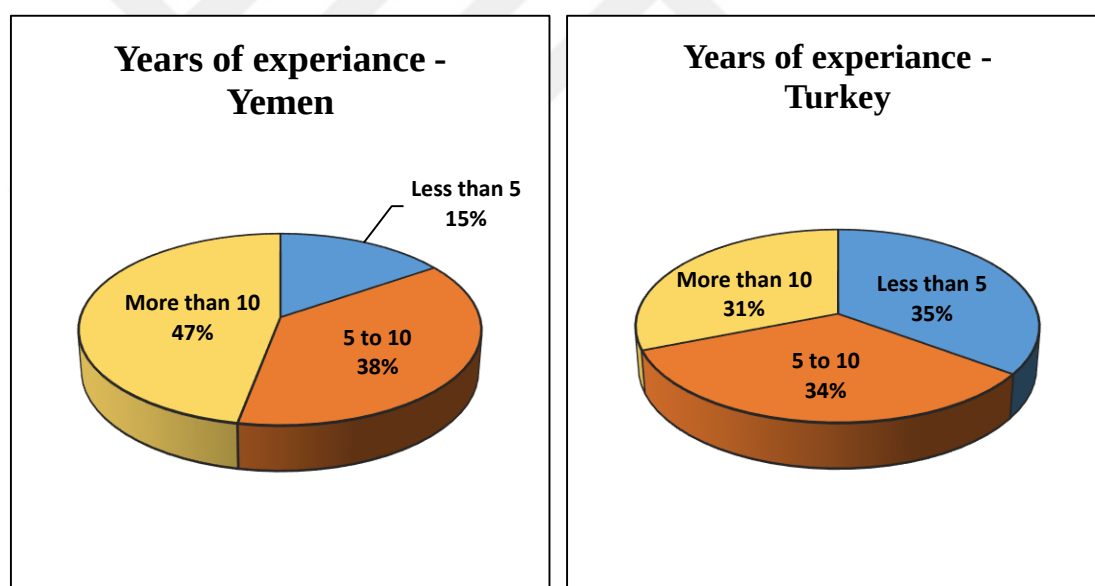
The above results showed that the majority of the respondents in both countries were from a managerial level or above which indicate that the majority of the respondents have a major role in selecting the external auditor of their organizations, however the T-test P-value result was .003 which is less than 0.05 which indicate a difference between the groups, the above charts shows that the difference is in the supervising level and the staff level but the important point is that the managerial level are quite the same.

Table 4.3: Respondents years of experience Q2 – Yemen

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 years or less.	31	15.5%	15.5%
More than 5 years, to 10 years.	75	37.5%	53%
More than 10 years.	94	47%	100%
Total	200	100%	

Table 4.4: Respondents years of experience Q2 - Turkey

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 years or less.	70	35%	35%
More than 5 years, to 10 years.	68	34%	69%
More than 10 years.	62	31%	100%
Total	200	100%	

**Figure 4.2:** Respondents years of experience - Yemen & Turkey

The above results showed that half of the Yemeni respondents have more than 10 years' experience in the financial field while the years of experience frequency for the Turkish respondents were distributed equally between the question's options. This result is confirmed by the T-test P-value result which was .000, such result confirms the difference between the groups, however combining the (More than 10 years) and the (5 to 10 years) Turkish respondents will make them more than (Less than 5 years), so this is an accepted distribution for this research.

- Second part of the demographic questions included two questions related to the frequency of the external auditing process in the organization is it yearly, every 6 months or quarterly and when the last time the organization had its financial statements audited, this will help to get more idea about how regular the organization deals with the audit firms and how the relative information is fresh in the respondents' memory the results of these questions was as shown below:

Table 4.5: Frequency of organization external auditing process Q3 – Yemen

Frequency auditing process	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yearly.	174	87%	87%
Every 6 months.	13	6.5%	93.5%
Quarterly.	13	6.5%	100%
Total	200	100%	

Table 4.6: Frequency of organization external auditing process Q3 - Turkey

Frequency auditing process	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yearly.	124	62%	62%
Every 6 months.	27	13.5%	75.5%
Quarterly.	49	24.5%	100%
Total	200	100%	

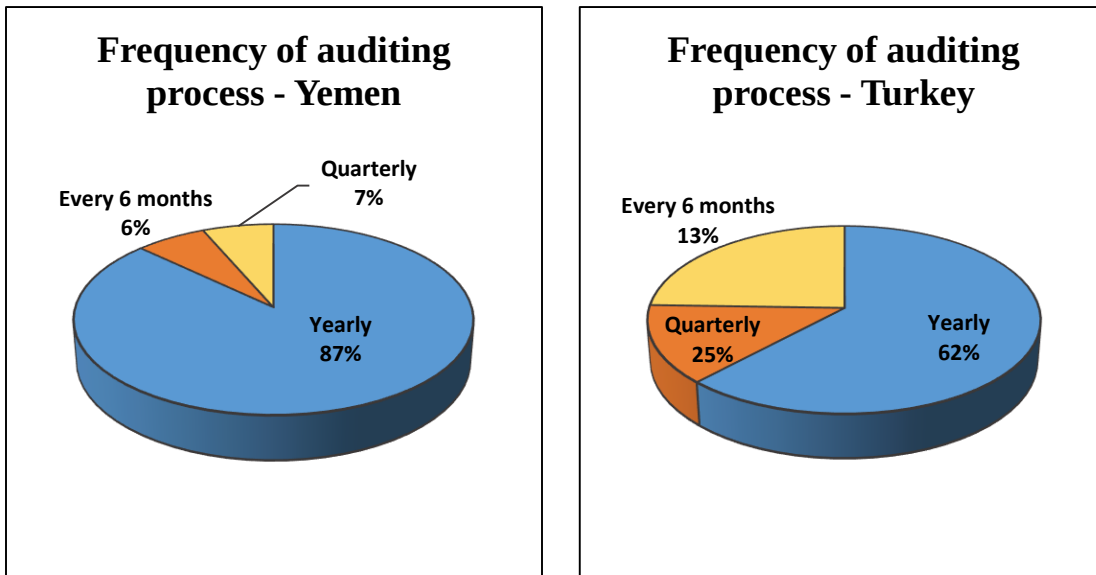


Figure 4.3: Frequency of organization external auditing process - Yemen & Turkey

The above results show that most of the targeted companies for this research in both countries have their financial statements audited yearly, however in Turkey companies get their financial statements reviewed in a quarterly basis or every 6 months more than Yemen, this difference is confirmed by the T-test results as it was 0.000, such results give a positive indicator about how regular the organization deals with the audit firms.

Table 4.7: Last time the organization was audited Q4 – Yemen

Last time audited	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Before 2 years.	24	12%	12%
Last Year.	52	26%	38%
This year.	124	62%	100%
Total	200	100%	

Table 4.8: Last time the organization was audited Q4 – Turkey

Last time audited	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Before 2 years.	11	5.5%	5.5%
Last Year.	52	26%	31.5%
This year.	137	68.5%	100%
Total	200	100%	

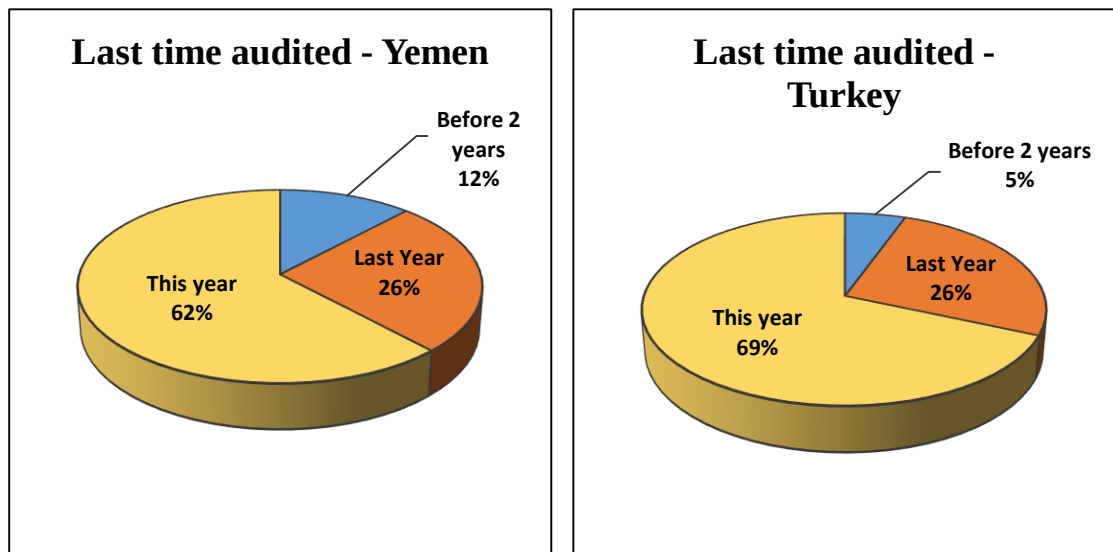


Figure 4.4: Last time the organization was audited - Yemen & Turkey

The above results show that majority of the targeted companies both countries have their financial statements audited this year (2018), this is confirmed by the T-test result as it was 0.05 indicating that no differences between the two countries, which gives us a positive indicator about how fresh the relative information needed for this research is fresh in the respondents' memory.

According to the results of the demographic data, Simple Percentage Analysis showed above it is concluded that: Targeted respondents of this research have an appropriate criteria and characteristics that made them appropriate to participate in this research.

- Additional descriptive analysis that includes Mean and Standard Deviation of all the survey questions and research variables can be found in Appendix D.

4.3. Data Screening

Data Screening is the first step of any analysis, as “it ensures that the data is usable, clean and prepared for any statistical analysis” (Gaskin, 2017), it includes two steps case screening and variable screening.

- Case Screening: is the process of reviewing, the individual respondents one by one to make sure that there are no missing answers in each questioner form received and no unengaged respondents that respond the same answer for all questions in the questioner form.

There are several techniques to track unengaged respondents one of them, which was used in this research, is to include some reversed scale questions in the questioner form, such questions will be in a negative form that needs the respondents to concentrate while answering the questions to give the appropriate answer.

Excel formulas also help to find unengaged respondents, to do that standard deviation formula is most appropriate, as getting a zero variance standard deviation results for a questioner form means that the respondent gives the same answer for all the questions.

The results of Case Screening lead to reject 41 responses from the Yemeni responses collected which lead to accept 200 responses and to reject 22 responses

from the Turkish responses which lead to accept 200 responses, such accepted responses do not have any missing answers and all of them are fully engaged.

- **Variable Screening:** this is the process of reviewing the responses of each variable of the research to make sure that there are no missing answers for any variable and to assess the normality distribution of each variable.

Normality Assessment: Normal distribution of any variable shows how the data is distributed for that variable, it depends on the number of the data collected as the more the data the better the results, in normality assessment the researcher makes sure that the variable data does not have a Skew or Kurtosis data distribution, such distributions reflects a none-normality data distribution, they can appear separately or together in any variable (Kline, 2011, p. 60).

Skew: shows that “the shape of the data distribution is not asymmetrical around its mean, a positive Skew indicates that most of the scores are below the mean, while a negative Skew indicates that most of the scores are above the mean” (Kline, 2011, p. 60).

Kurtosis: indicates if the data have a higher peak (heavy-tailed) or have a lower peak (light-tailed) comparing to normal distribution, having a higher peak will lead to a positive Kurtosis and having a lower peak will lead to a negative Kurtosis.

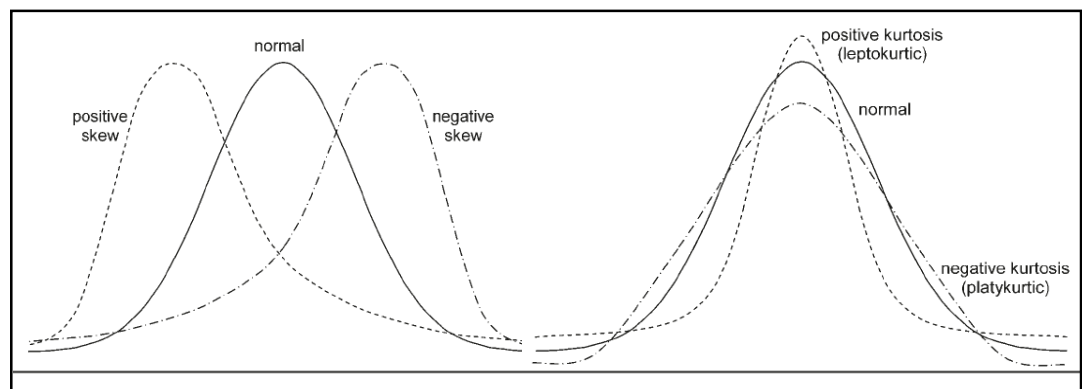


Figure 4.5: Skew & Kurtosis data distribution

“Having such extremely non-normally distributed data may influence the analysis in SPSS and AMOS”, so it may be better to remove the question or the variable that has such extremely non-normal distribution, or keep it under observation if it

is slightly non-normally distributed as its influence may not be significant to the analysis (Gaskin, 2017).

According to (Kline, 2011, p. 63) the interpretation of the Normality Assessment is subjected to the below rules:

- For Skewness getting a result that is higher than 3 ($SI > 3$) will indict that the data has an extremely positive Skew distribution, and getting a result that is less than -3 ($SI < -3$) will indict that the data has an extremely negative Skew distribution.
- For Kurtosis getting a result that is higher than 8 ($KI > 8$) will indict that the data has an extremely positive Kurtosis distribution, and getting a result that is less than -8 ($KI < -8$) will indict that the data has an extremely negative Kurtosis distribution.

For this research Normality Assessment was done by SPSS and according to the results shown in Appendixes: E.

- The Skewness distribution for the Yemeni data set variables was between 0.23 and -1.14 ($0.23 \geq SI \geq -1.14$) and the Kurtosis distribution was between 3.3 and -0.85 ($3.3 \geq KI \geq -0.85$).
- The Skewness distribution for the Turkish data set variables was between 0.04 and -1.28 ($0.04 \geq SI \geq -1.28$) and the Kurtosis distribution was between 2.38 and -0.81 ($2.38 \geq KI \geq -0.81$).

This will lead us to conclude that the data set in both countries do not have any Skewness or Kurtosis distribution and considered appropriate for SEM analyses. However, Q18 which has a 3.3 Kurtosis distribution was put under observation while analyzing and removed later when conducting the CFA analysis.

4.4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Factor analysis is used to determine “which sets of observed variables share common variance-covariance characteristics which define theoretical constructs or factors (latent variables)” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p. 164), it assumes that some factors have a smaller number than the observed variables number, such variables are responsible for variance-covariance between the observed variables.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis “tests the significance of a hypothesized factor model, whether the sample data confirm that model or not, for a prior specified theoretical model CFA specifies a certain number of factors, which group of them are correlated and which observed variables measure each factor” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010, p. 164).

CFA works on confirming the relation between the observed factors and their latent factor, it also checks and evaluates the regression paths that connect the variables.

Using SPSS AMOS, a CAF model including two groups of data set (Yemeni data and Turkish data) was created, an initial analysis was done including all questions of the research survey to reach the appropriate model fit.

A CFA model fit is determined by these measures:

- CMIN/DF (Chi-Square Mean / Degree of Freedom): Chi-Square value is a traditional measure for evaluating the overall model fit is “assesses the greatness of difference between the sample and fitted covariance matrices” (Hu & Bentler, 1999, p. 2), however it is very sensitive to sample size as “it nearly always rejects the model when large samples are used” so dividing Chi-Square on the Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF) is proposed to minimize this effect” (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 54).

Having a CMIN/DF result between 3 and 1 ($3 \geq \text{value} \geq 1$) indicates that there is a good fit for the model (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 58).

- CFI (Comparative Fit Index): “CFI assumes that all latent variables are uncorrelated (null model) and compares the sample covariance matrix with this null model” (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 55).

Having a CFI result that is greater than or equal to 0.95 ($\text{value} \geq 0.95$) indicates that there is a good fit for the model (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 58), on the other hand having a results that are between 0.95 and 0.90 ($0.95 \geq \text{value} \geq 0.90$) is accepted (Hu & Bentler, 1999, p. 4).

- RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation): “shows how well the model, with unknown but optimally chosen parameter estimates, would fit the populations' covariance matrix” (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 54).

Having an RMSEA result that is less than or equal to 0.06 ($0.06 \geq \text{value}$) indicates that there is a good fit for the model (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 54) citing from (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

- PCLOSE (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation associated p-value): shows how good the RMSEA level within the population (Byrne, 2010, p. 81).
Having a PCLOSE result that is greater than or equal to 0.05 ($\text{value} \geq 0.05$) indicates that there is a good fit for the model (Gaskin, 2018) citing from (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and (Byrne, 2010, p. 81).

In order to achieve the above results and get the appropriate model fit some modification indices were done:

- Items that have low loading or cross loading should be removed this could be done with the help of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Hayton, et al., 2004, p. 193), however each factor must have at least two items so that it can be included in a CFA analysis otherwise the factor itself will be removed (Kline, 2011, p. 148).
Implementing this idea in order to get an appropriate model fit, survey questions that have a low or cross loading was removed from both data set, these questions are Q1, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q11, Q13, Q14, Q18, Q22, and Q30.
- One other step of modification indices is doing a covariance between errors that are in the same factor, “it means that there are some other issues that are not specified within the model that is causing a covariation” (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 56). In this research, only one covariance was done between e24 and e27 as they are under the same factor.

The final results of the CFA model fit analysis for this research are explained below:

Table 4.9: CFA model fit results and interpretation

Measure	Standard fit	Result	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	$(3 \geq \text{value} \geq 1)$	2.013	Good Fit
CFI	$(\text{value} \geq 0.95)$ or $(0.95 \geq \text{value} \geq 0.90)$	.933	Accepted Fit
RMSEA	$(0.06 \geq \text{value})$	.050	Good Fit
PCLOSE	$(\text{value} \geq 0.05)$	.442	Good Fit

Items loading on their factors results, which indicate a good fit of the model are shown in figure 4.7 and 4.8:

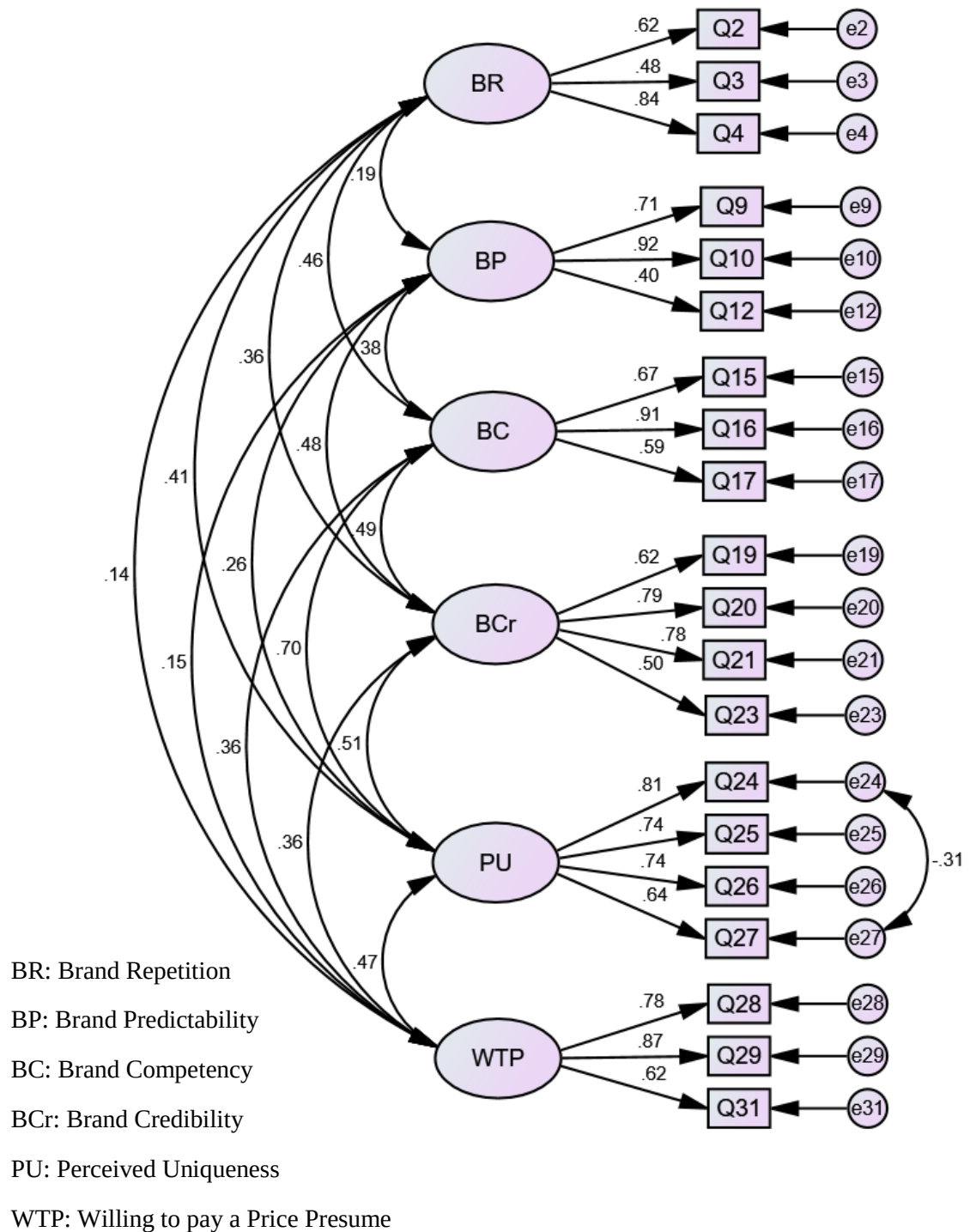


Figure 4.6: CFA model - Yemeni data set

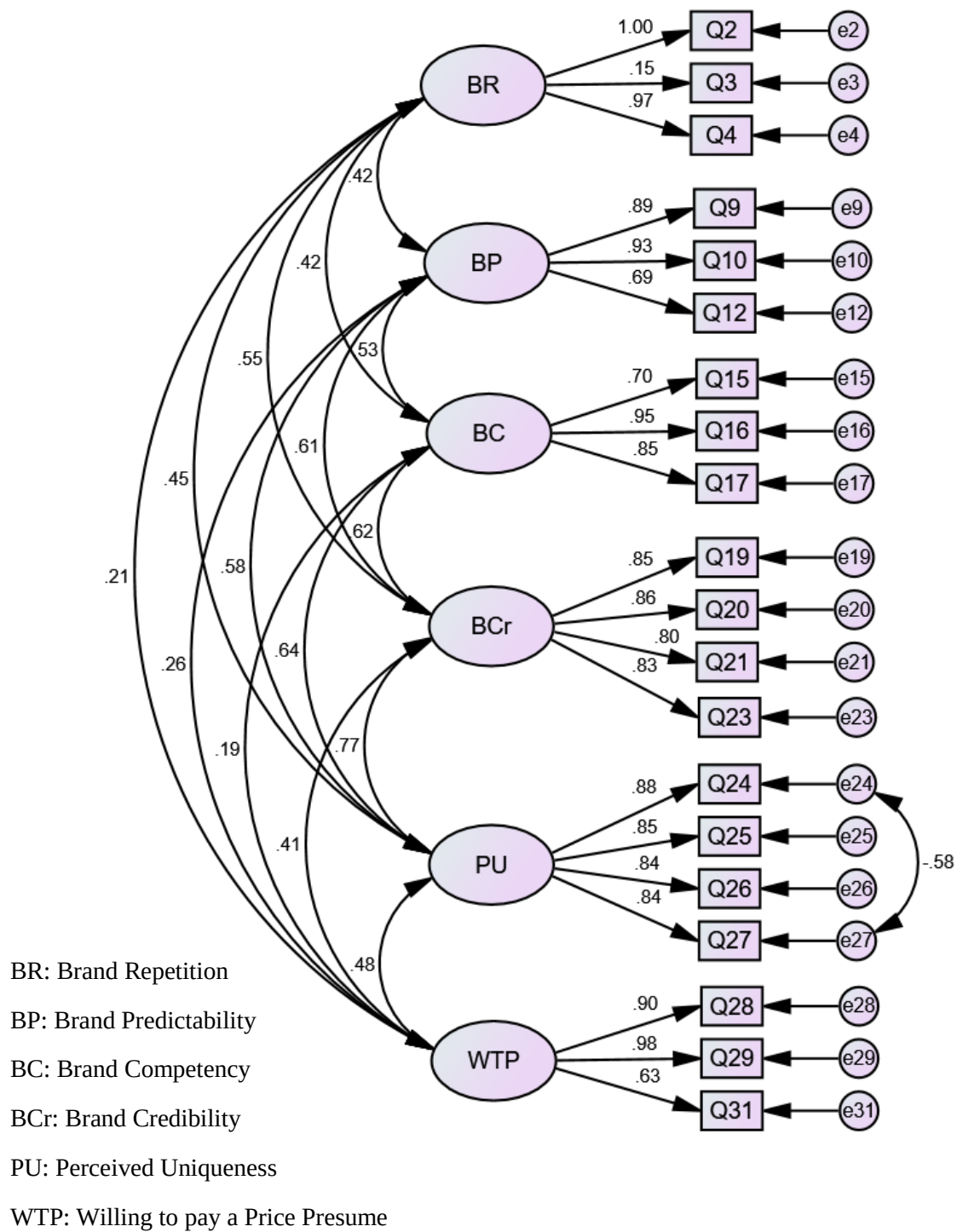


Figure 4.7: CFA model - Turkish data set

As explained previously CFA doesn't only confirm the relation between factors and their latent factor, it also checks and evaluates the regression paths that connect these variables, this evaluation can be confirmed by P-value (probability value) as a value less than or equal to 0.05 ($P \geq 0.05$) will indicate that significant relationship exists (Hair Jr, et al., 2014, p. 577), table 4.10 shows the P-value that indicates the relation between each factor (question) and its latent factor (variable) in both countries data set (*** refers to $P < 0.001$).

Table 4.10: Regression Weights - CFA model Yemen & Turkey

	Yemen - Default model				Turkey - Default model				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
Q2 <--- BR	1				1				
Q3 <--- BR	0.982	.182	5.383	***	0.236	.110	2.151	.031	-3.504*
Q4 <--- BR	1.195	.195	6.137	***	0.972	.033	29.287	***	-1.128
Q9 <--- BP	1				1				
Q10 <--- BP	1.048	.139	7.520	***	1	.059	16.996	***	-0.312
Q12 <--- BP	0.423	.081	5.193	***	0.719	.064	11.265	***	2.865*
Q15 <--- BC	1				1				
Q16 <--- BC	1.294	.136	9.508	***	1.538	.128	11.990	***	1.306
Q17 <--- BC	0.805	.109	7.390	***	1.260	.111	11.310	***	2.919*
Q19 <--- BCr	1				1				
Q20 <--- BCr	1.309	.161	8.144	***	1.154	.076	15.090	***	-0.868
Q21 <--- BCr	1.150	.142	8.127	***	1	.074	13.559	***	-0.942
Q23 <--- BCr	0.784	.133	5.910	***	1.173	.082	14.365	***	2.499*
Q24 <--- PU	1				1				
Q25 <--- PU	0.960	.092	10.452	***	1.136	.071	15.997	***	1.515
Q26 <--- PU	0.832	.081	10.334	***	1.160	.075	15.561	***	2.985*
Q27 <--- PU	0.782	.098	7.944	***	1.094	.088	12.439	***	2.366*
Q28 <--- WTP	1				1				
Q29 <--- WTP	1.048	.106	9.852	***	1.107	.059	18.854	***	0.488
Q31 <--- WTP	0.744	.090	8.270	***	0.650	.062	10.424	***	-0.855

Z-score notes: * p-value < 0.05;

According to the P-value results shown in the above table it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between each factor (question) and its latent factor (variable), however, this relation might be weak in Q3 in the Turkish data set but it is available.

As this research is a comparative research between Yemen and Turkey, a comparative Critical Ratios for Differences between Parameters calculation was done using SPSS AMOS to determine if there is a difference between the two countries results of the CFA analysis or not, generally “ A Critical Ratios calculate the parameter estimate divided by its standard error and it works as a z-statistic in testing that the estimate, if it is statistically different from zero or not” (Byrne, 2010, p. 68), this calculation will give a Z-score value as a result, which is a “measure of how many standard deviations below or above the population mean”.

According to (Byrne, 2010, p. 68) on a probability level of 0.05: Getting a Z-score value that is higher than 1.96 or less than -1.96 will lead us to conclude that there is a difference between groups, so to conclude that there is no difference in regression between groups Z-score should be between 1.96 and -1.96 ($1.96 \geq \text{Z-score} \geq -1.96$).

Based on the Z-score results showed in table 4.10 it is concluded that Q3, Q12, Q17, Q23, Q26 and Q27 indicates that there are some differences in the response between the Yemeni and the Turkish respondents, other than that there are no differences in the remaining CFA model.

4.5. Reliability and Validity Assessment

Reliability and Validity are used to evaluate the level of quality of the measurement instruments (the survey and the respondents' answers), using a measurement instrument is common in quantitative researches especially for the ones that should be measured indirectly.

- Reliability: “is defined as the level that the test scores are free from measurement error or the elements of errors that occur when testing something. Having an unreliable measurement will lead to insignificant relationship between variables and inaccurate results” (Muijs, 2004, p. 71), In other words, reliability is “taking care of the consistency of analysis results over groups of people or over the same person at different times” (Smith & Albaum, 2010, p. 254).

According to (Muijs, 2004, p. 73) if the reliability test results (Composite Reliability) were above 0.70 then the measurement is reliable to be used ($CR \geq 0.70$).

- Validity: “lead to answer the question, are we measuring what we are willing to measure? So it works on confirming if the variables are being measured accurately or not, especially the variables that can’t be measured directly (latent variables)” (Muijs, 2004, p. 71).

Each question in a survey (measurement instrument) work as a noticeable variable selected to disclose the latent variable as much as possible, so if the measurement of the latent variable was not designed correctly or the question for the latent variable and if it is not selected well the analysis won’t have value (Muijs, 2004, p. 71).

Validity can be divided into Convergent Validity which indicates “to what level two measures of the same variable are correlated”, and Discriminant Validity which indicates “to what level two conceptually similar concepts are separated” (Hair Jr, et al., 2014, p. 124).

According to (Gefen & Straub , 2005, pp. 93-94) to get an accepted validity you have to get an Average Variance Extracted higher than or equal to 0.5 ($AVE \geq 0.5$) and a Maximum Shared Variance that is less than the Average Variance Extracted ($MSV > AVE$).

- Using SPSS AMOS and based on the outputs of the CFA analysis, correlation and standardized regression weights figures are used to calculate Reliability and Validity of the Yemeni and Turkish responses and the results were as the following:

Table 4.11: Reliability and Validity Assessment - Yemeni responses

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PU	BR	BP	BC	BCr	WTP
PU	0.825	0.543	0.491	0.836	0.737					
BR	0.700	0.500	0.216	0.765	0.408	0.661				
BP	0.733	0.501	0.227	0.868	0.260	0.192	0.708			
BC	0.773	0.541	0.491	0.858	0.701	0.465	0.376	0.735		
BCr	0.773	0.510	0.257	0.807	0.507	0.357	0.476	0.490	0.684	
WTP	0.803	0.581	0.220	0.839	0.469	0.138	0.145	0.358	0.359	0.762

Table 4.12: Reliability and Validity Assessment - Turkish responses

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PU	BR	BP	BC	BCr	WTP
PU	0.915	0.728	0.588	0.916	0.853					
BR	0.811	0.651	0.305	0.993	0.451	0.807				
BP	0.877	0.708	0.375	0.916	0.577	0.422	0.841			
BC	0.877	0.707	0.407	0.933	0.638	0.416	0.530	0.841		
BCr	0.902	0.697	0.588	0.904	0.767	0.552	0.612	0.622	0.835	
WTP	0.882	0.721	0.233	0.968	0.483	0.206	0.264	0.190	0.414	0.849

The results of Reliability and Validity Assessment for all variables in both countries' responses shows that: Reliability is greater than 0.70 ($CR \geq 0.70$), Convergent Validity is more than 0.50 ($AVE \geq 0.50$) and MSV is less than AVE for Discriminant Validity ($MSV < AVE$), lead us to conclude that the responses got from respondents in both countries are reliable and valid, however, the Turkish responses shows better results than the Yemeni ones.

4.6. SEM Pre-Analysis

Before starting the SEM hypothesis testing there are some analysis to be done which can be considered as a second stage of data screening after fitting the model in the CFA analysis for this research an Outliers and Influential test and a Multi-Collinearity analysis will be implemented.

- Outliers and Influential: are some different scores from the rest, such scores can be considered as a response to a survey that is different from the rest of respondents, it can be recognized by calculating the standard deviation that is beyond the mean of each response, in other words inspecting frequency distributions of z scores, getting a result that is over 3 will indicate an Outlier that may influence the results and effect its accuracy ($|z| > 3 = \text{Outlier}$) (Kline, 2011, p. 54).

For this research, this test was done for the Yemeni and the Turkish respondents by SPSS and the graphs below show the results:

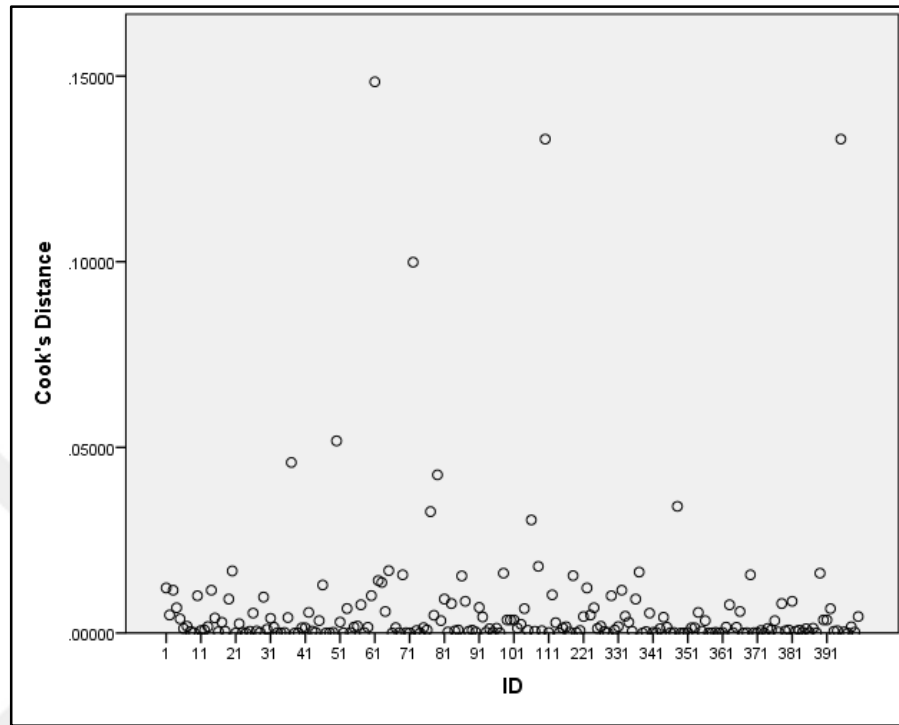


Figure 4.8: Outliers and Influential test - Yemeni respondents

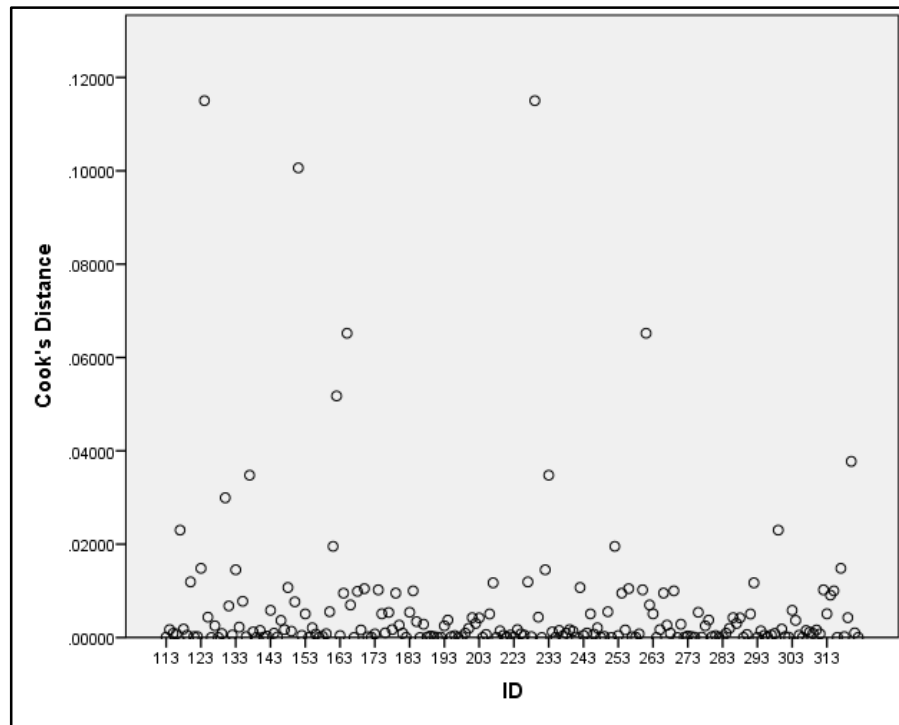


Figure 4.9: Outliers and Influential test - Turkish respondents

The results of this test show that in the Yemeni respondents the highest result is 0.15 and in the Turkish respondent the highest result is 0.12 both results are less than 3, so it is concluded that there is no significant effect of outliers that can affect our results in both data sets.

- Multi-Collinearity analysis: Multi-Collinearity happen when independent variables in a model are correlated and not independent from each other, there is an acceptable degree of such correlation but if this degree of correlation between variables is high enough, the researcher will face some difficulties when fitting the model and interpreting the results.

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance are used to test Multi-Collinearity if the VIF is greater than 10 and tolerance is less than 0.1 then there is an issue ($VIF > 10$ & $Tolerance < 0.1$ = Multi-Collinearity issue) (O'Brien, 2007, p. 673).

Some other statisticians are more specific as they say that if ($VIF > 3$) there might be a potential problem, if ($VIF > 5$) it is very likely to have a problem and if ($VIF > 10$) definitely there is a problem (Gaskin, 2017).

In this research there are three independent variables (Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) Multi-Collinearity analysis was done by SPSS three times putting one variable as dependent and the other two as independents in order to see the collinearity between them, the results are shown in the following tables:

Table 4.13: Multi-Collinearity analysis - Yemen & Turkey

Collinearity Statistics: Part 1		Yemeni Data set		Turkish Data set	
Dependent Variable: Brand Reputation	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	
Total Brand Predictability	.735	1.361	.703	1.423	
Total Brand Competence	.735	1.361	.703	1.423	
Collinearity Statistics: Part 2		Yemeni Data set		Turkish Data set	
Dependent Variable: Brand Predictability	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	
Total Brand Reputation	.804	1.243	.771	1.297	
Total Brand Competence	.804	1.243	.771	1.297	

Table 4.14: (Cont.) Multi-Collinearity analysis - Yemen & Turkey

Collinearity Statistics: Part 3		Yemeni Data set		Turkish Data set	
Dependent Variable: Brand Competence	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF	
Total Brand Reputation	.853	1.172	.867	1.153	
Total Brand Predictability	.853	1.172	.867	1.153	

All the VIS results shown above are less than 3 and all the Tolerance values are greater than 0.1, so it is concluded that there is no Multi-Collinearity issue in both data set.

4.7. SEM Hypotheses Testing

Structural Equation Modeling work on the analysis and evaluation of the relations between hypothesized latent variables it provides the measurement model or the CFA model, which was discussed previously and the structural model which will be discussed now (Byrne, 2016, p. 3).

The term structural equation modeling represents two important aspects of the procedure:

- The causal processes under research are represented by a series of structural (i.e., regression) equations.
- The structural relations can be modeled pictorially in order to enable a clearer conceptualization of the theory under the research.

If these two aspects were available; the hypothesized model can be tested statistically in a simultaneous analysis of the entire pattern of variables to determine to which level it is consistent with the data.

If goodness-of-fit is adequate, suitable and acceptable the model argues for the plausibility of postulated relations among variables; if it is not, the tenability of such relations is rejected.

It takes a confirmatory approach to the data analysis and lends itself well to the analysis of data for a concluding purpose by demanding that the pattern of inter-variable relations that was specified previously, in addition to that it provides explicit estimates of measurement errors variance parameters which is not accurately available in traditional multivariate procedures.

Using SEM procedures can able the researcher to incorporate both unobserved (i.e., latent) and observed variables and help him/her in modeling multivariate relations, or estimating point and/or interval indirect effects.

According to that Structural equation modeling can be defined as “a multivariate statistical analysis technique that is used to analyze structural relationships that is considered as a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, and it is used to analyze the structural relationship between measured variables and latent constructs” (Byrne, 2016, p. 3).

This method is preferred by the researcher as it estimates the multiple and interrelated dependence in a single analysis. In this analysis, two types of variables are used endogenous variables and exogenous variables, where endogenous variables are equivalent to dependent variables and are equal to the independent variable.

This is also discussed by (Hox & Bechger , 1999, p. 354) as they explained that “SEM is a powerful technique that can combine complex path models with latent variables and help to specify confirmatory factor analysis models, regression models, and complex path models.

Using SPSS AMOS, the hypothesis structural model was created, this model shows the relation between the research latent variables where several regression equations take place.

The model shows the direct effect between independent and dependent variables and indirect relation between independent and dependent variables with mediator variables in the middle, and later on the moderator variables were added.

Hypothesis structural model which shows the independent, mediator and dependent variables with their factors loading are shown in figure 4.10 and 4.11:

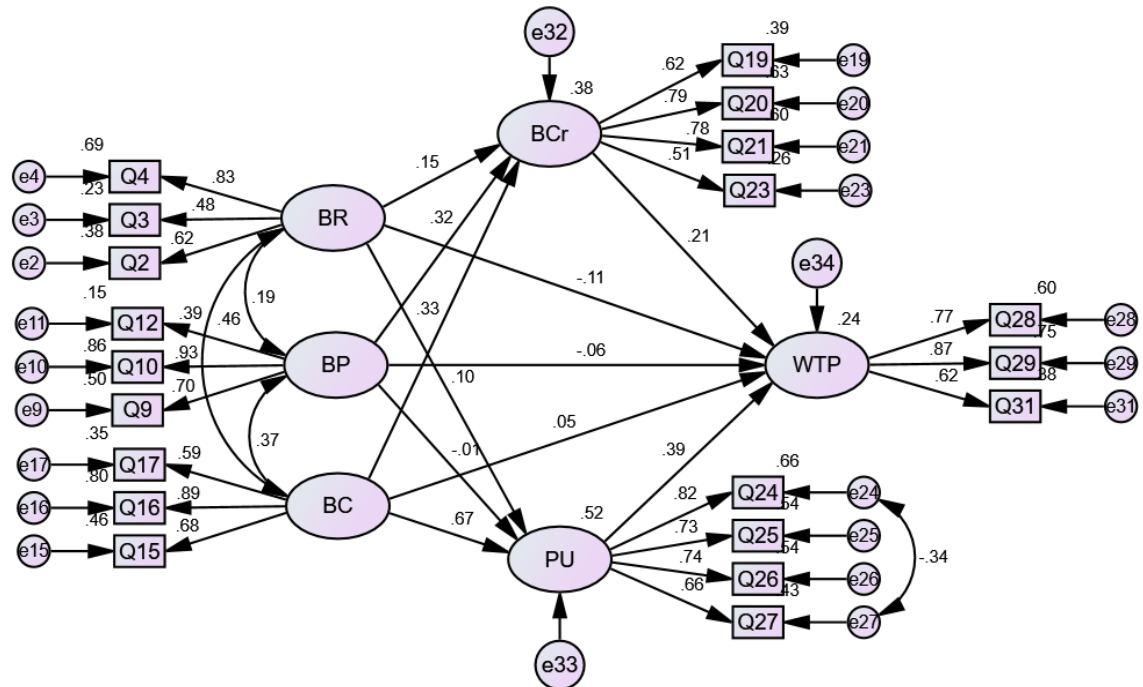


Figure 4.10: Hypothesis structural model – Yemen

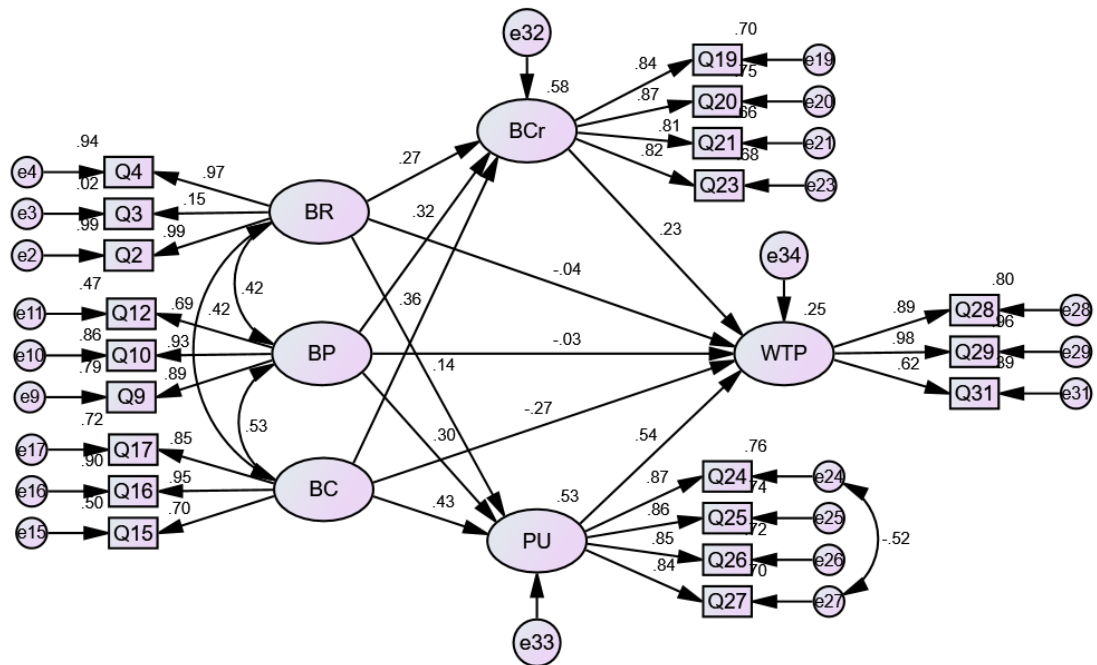


Figure 4.11: Hypothesis structural model – Turkey

According to (Gaskin, 2018) for appropriate hypothesis testing some criteria must be met, these criteria could be classified in to three levels that are organized in sequence as no meaning for meeting the third level before meeting the second level and no meaning for meeting the second level before meeting the first one, these criteria are Model Fit in the first level, Test of variance explained or R-squared in the second level, then the hypothesis can be tested by the P-value in the third level.

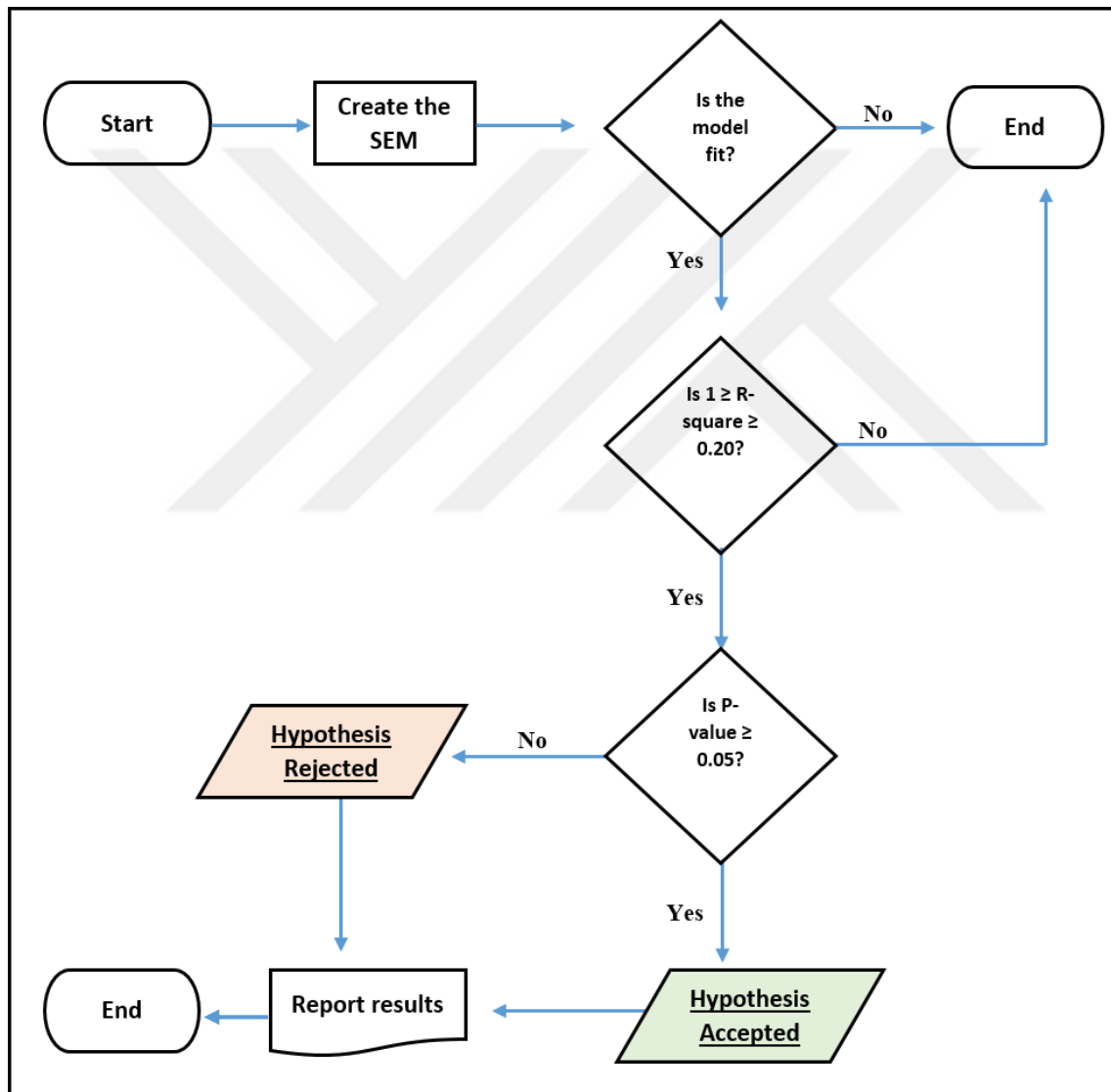


Figure 4.12: SEM hypothesis testing flow chart

- Model fit: As same as CFA analysis the hypothesis structural model must be fitted, same rules of CMIN/DF, CFI, RMSEA, and PCLOSE in the CFA analysis will be implemented in SEM Hypotheses Testing as shown in below:

Table 4.15: SEM model fit results and interpretation

Measure	Standard fit	Result	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	(3 $\geq$ value $\geq$ 1)	2.150	Good Fit
CFI	(value $\geq$ 0.95) or (0.95 $\geq$ value $\geq$ 0.90)	.923	Accepted Fit
RMSEA	(0.06 $\geq$ value)	.054	Good Fit
PCLOSE	(value $\geq$ 0.05)	.133	Good Fit

This will lead to conclude that fitted SEM is available and the first testing criteria is fulfilled, and the evaluation of the R-square results can be done.

- R-squared: which is also called Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) represent the percentage of variance that is reflected by the variable predictors of the questions, it is usually between 0% and 100% and the higher the value the better the sample data matches to the model (Byrne, 2010, p. 189), however, according to (Hooper, et al., 2008, p. 56) items (indicators) multiple R-square less than 0.20 should be removed from the analysis as this is a sign of high error level, table 4.17 shows the Squared Multiple Correlations results for both countries data set:

Table 4.16: Squared Multiple Correlations (R-square) - Yemen & Turkey

Squared Multiple Correlations:			Squared Multiple Correlations:		
	Estimate - Yemen	Estimate- Turkey		Estimate - Yemen	Estimate- Turkey
Q2	0.380	0.888	Q20	0.627	0.749
Q3	0.233	0.223	Q21	0.601	0.662
Q4	0.694	0.843	Q23	0.257	0.68
Q9	0.495	0.792	Q24	0.665	0.758
Q10	0.783	0.856	Q25	0.539	0.738
Q12	0.233	0.471	Q26	0.543	0.717
Q15	0.458	0.497	Q27	0.429	0.699
Q16	0.797	0.898	Q28	0.601	0.796
Q17	0.352	0.721	Q29	0.751	0.963
Q19	0.390	0.698	Q31	0.383	0.387

The table shows accepted results for Squared Multiple Correlations (R-square) for Yemen and Turkey which will lead to conclude that the second testing criteria is fulfilled, and it is ok to go for hypothesis testing and P-value evaluation.

- P-value: or the probability value is the indicator of accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis H_0 (Carvalho & Chima, 2014, p. 10), According to (Hung, et al., 1997, p. 11) P-value can be defined as: “a random variable comes from the distribution of test statistic which is used to analyze a data set, in order to test a hypothesis”.

P-value is a percentage between 0 and 1 and, 0.05 is the cutoff point of accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis as long as it is less than 0.05 ($0.05 \geq P\text{-value}$) the null hypothesis H_0 will be rejected (Hair Jr, et al., 2014, p. 577).

The smaller the P-value the better evidence to reject the null hypothesis H_0 as according to (Zain & Ibrahim, 2015, p. 81):

- When ($0.01 \geq P\text{-value}$) it is a very strong evidence or a highly significant evidence against H_0 .
- When ($0.05 \geq P\text{-value}$) it is a strong evidence or a significant evidence against H_0 .
- When ($0.10 \geq P\text{-value} > 0.05$) it is a moderate evidence against H_0 .
- When ($P\text{-value} > 0.10$) there is no significant results.

Generally, in this research relationship between independent and dependent variables will be supported (H_1 accepted), if ($0.05 \geq P\text{-value}$) otherwise relation will not be supported.

4.7.1. First Hypothesis Results (Direct effect)

First hypothesis of this research is: Brand Characteristics (which includes Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) have a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium, as Brand Characteristics includes three dimensions the hypothesis can be divided into three parts:

- a. Brand Repetition has a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- b. Brand Predictability has a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- c. Brand Competency has a significant impact on Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

The results of the first hypothesis testing are shown below:

Table 4.17: First hypothesis testing results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
BR → WTP	-0.178	0.157	-1.136	0.256	-0.057	0.123	-0.460	0.645	0.610
BP → WTP	-0.071	0.117	-0.610	0.542	-0.032	0.125	-0.259	0.796	0.227
BC → WTP	0.072	0.191	0.376	0.707	-0.500	0.198	-2.525	0.012	-2.077*

Z-score notes: * p-value < 0.05;

According to the P-value results shown in the above table, it is concluded that there is no relationship between Brand Repetition and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium, Brand Predictability and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium or Brand Competency and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in Yemen, this result is also the same in Turkey except that in Turkey there is a strong relation between Brand Competency and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

The Z-score results showed above confirms the P-value results as it confirms the difference only in regression of the Brand Competency and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium between the two groups.

4.7.2. Second Hypothesis Results (Mediating effect)

A mediating variable comes between the independent variable and the dependent variable, its effect appears between the time when the independent variable starts to give the influence and the dependent variable gets that influence, it helps to explain that influence from the independent to the dependent variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 79).

Second hypothesis of this research includes a mediating effect of Brand Credibility, it is divided into two steps as the following:

Brand Credibility significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:

- Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) significantly influences Brand Credibility, and
- Brand Credibility significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

- First Path of this hypothesis will be divided into three parts:
 - a. Brand Repetition significantly influences Brand Credibility.
 - b. Brand Predictability significantly influences Brand Credibility.
 - c. Brand Competency significantly influences Brand Credibility.

The results of this Path are shown below:

Table 4.18: First path of the second hypothesis testing results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
BR → BCr	0.128	0.080	1.598	0.110	0.268	0.061	4.358	***	1.380
BP → BCr	0.222	0.061	3.639	***	0.261	0.059	4.442	***	0.469
BC → BCr	0.234	0.073	3.215	0.001	0.423	0.089	4.775	***	1.649

According to the P-value results shown in the above table, it is concluded that:

- There is a no relationship between Brand Repetition and Brand Credibility in Yemen but there is a strong relationship between them in Turkey.
- There is a very strong relationship between Brand Predictability and Brand Credibility in both countries.
- There is a very strong relationship between Brand Competency and Brand Credibility in Yemen and in Turkey.

Although there is a difference between the P-value in one path of the hypotheses paths, Z-score results show that there is no difference in the regression between the two groups.

- Second Path of this hypothesis is Brand Credibility significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium, the results of this path is shown below:

Table 4.19: Second path of the second hypothesis testing results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
BCr → WTP	0.395	0.205	1.927	0.054	0.360	0.176	2.048	0.041	-0.130

According to the P-value results shown in the above table, it is concluded that there is a moderate relationship between Brand Credibility and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in Yemen but there is a strong relation between them in Turkey.

Z-score results showed above as it leads to the conclusion that there is no difference in the regression between Brand Credibility and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in the two groups as the difference between the P-value of the two groups is quite small.

The above results show the relation separately between the independent and mediating variables, and the mediating and the dependent variables, but the main target of this hypothesis is to test the mediating effect of the Brand Credibility between independent and dependent variables, related results are shown in the table below:

Table 4.20: Second hypothesis mediating effect results

	Yemen				Turkey			
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
BR → BCr → WTP	0.051	0.000	0.179	0.102	0.096	-0.008	0.317	0.130
BP → BCr → WTP	0.088	0.021	0.233	0.028	0.094	-0.008	0.219	0.129
BC → BCr → WTP	0.092	0.009	0.259	0.061	0.152	-0.050	0.387	0.277

According to the results shown in the above table, it is concluded that there is no effect of Brand Credibility as a mediator between Brand Repetition and Consumer WTP a Price premium but this effect is strong between Brand Predictability and Consumer WTP a Price premium and moderate between Brand Competency and Consumer WTP a Price premium only in Yemen, however, this is not enough to conclude that it has a significant or strong effect.

On the other hand, there is no effect of Brand Credibility as a mediator between the three dimensions of Brand Characteristics and Consumer WTP a Price premium in Turkey.

4.7.3. Third Hypothesis Results (Mediating effect)

Third hypothesis of this research includes a mediating effect of Perceived Uniqueness, it is divided into two steps as the following:

Perceived Uniqueness significantly mediates the relationship between Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium such that:

- Brand Characteristics (which includes a. Brand Repetition, b. Brand Predictability, and c. Brand Competency) significantly influences Perceived Uniqueness, and
 - Perceived Uniqueness significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- First Path of this hypothesis will be divided into three parts:
 - a. Brand Repetition significantly influences Perceived Uniqueness.
 - b. Brand Predictability significantly influences Perceived Uniqueness.
 - c. Brand Competency significantly influences Perceived Uniqueness.

The results of this Path are shown below:

Table 4.21: First path of the third hypothesis testing results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
BR → PU	0.130	0.109	1.194	0.232	0.166	0.072	2.321	0.020	0.277
BP → PU	-0.005	0.076	-0.070	0.944	0.292	0.070	4.198	***	2.892*
BC → PU	0.725	0.115	6.328	***	0.604	0.109	5.559	***	-0.770

Z-score notes: * p-value < 0.05;

According to the P-value results shown in the above table, it is concluded that:

- There is no relationship between Brand Repetition and Perceived Uniqueness in Yemen but this relationship is strong in Turkey.
- There is no relationship between Brand Predictability and Perceived Uniqueness in Yemen but this relationship is very strong in Turkey.
- There is a very strong relationship between Brand Competency and Perceived Uniqueness in both countries.

Z-score results show that there is only deference in the regression between the two groups in the relation between Brand Predictability and Perceived Uniqueness.

- Second Path of this hypothesis is Brand Credibility significantly influences Consumers' WTP a Price Premium, the results of this path is shown in the following table:

Table 4.22: Second path of the third hypothesis testing results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
PU → WTP	0.480	0.160	2.997	0.003	0.707	0.141	5.021	***	1.061

According to the P-value results shown in the above table, it is concluded that there is a very strong relationship between Perceived Uniqueness and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in Yemen and in Turkey.

Z-score results showed above as it leads to the conclusion that there is no difference in the regression between Perceived Uniqueness and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in the two groups.

The above results show the relation separately between the independent and mediating variables, and the mediating and the dependent variables, but the main target of this hypothesis is to test the mediating effect of the Perceived Uniqueness between independent and dependent variables, related results are shown in the table below:

Table 4.23: Third hypothesis mediating effect results

	Yemen				Turkey			
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
BR → PU → WTP	0.063	-0.016	0.230	0.202	0.118	0.010	0.278	0.068
BP → PU → WTP	-0.003	-0.082	0.070	0.904	0.207	0.060	0.390	0.022
BC → PU → WTP	0.349	0.124	0.592	0.005	0.427	0.197	0.744	0.011

According to the above results, it is concluded that Perceived Uniqueness does not mediate the relation between Brand Repetition and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium and between Brand Predictability and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium but there is a very strong mediating effect between Brand Competency and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium in Yemen.

In Turkey, Perceived Uniqueness do not mediate the relation between Brand Repetition and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium, but it strongly mediates the relation between Brand Predictability and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium and between Brand Competency and Consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Summary of the hypothesis paths testing results in Yemen and Turkey are shown in figure 4.14 and 4.15:

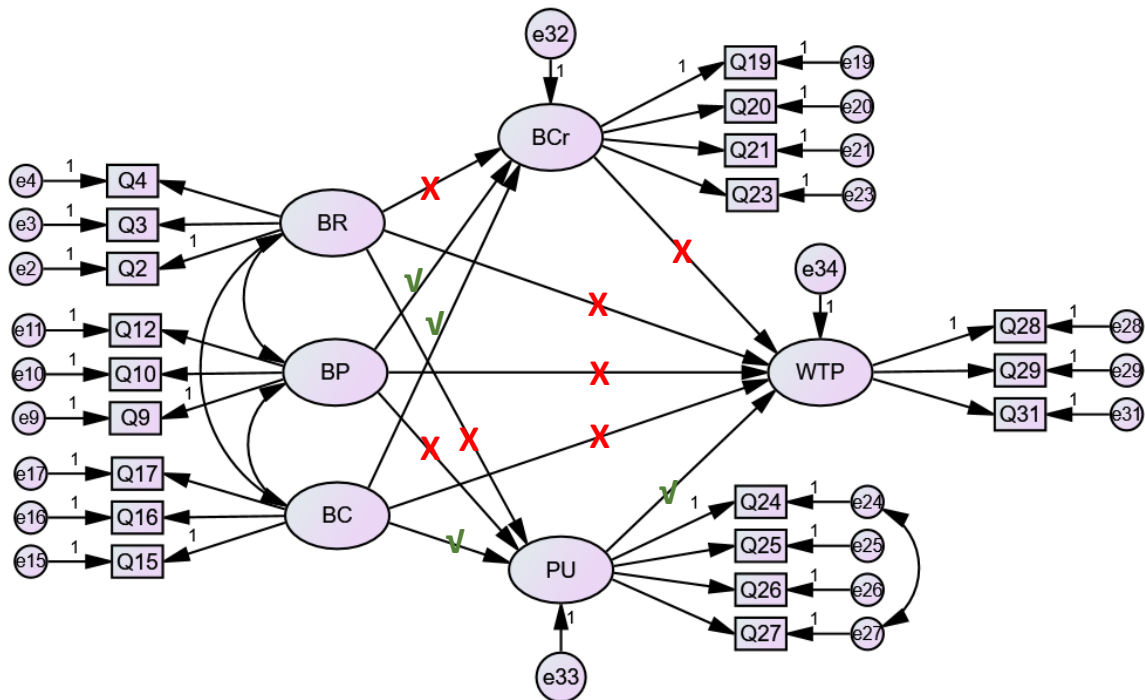


Figure 4.13: Summary of the hypothesis paths testing results – Yemen

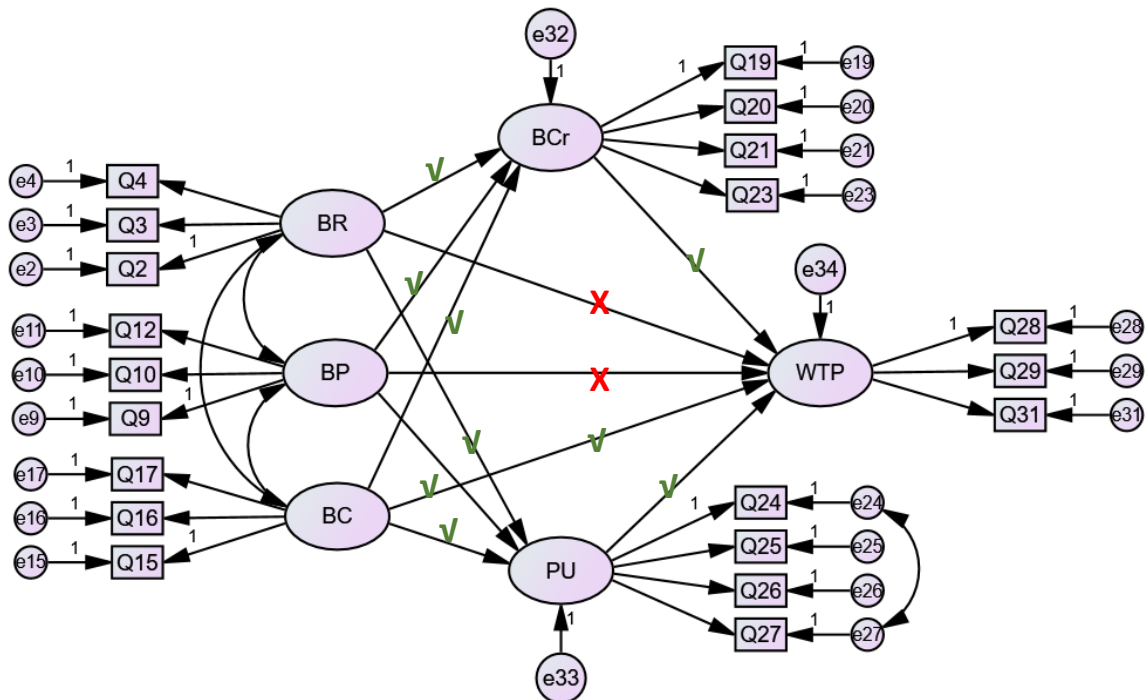


Figure 4.14: Summary of the hypothesis paths testing results – Turkey

4.7.4. Fourth and Fifth Hypothesis Results (Moderating effect)

A moderating variable has a strong effect on the relationship between independent and dependent variable itself, it modifies the original relationship either it becomes stronger or weaker (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 75).

Fourth hypothesis and fifth of this research includes three variables who works as moderators between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price premium and between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price premium, these moderators are Brand Familiarity (BF), Product Category Involvement (PcI) and Consistency of Brand Image (CBI), as the following:

- Forth hypothesis: The moderating variables (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image significantly) moderate the influence of Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
- Fifth hypothesis: The moderating variables (a. Brand Familiarity, b. Product Category Involvement, and c. Consistency of Brand Image significantly) moderate the influence of Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

Using SPSS AMOS, the Moderating variables were added to the Hypothesis structural model as shown in the below figure:

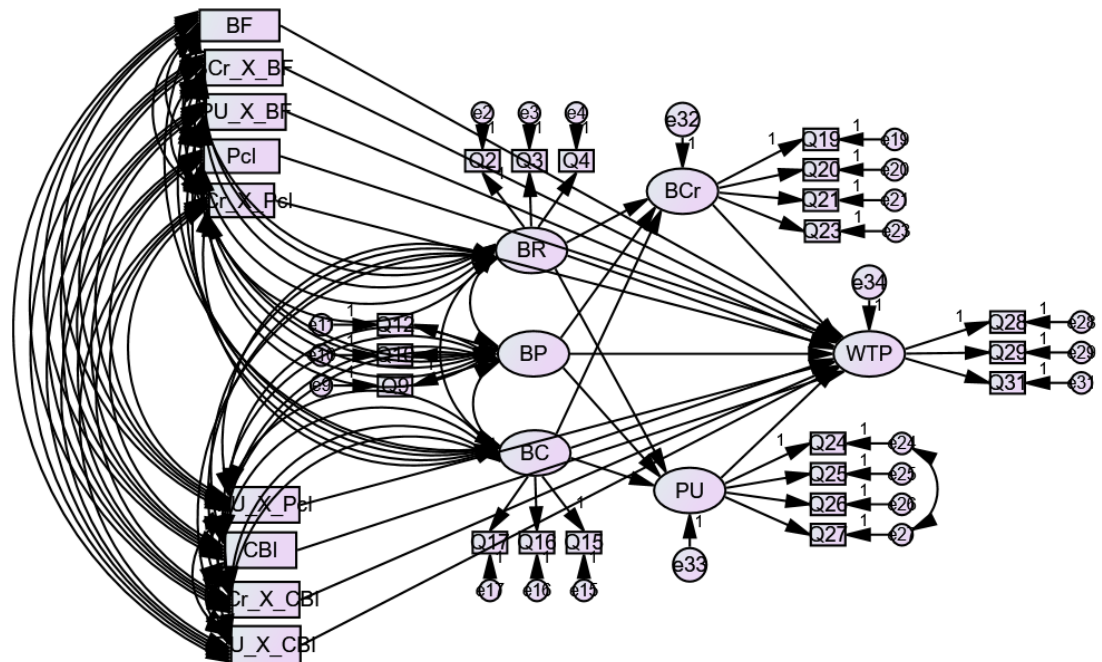


Figure 4.15: Hypothesis structural model including moderators

From the moderator definition, it is concluded that if there is a relation between independent and dependent variables then a moderating test will be meaningful as the moderator affects the existing relation between independent and dependent variables, and testing such an effect between variables that do not have a relation is meaningless.

According to the second and third hypothesis results, in Yemen there is no relation between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price Premium in Yemen, but there is a relation between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price Premium, so the moderating test in the Yemeni data set will be done only between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price Premium.

On the other hand, in Turkey there is a relation between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price Premium and between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price Premium, so the moderating test will be fully done in Turkey.

Before starting to evaluate P-value results of moderators, it is important to make sure of model fit and R-squared as explained earlier and from the tables below it is concluded that a fitted model and an accepted R-square value are available.

Table 4.24: SEM including moderators model fit results and interpretation

Measure	Standard fit	Result	Interpretation
CMIN/DF	(3 $\geq$ value $\geq$ 1)	2.405	Good Fit
CFI	(value $\geq$ 0.95) or (0.95 $\geq$ value $\geq$ 0.90)	.901	Accepted Fit
RMSEA	(0.06 $\geq$ value)	.059	Good Fit
PCLOSE	(value $\geq$ 0.05)	.050	Good Fit

Table 4.25: Squared Multiple Correlations (R-square) including Moderator

Squared Multiple Correlations:			Squared Multiple Correlations:		
	Estimate - Yemen	Estimate- Turkey		Estimate - Yemen	Estimate- Turkey
Q2	0.317	0.807	Q20	0.612	0.752
Q3	0.312	0.323	Q21	0.606	0.659
Q4	0.708	0.823	Q23	0.303	0.681
Q9	0.516	0.794	Q24	0.603	0.765
Q10	0.665	0.845	Q25	0.553	0.734
Q12	0.3	0.469	Q26	0.545	0.711
Q15	0.441	0.504	Q27	0.419	0.704
Q16	0.69	0.895	Q28	0.616	0.807
Q17	0.357	0.714	Q29	0.753	0.944
Q19	0.404	0.696	Q31	0.37	0.386

- Forth hypothesis is divided into three parts:
 - a. Brand Familiarity significantly moderates the influences from Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
 - b. Product Category Involvement significantly moderates the influences from Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
 - c. Consistency of Brand Image significantly moderates the influences from Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

The results are shown in the below:

Table 4.26: Forth hypothesis moderating effect results

Turkey				
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
BCr x BF → WTP	0.382	0.106	3.594	***
BCr x PcI → WTP	0.131	0.131	0.999	0.318
BCr x CBI → WTP	-0.341	0.117	-2.907	0.004

According to the results shown above, it is concluded that Brand Familiarity and Consistency of Brand Image are the only variables that significantly moderate the influences from Brand Credibility to consumers' WTP a Price Premium in Turkey.

Using a statistical software, the figures below show the nature of the moderating effect that Brand Familiarity and Consistency of Brand Image has on the relation between Brand Credibility and consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

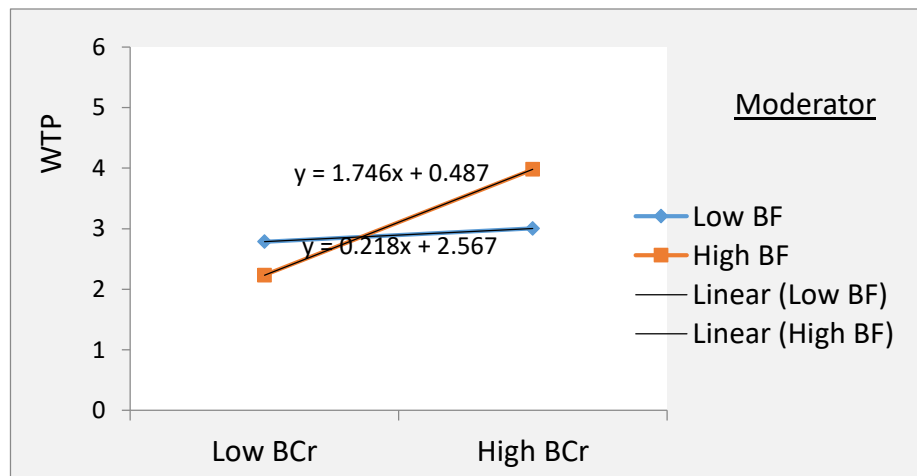


Figure 4.16: Nature of BF moderating on BCr and WTP relationship - Turkey

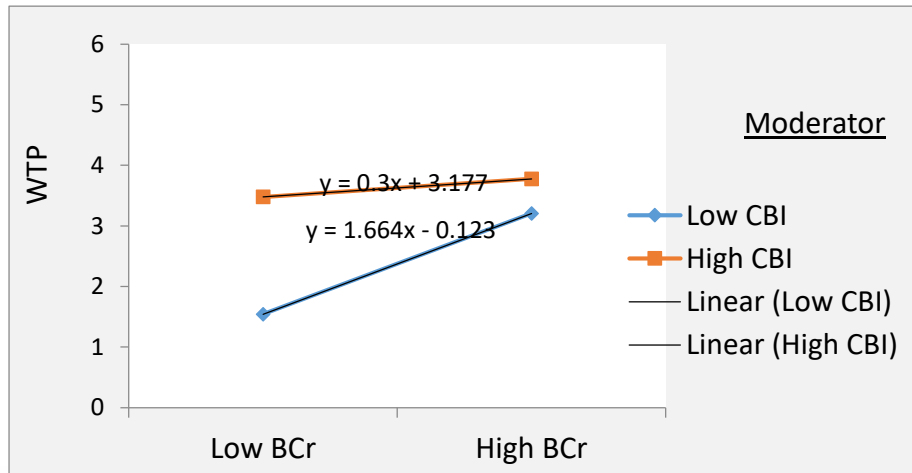


Figure 4.17: Nature of CBI moderating on BCr and WTP relationship - Turkey

The results shown in figure 4.16 will lead to a final conclusion that Brand Familiarity strengthens the positive relationship between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services in Turkey but on the other hand and the results shown in figure 4.17 Shows that Consistency of Brand Image dampens the positive relationship between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services in Turkey.

- Fifth hypothesis is divided into three parts:
 - a. Brand Familiarity significantly moderates the influences from Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
 - b. Product Category Involvement significantly moderates the influences from Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
 - c. Product Category Involvement significantly moderates the influences from Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium.
 - d. The results are shown in the below:

Table 4.27: Fifth hypothesis moderating effect results

	Yemen				Turkey				Z-score
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
PU x BF → WTP	0.287	0.108	2.668	0.008	0.256	0.102	-2.504	0.012	-3.659*
PU x PcI → WTP	0.292	0.102	-2.873	0.004	0.189	0.085	-2.210	0.027	0.778
PU x CBI → WTP	-0.161	0.091	-1.765	0.078	0.160	0.093	1.722	0.085	2.465*

Z-score notes: * p-value < 0.05;

According to the results shown above, it is concluded that Brand Familiarity and Product category involvement are highly significantly moderate the influences from Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium for audit and accounting services in Yemen and they are significantly moderate the influences from Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium for audit and accounting services in Turkey.

On the other hand, there is a moderate effect of Consistency of Brand Image as a moderator variable moderating the relation between Perceived Uniqueness to consumers' WTP a Price Premium in both countries but this is not enough to support the acceptance of the hypothesis.

The Z-score results show that the regression between the two groups in is deferent in the moderating effect of Brand Familiarity and Consistency of Brand Image.

Using a statistical software, the figures below show the nature of the moderating effect that Brand Familiarity and Product category involvement has on the relation between Perceived Uniqueness and consumers' WTP a Price Premium.

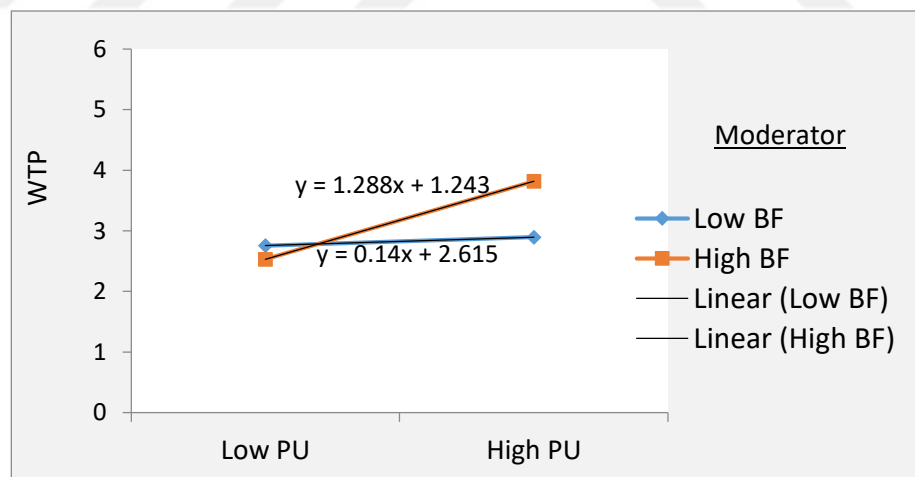


Figure 4.18: Nature of BF moderating on PU and WTP relationship - Yemen

The results shown in figure 4.18 is leading to a final conclusion that Brand Familiarity strengthens the positive relationship between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services in Yemen.

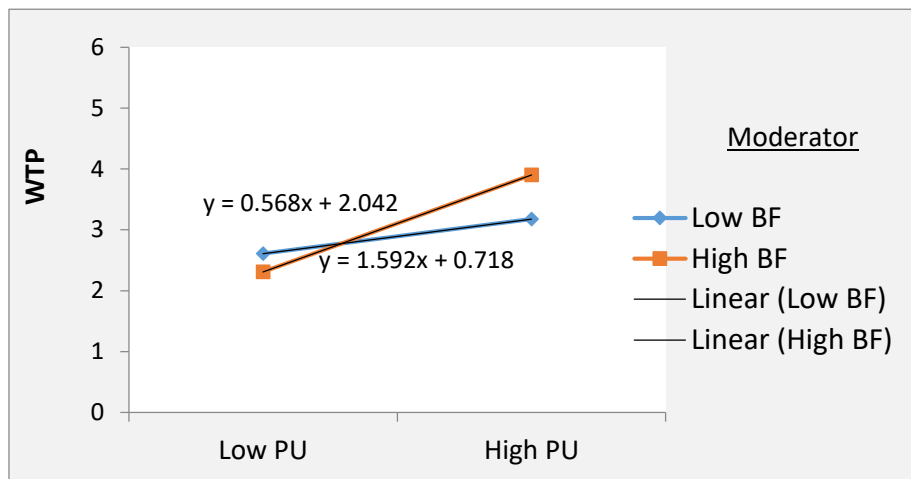


Figure 4.19: Nature of BF moderating on PU and WTP relationship - Turkey

The results related to Turkey shown in figure 4.19 is also leading to a final conclusion that Brand Familiarity strengthens the positive relationship between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services.

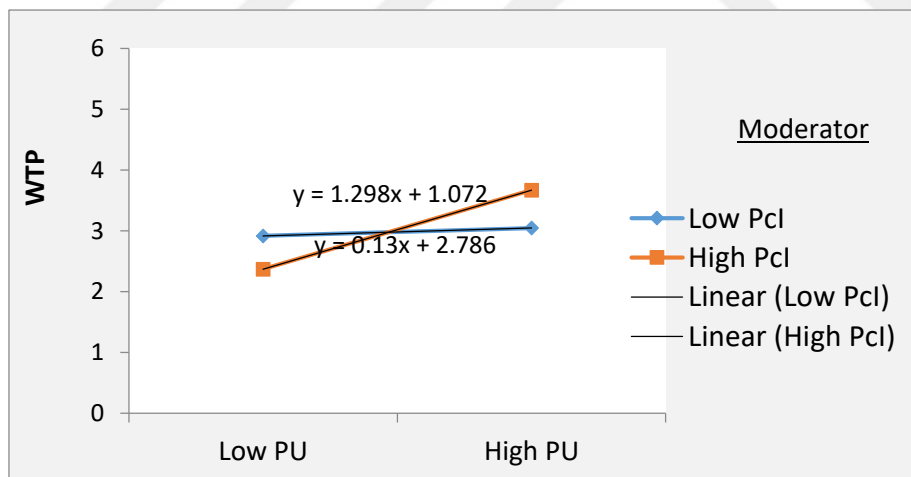


Figure 4.20: Nature of Pcl moderating on PU and WTP relationship – Yemen

On the other hand, the results shown in figure 4.20 is leading to a final conclusion that Product category involvement strengthens the positive relationship between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services in Yemen.

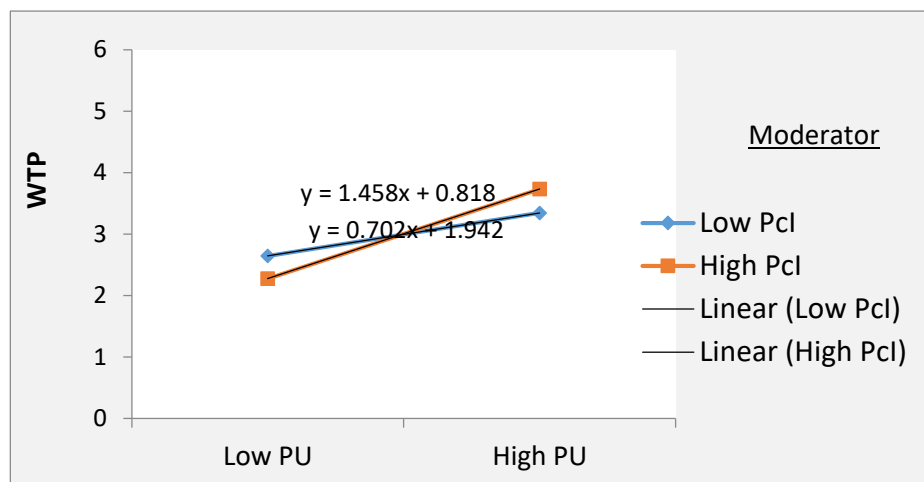


Figure 4.21: Nature of Pcl moderating on PU and WTP relationship – Turkey

The results related to Turkey shown in figure 4.20 is also leading to a final conclusion that Product category involvement strengthens the positive relationship between Perceived Uniqueness and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services.

4.7.5. Hypothesis Results Summary

Table 4.28: Hypothesis Results Summary - Yemen

	Relationships	P-value	Interpretation
First Hypothesis (Direct Effect) H1:			
H1a	BR → WTP	0.256	Not Supported
H1b	BP → WTP	0.542	Not Supported
H1c	BC → WTP	0.707	Not Supported
Second Hypothesis (Mediating Effect) H2:			
H2a	BR → BCr → WTP	0.102	Not Supported
H2b	BP → BCr → WTP	0.028	Supported
H2c	BC → BCr → WTP	0.061	Not Supported
Third Hypothesis (Mediating Effect) H3:			
H3a	BR → PU → WTP	0.202	Not Supported
H3b	BP → PU → WTP	0.904	Not Supported
H3c	BC → PU → WTP	0.005	Supported

Table 4.29: (Cont.) Hypothesis Results Summary – Yemen

	Relationships	P-value	Interpretation
Fourth Hypothesis (Moderating Effect) H4:			
H4a	BCr x BF → WTP	No relation	Not Supported
H4b	BCr x PcI → WTP	No relation	Not Supported
H4c	BCr x CBI → WTP	No relation	Not Supported
Fifth Hypothesis (Moderating Effect) H5:			
H5a	PU x BF → WTP	0.008	Supported
H5b	PU x PcI → WTP	0.004	Supported
H5c	PU x CBI → WTP	0.078	Not Supported

Table 4.30: Hypothesis Results Summary – Turkey

	Relationships	P-value	Interpretation
First Hypothesis (Direct Effect) H1:			
H1a	BR → WTP	0.645	Not Supported
H1b	BP → WTP	0.796	Not Supported
H1c	BC → WTP	0.012	Supported
Second Hypothesis (Mediating Effect) H2:			
H2a	BR → BCr → WTP	0.130	Not Supported
H2b	BP → BCr → WTP	0.129	Not Supported
H2c	BC → BCr → WTP	0.277	Not Supported
Third Hypothesis (Mediating Effect) H3:			
H3a	BR → PU → WTP	0.068	Not Supported
H3b	BP → PU → WTP	0.022	Supported
H3c	BC → PU → WTP	0.011	Supported
Fourth Hypothesis (Moderating Effect) H4:			
H4a	BCr x BF → WTP	***	Supported
H4b	BCr x PcI → WTP	0.318	Not Supported
H4c	BCr x CBI → WTP	0.004	Supported
Fifth Hypothesis (Moderating Effect) H5:			
H5a	PU x BF → WTP	0.012	Supported
H5b	PU x PcI → WTP	0.027	Supported
H5c	PU x CBI → WTP	0.085	Not Supported

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Research Summary

Leveraging with a secondary brand's concept was the starting point of this research, as each and every organization works on improving its brand and generate more and more brand associations in the consumer's minds.

One way of the leveraging strategies is getting audited by a well-known branded audit firm as this will give more credibility to its financial statements but this will cost them to pay more audit fees as a well-known international branded audit firm will ask for more audit fees than a regular or local one, but are the organizations willing to pay such high amount of audit fees or they want to take the leveraging advantage paying the minimum amount of audit fees?

Starting from that question the research started by reviewing the previous literature to find which brand variables are more appropriate to be used to test the consumer WTP a price premium, so based on (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 345) the Brand Characteristics were selected, which includes Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability and Brand Competency as an independent variables and based on (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 101) the Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness was selected as mediating variables and Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement and Consistency of Brand Image was selected as moderating variables, after that the research main target was shaped, which is to test the direct impact of Brand Characteristics on consumer willingness to pay a price premium for audit and accounting services and their indirect effect through Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness.

This research was implemented in Yemen and Turkey to compare the organizations behavior in both countries, so the data was collected using a 5 point Likert scale and a 200 accepted response in Yemen were gotten, also 200 accepted response in Turkey based on

initial data screening, after that using the CFA analysis the reliability and validity of these responses was confirmed, which lead us to implement the SEM hypothesis testing and P-value assessment taking in consideration the model fit and the R-square value, such testing provided the results of this research.

5.2. Findings and Conclusions

- First finding of this research is that: Brand Characteristics (including Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) do not effect Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry, this was applicable in Yemen and partially applicable in Turkey as only Brand Competency is effecting Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in this industry.

Part of this finding is confirmed by (Ward, et al., 1994, p. 399) as they found that “research has not documented reputation effects for audit fee for non-Big 6 firms” as the effect of reputation is the same whether the audit firm is branded or not.

This will lead us to conclude that: What is applicable in other industries is not applicable for audit and accounting services industry, as according to (Dwivedi, et al., 2018, p. 105) brand has an effect on consumer willingness to pay a price premium in automobile industry, and according to (Anselmsson, et al., 2014, p. 90) brand has an effect on consumer willingness to pay a price premium in restaurants and food industries, this is also applicable in the airlines industry according to (Garrow, et al., 2007, p. 271) and (Kuo & Jou, 2017, p. 134), also the consumer behavior toward the brand for individuals is different than the organizations as they are restricted to the target of decreasing costs and increasing profits.

Also, it is concluded that Brand Characteristics has an effect on other brand variables as according to (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 341) it has an effect on Brand Loyalty, according to (Sengupta, et al., 2015, p. 655) Brand Characteristics represented by Brand Repetition has an effect on consumer behavioral intentions and according to (Sung, et al., 2009, p. 5) represented by Brand Competency also, according to (Hegner & Jevons, 2016, p. 59) represented by Brand Predictability it has an effect on Brand trust.

In addition to that according to (Firer & Swartz, 2006, p. 1) and (Naser & Nuseibeh, 2008, p. 239) find out that the main factors affecting the audit fee are the client size, risk and the complexity of his business, such results are confirming the finding of (Cullinan, 1997, p. 91) which is: “client characteristics, including client size and risk, are the main factors of determining audit fees and no difference between big six audit firms and non-big six audit firms in this fee structure”. On the other hand (Villiers, et al., 2013, p. 2) confirmed the fact that audit fees are easy to be increased than to decreased which will make it more difficult for organizations to negotiate the appropriate price they can afford.

Finally Based on the previous literature review and the practicable analysis done in this research, this might be one of the first researches that linked between Brand Characteristics and Consumer WTP a Price Premium.

- Second finding of this research is that: Brand Credibility does not play a mediating role between Brand Characteristics (including Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability, and Brand Competency) and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry, in Turkey but in Yemen it has a mediating role between Brand Predictability and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry, as the more the brand is credible and honest the more the client will be able to predict its performance.

This will lead us to conclude that: Although Credibility is essential for any brand, it has no significant effect in Audit and Accounting industry even though it effects some variables, because credibility for audit and accounting firms is essential and monitored by law and there are negative consequences if any audit and accounting firm brakes the credibility law, so the audit clients take credibility for granted and audit firms cannot debate for increasing their fees based on their credibility.

The main example supporting this conclusion is what happened to Arthur Andersen one audit firm that used to be one of the Big Five audit firms and one of the worldwide multi-national audit firms but in 2001 “the US government represented by the US Department of Justice decided to prosecute Andersen as a firm” (Asthana, et al., 2009, p. 4) due to the scandal of Enron Energy Corporation as it reported that their financial

condition is sustained but after their bankruptcy the investigations revealed that it was reported by a creatively planned accounting fraud, and this fact was ignored by Arthur Andersen the audit firm while auditing as they didn't modify their reports after finding some external events evidence and going concern issue (Nogler, 2007, p. 51), and that caused them to surrendered their licenses to practice as an audit firm, this lead to destroy their reputation and affect the other audit firms negatively (Nelson, et al., 2008, p. 279).

So credibility is a main issue for an audit firm which will lead to legal consequences if ignored by the audit firm and such value does not have a great power when negotiating for audit fee, but according to what happened to Arthur Andersen audit firms debate that the risk they are facing and their responsibility was increased so accordingly they have to increase their fees (Asthana, et al., 2009, p. 4).

- Third finding of this research is that: Perceived Uniqueness does not play a mediating role between Brand Characteristics (including Brand Repetition and Brand Predictability) and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry in Yemen and between Brand Repetition and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Turkey, but it has a mediating role between Brand Competency and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry in Yemen and between Brand Characteristics (including Brand Predictability and Brand Competency) and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Audit and Accounting Industry in Turkey.

Perceived Uniqueness in audit and accounting industry could be linked with industry specialization as one way to be unique in audit industry to be specialized in a certain industry and have a big understanding, experience and resources to audit any company in that industry, being unique as an audit firm is a main factor that leads to high audit fees as according to (Rahmat & Iskandar, 2004, p. 20) being a branded audit firm with an industry specialization will generate audit fee premium, and according to (Craswell, et al., 1995, p. 319) industry expertise is a dimension of the demand of Branded audit firms, this is also confirmed by (Scott & Gist, 2013, p. 708).

The Turkish part's findings of this research confirm that fact as Perceived Uniqueness has a mediating role between the brand and the WTP a price premium, taking in consideration that Uniqueness includes each and every unique aspect of an audit firm including industry specialization. This finding is confirming the finding of (Can, 2017, p. i) as he found that brand has a direct effect on audit quality, which is one aspect of uniqueness of an audit firm, in Turkey.

In respect to the Yemeni part, this research was done in 2018-2019 while Yemen as a country has economic crises and unstable situation, organizations are not considering the uniqueness of audit firms a value and it is difficult for them to be willing to pay a price premium for a branded audit and accounting services, even for a well-known name that has a unique industry specialization value, such finding was confirmed by the finding of (Sonu, et al., 2017, p. 127) as they found out that “audit fees are significantly decreased during financial crises as the clients are under high pressure of reducing expenses” also (Groff, et al., 2017, p. 922) found out that “financial crisis negatively affected audit fees in Slovenia and the ability of clients to pay a price premium”. This will lead us to see the difference between consumer behavior in the stable and unstable country situation.

- Forth finding of this research is that: Only Brand Familiarity and Product category involvement has a moderating role between Perceived Uniqueness and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium, as it strengthens that relation in Yemen and in Turkey.

On the other hand, these three moderating variables do not have any role between Brand Credibility and Consumer Willingness to Pay a Price Premium in Yemen but in Turkey Familiarity strengthens the positive relationship between Brand Credibility and WTP a Price premium for audit and accounting services but the Consistency of Brand Image dampens the positive relationship between them.

The more the consumer (financial manager, general manager, head of accountants) is involved with the product (the audit process) and familiar with the brand he/she will be able to see the efforts done by the audit team and the values that they add such as the audit observations, finding and recommendations, and this will improve his/her knowledge about the audit firm itself and will confirm the audit firm's Perceived

Uniqueness and the audit firm's Credibility and will lead to consider assigning the same audit firm again in the coming year.

Such conclusion is confirmed by (Lee, et al., 2017, p. 223) as they found that Product Category Involvement has a positive impact on the customers' purchase intention, according to (Calvo-Porrall, et al., 2018, p. 134) it has an impact on consumer satisfaction and finally according to (Campbell, et al., 2014, p. 34) it has a significant relationships with willingness-to-pay a price premium on the other hand this conclusion is also confirmed by (Sheau-Fen, et al., 2012, p. 49) as they found that brand familiarity is significantly affecting perceived quality and purchase intention.

The overall findings of this study are aligned with the finding of (Siddiqui, et al., 2013, p. 332) who were answering the question "Do Big-Four affiliates earn audit fee premiums in emerging markets?" taking Bangladesh as an example of an emerging market they found out that "big 4 audit firms do not generally earn a fee premium Bangladesh, however, they charge higher audit fees for clients" and suggested that big 4 audit firms may lower their audit fees to attract more clients.

5.3. Implications and Recommendations

Being a Branded organization is a big advantage that has positive effects on the organization itself and its overall profitability, international branded audit firms are aware of that fact and it is reflected in their audit fees scale as they believe that they provide a leveraging value to their clients to link the client name with the international branded audit firm's name in their financial reports, usually audit firms relay on the big companies in the market to target as a clients because they believe that they can afford such high audit fees, however adopting such target is quit risky because generally in a competitive market and stable economic situation such as Turkey, where there is a competition between many international branded audit firms a company can get the leveraging value from any international audit firm, on the other hand in an unstable situation where there is an economic crises like Yemen (2018-2019) even big companies are operating with the minimum cost plan and leveraging will be a secondary target, one more issue that audit firm targeted and available clients are not for granted as big listed companies are forced by law to change the external auditor after dealing with the same auditor for a couple of

years, for example instruction of the Central Bank in Yemen request Banks and Insurance Companies to make rotation every 3 years in respect to assigning their external auditor.

It is not an easy job for a branded audit firm to manage that issue, however, according to the findings of this research our first recommendation for international branded audit firm is:

- As recommended by (Siddiqui, et al., 2013, p. 332) it is recommended that audit firms review their audit fees scale to be more competitive especially when they are operating in an unstable economic situation or an emerging market.
- To target medium and small companies more and more with an appropriate audit fee scale, as these companies needs the leveraging value more especially in an unstable economical station as they are trying to get loans and grants to survive and getting audited by an international branded audit will give them more value inform of the granter or the donor.

Speaking from another point of view the final product of any audit firm is the audit report and management letter points and recommendations, so there is no chance to invent or create something new in term of the final product of an audit firm, but it is possible to be unique during the audit process while doing the field work at the client premises by acting professionally and present updated recommendation that are according to the latest update of the accounting standards this will require the audit firms to be updated with the international accounting standards, local laws and regulations, and concentrate on its employees development, also being an industry specialist is also a competitive value of an audit firm that will lead to attract more clients, so our second recommendation of audit firms in general is:

- To be updated with the accounting and auditing standards, local laws and regulations, and present valuable observations and recommendations and work on proving their uniqueness during their filed work auditing process.
- To put a target to be an industry specialist audit firm in more than one industry to get more competitive value in the market and work on growing their other services beside audit such as consulting, tax declaration review and other accounting services.

Generally being involved more in any product and its related community and activates will introduce you more to its features and advantages (Keller, 2013, p. 121), same is applicable to the audit industry as the more the company's management is involved in the audit process the more the audit will be smooth and auditor will be more able to do his work as an auditor main task is to audit the data provided by the client and the more the company will understand the audit value, according to the finding of this research our third recommendation is for the audit clients top and operating management:

- To involve more in the auditing process become more familiar of the audit services and work side by side with the auditor more and more to understand the audit process more and get better output from the auditor.

5.4. Limitations and Suggestions for further researches

This research worked on studying some brand variables in a specialized industry as audit and accounting industry and it might be one of the firsts research that worked on such an idea, although the results of this study were encouraging, however, like any research, it has some limitations as listed below:

- This research discussed only three dimensions of the Brand Characteristics Brand Repetition, Brand Predictability and Brand competency, two brand variables as mediators Brand Credibility and Perceived Uniqueness, three Variables as moderators Brand Familiarity, Product Category Involvement and Consistency of Brand Image.
- Limitation in time as collecting more data especially from companies needs more time and efforts.
- Limitation in getting cooperation from some targeted companies.
- Limitation in time period and related conditions in 2018-2019 in Yemen.

For further researches in the same filed and in order to add more value to such filed, it is suggested that:

- Implement the same idea in other countries worldwide to compare the organization behavior toward the branded audit firms' fees.

- Implement the same idea with a larger sample size to be able to generalize the results more and more.
- Implement the same idea of the effects of brand characteristics on the prices in deferent industries to be able to compare the results between more industries.
- Study other characteristics of the brand and other variables of the brands on the WTP a price premium and their direct, mediating and moderating effects such as Brand Trust, Brand experience, Brand Loyalty and others.
- As same as (Lau & Lee, 1999, p. 345) they studied in addition to the Brand characteristics, the Company Characteristics and Consumer- Brand Characteristics on the Brand Loyalty, so it is suggested to adopt the other two Characteristics they used as in independent variables (Company Characteristics and Consumer- Brand Characteristics) and study their effects on the Consumer WTP a Price Premium.

This research worked on filling the research gap witnessed in the literature that studying the relation between the brand and the product/service prices in audit and accounting industry especially in Yemen and Turkey and doing further research in this filed will help to fill this gap more and more and in reach the related information available.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire (English Version)

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire (Arabic Version)

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire (Turkish Version)

Appendix D: Additional Descriptive Analysis

Appendix E: Skewness and Kurtosis Analysis Results





Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire (English Version)

- This is an MBA thesis Study for Marwan Mohammed Abdullah Ghaleb, a student at Istanbul Aydin University.
- The objectives of this study are:
 1. To determine whether there is a direct effect of Brand characteristics on the consumers' Willingness to pay a Price premium for audit and accounting services or not.
 2. To determine whether there is an indirect effect of Brand characteristics on the consumers' Willingness to pay a Price premium through Brand credibility, Brand trust and Perceived uniqueness or not.
- Targeted respondents are top management or employees in the finance department for a company that gets audit and accounting services.

Part 1: Demographic data

This part is to collect basic data about the person filling the survey and the company and its relation with audit services.

Position:	
	Managerial level or above.
	Supervising level.
	Staff level.
Years of experience:	
	More than 10 years.
	More than 5 years, to 10 years.
	5 years or less.

Your Financial Statements are audited / Reviewed:

	Yearly.
	Every 6 months.
	Quarterly.

Last time you got an audit or accounting service:

	This year.
	Last Year.
	Before 2 years.

Part 2: Research Questionnaire

- This part represents the main questions of the study.
- Kindly take into consideration that the word [Brand] represents the audit and accounting firm brand, that your company is dealing with.
- All the questions are referring to the audit and accounting industry.

Question:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Natural	Agree	Strongly agree
Brand Reputation:					
[Brand] has a reputation for being good.					
* [Brand] has a reputation for being unreliable.					
* Other people have told me that [Brand] is not good.					
Other people have told me that [Brand] is reliable.					
[Brand] is reputed to perform well.					
* I have heard negative comments about [Brand].					

Brand Predictability:

	When I buy [Brand], I know what exactly to expect.					
	I can always anticipate correctly how [Brand] will perform.					
*	[Brand] is not consistent in its quality.					
	[Brand] is performing consistently.					
*	[Brand]'s performance tends to be quite variable. I can't always be sure how it will perform the next time I buy it.					
	I know how [Brand] is going to perform. [Brand] can always be counted on to the performance I expect.					

Brand Competence:

	[Brand] is the best one for this category of service.					
*	Most other [Brand]s are better than this one.					
	[Brand] performs better than other brands.					
	[Brand] is more effective than other brands.					
	[Brand] meets my needs better than other brands.					

Brand Credibility:

	[Brand] has a name you can trust.					
	[Brand]'s service claims are believable.					
	[Brand] delivers what it promises.					
	[Brand] has the ability to deliver what it promises.					
	Over time, my experiences with [Brand] had led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.					
	[Brand] reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what he/she is doing.					

Perceived uniqueness:

I feel that [Brand] really stands out from other audit service brands.					
I think that [Brand] is distinct from other brands of audit service.					
[Brand] is unique from other audit service brands.					
[Brand] offers very different products than other audit service brands.					

Willingness-to-pay a price premium

I am willing to pay a higher price for [Branded] audit service than for other brands.					
I am willing to pay a lot more for [Brand] than other audit service brands.					
The price of [Brand] services would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand.					
I am willing to pay more for [Brand] over other brands of audit service.					

Brand familiarity

I am very familiar with [Brand].					
I recognize [Brand] very well.					

Product category involvement

I am very involved with audit services.					
I consider myself good when it comes to audit services.					
Audit services are very important to me.					

Consistency of brand image

Everything is consistent about [Brand].					
[Brand] audit services have been consistent for many years.					
The pricing of [Brand] matches its overall image.					
[Brand]'s image in promotions has been consistent for many years.					

* Items are reverse scaled.



Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire (Arabic Version)

- هذه الدراسة تخص رسالة ماجستير الطالب: مروان محمد عبد الله غالب - قسم ادارة اعمال جامعة اسطنبول ايدن، إسطنبول -تركيا.
- أهداف الدراسة هي:
 1. تحديد ما إذا كان هناك أثر مباشر لخصائص العلامة التجارية على رغبة العميل في دفع أتعاب أعلى لخدمات التدقيق والمحاسبة، أو لا.
 2. تحديد ما إذا كان هناك أثر غير مباشر لخصائص العلامة التجارية على رغبة العميل في دفع أتعاب أعلى لخدمات التدقيق والمحاسبة، من خلال مصداقية العلامة التجارية، الثقة في العلامة التجارية والتميز الملموس للعلامة التجارية، أو لا.
- الفئة المستهدفة للإجابة هي الإدارة العليا أو قسم المحاسبة للشركات التي تتلقى خدمات التدقيق والمحاسبة.

الجزء الأول: البيانات الديموغرافية

هذا الجزء مخصص لجمع بيانات أساسية عن الشخص الذي سيقوم بالإجابة على أسئلة الاستبيان وعن الشركة وعلاقتها بخدمات التدقيق.

المستوى الإداري:	
مستوى إداري أو أعلى.	
مستوى إشرافي.	
مستوى الموظفين.	

سنوات الخبرة:	
أكثر من 10 سنوات.	
أكثر من خمس سنوات إلى 10 سنوات.	
من 5 سنوات أو أقل.	

يتم تدقيق و مراجعة قوائمك المالية:	
سنويا.	
كل 6 اشهر.	
كل ربع السنة.	

آخر مرة حصلت على خدمات مراجعة أو محاسبة:	
هذه السنة.	
السنة الماضية.	
قبل سنتين.	

الجزء الثاني: أسئلة استبيان الدراسة

- هذا الجزء يمثل الاسئلة الرئيسية للدراسة.
- لطفاً، يتم الاخذ بعين الاعتبار ان كلمة [علامة تجارية] يقصد بها العلامة التجارية لشركة التدقيق والمحاسبة التي تتعامل معها الشركة او المؤسسة التي تعمل بها.
- جميع الاسئلة تعود على مهنة المحاسبة والتدقيق.

السؤال:	غير موافق بشدة	غير موافق	محايد	موافق	موافق بشدة
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سمعة العلامة التجارية:

					[العلامة التجارية] لديها سمعة بأنها جيدة.
*					[العلامة التجارية] لديها سمعة بأنها غير موثوق بها.
*					بعض الناس أخبروني بأن هذه [العلامة التجارية] ليست جيدة.
					بعض الناس أخبروني بأن [العلامة التجارية] يعتمد عليها.
					[العلامة التجارية] مشهورة بأدائها الجيد.
*					سمعت بعض التعليقات السلبية عن [العلامة التجارية].

توقع أداء العلامة التجارية:

					عند شراء [العلامة التجارية] اعرف ما الذي أتوقعه منها بالضبط من حيث الأداء.
					يمكنني دائماً أن أتوقع بشكل صحيح كيف ستؤدي [العلامة التجارية].
*					جودة أداء [العلامة التجارية] غير منتظمة / غير مستقرة.
					جودة أداء [العلامة التجارية] منتظمة / مستقرة.
*					يميل أداء [العلامة التجارية] إلى التغير دائماً، لا يمكنني توقع أدائها في المرة القادمة التي أتعامل معها.

					أعلم كيف سيكون أداء [العلامة التجارية] ، إذ يمكنني الاعتماد عليها في الحصول على الأداء الذي أتوقعه.
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كفاءة/جدارة العلامة التجارية:

					[العلامة التجارية] هي الأفضل في هذه الفئة من فئات الخدمات.
					* أغلب [العلامات التجارية] الأخرى أفضل من هذه العلامة التجارية.
					أداء هذه [العلامة التجارية] أفضل من باقي العلامات التجارية الأخرى.
					أداء [العلامة التجارية] أكثر فعالية من العلامات التجارية الأخرى.
					[العلامة التجارية] تلبي احتياجاتي بشكل أفضل من باقي العلامات التجارية الأخرى.

مصادقية العلامة التجارية:

					[العلامة التجارية] لديها اسم يمكن الوثوق به.
					الخدمات التي تقول/تدعي [العلامة التجارية] أنها تقدمها قابلة للتصديق.
					[العلامة التجارية] تفي بوعودها.
					[العلامة التجارية] لديها الإمكانيات التي تجعلها تفي بوعودها.
					مع مرور الوقت تجربتي مع [العلامة التجارية] قادتني إلى أن أتوقع أنها تحافظ على وعودها، لا أكثر ولا أقل.
					تذكرني [العلامة التجارية] بشخص لديه الكفاءة ويعرف ماذا يفعل.

التمييز الملموس للعلامة التجارية:

					أشعر أن [العلامة التجارية] متقدمة حقاً عن غيرها من العلامات التجارية لخدمات التدقيق.
					أعتقد أن [العلامة التجارية] متميزة عن غيرها من العلامات التجارية لخدمات التدقيق.
					[العلامة التجارية] متفردة عن غيرها من العلامات التجارية لخدمات التدقيق.
					[العلامة التجارية] تقدم منتجات مختلفة تماماً عن غيرها من العلامات التجارية لخدمات التدقيق.

الرغبة في دفع أتعاب أعلى:

					أنا / الشركة على استعداد لدفع سعر أعلى لخدمات التدقيق ذات [العلامة التجارية] مقارنةً بالعلامات التجارية الأخرى.
					أنا / الشركة على استعداد لدفع المزيد من أجل خدمات [العلامة التجارية] مقارنةً بالعلامات التجارية الأخرى لخدمات التدقيق.
					يجب أن يرتفع سعر خدمات [العلامة التجارية] قليلاً قبل أن أنقل إلى علامة تجارية أخرى.
					أنا على استعداد للمزايدة في دفع الإتعاب لهذه [العلامة التجارية] على العلامات التجارية الأخرى لخدمات التدقيق.

المعرفة بالعلامة التجارية:

					أنا على دراية بشكل جيد [بالعلامة التجارية].
					يمكنني التعرف على [العلامة التجارية] بشكل جيد.

مستوى التعامل والارتباط مع المنتج:

					أنا أتعامل بكثرة مع خدمات التدقيق.
					أعتبر نفسي جيد عندما يتعلق الأمر بخدمات التدقيق.
					خدمات التدقيق مهمة جداً بالنسبة لي ولشركتي.

ثبات وتناسق صورة العلامة التجارية:

					كل شيء متعلق [بالعلامة التجارية] ثابت ومتناسق.
					مستوى خدمات التدقيق المقدمة من [العلامة التجارية] ثابت ومتناسق على مر السنوات.
					أسعار أتعاب [العلامة التجارية] تتناسب مع الصورة العامة لها.
					صورة [العلامة التجارية] في المواد الترويجية الخاصة بها، ثابتة ومتناسقة على مر السنوات.

* تم عكس المقياس في هذه البنود.

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire (Turkish Version)

- Bu çalışma, İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi'nde öğrenci olan Marwan Mohammed Abdullah Ghaleb'in yüksek lisans tezi bağlamında oluşturmuş olduğu ankettir.
- Bu çalışmanın amaçları:
 1. Tüketicinin denetim ve muhasebe hizmetleri için bir daha yüksek bir meblağ ödemeye istekli olması konusunda marka özelliklerinin doğrudan bir etkisi olup olmadığını belirlemek.
 2. Marka özelliklerinin, marka güvenilirliği ve algılanan özgün yoluyla, diğer markalara göre daha yüksek fiyat ödemeye isteklilik konusunda dolaylı bir etkisi olup olmadığını belirlemek.
- Hedeflenen katılımcılar denetim ve muhasebe hizmetleri alanında aldığınız bir şirkette çalışan üst yönetim kadroları ya da çalışanlarıdır.

Bölüm 1: Demografik veriler

Bu bölüm, anketi dolduran kişi ile şirket hakkındaki temel verileri ve denetim hizmetleri ile ilişkisini toplamaktadır.

Pozisyon:	
	Yönetim seviyesi veya üstü.
	Denetleme seviyesi.
	Orta düzey.
Çalışma Deneyimi:	
	10 yıldan fazla.
	5-10 yıl arası.
	5 yıl veya daha az.
Finansal Tablolarınız denetlendi / İncelendi:	
	Yıllık olarak.
	6 ayda bir.
	Üç ayda bir.

Son kez bir denetim veya muhasebe hizmeti aldınız:

	Bu yıl.
	Geçen yıl.
	2 yıl önce.

Bölüm 2: Araştırma Anketi

- Bu bölüm çalışmanın temel sorularını temsil etmektedir.
- [Marka] kelimesinin, şirketinizin ele aldığı denetim ve muhasebe firması markasını temsil ettiğini dikkate alınız.
- Tüm sorular denetim ve muhasebe sektörüne atıfta bulunmaktadır.

Soru:	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Doğal	Katılıyor	Kesinlikle katılıyor
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Marka itibarı:

	[Marka] iyi olmak için bir üne sahiptir.				
*	[Marka] kötü bir üne sahiptir.				
*	Diğer insanlar bana [Markanın] iyi olmadığını söylediler				
	Diğer insanlar bana [Markanın] güvenilir olduğunu söylediler.				
	[Marka] iyi performans göstermektedir.				
*	[Marka] hakkında olumsuz yorumlar duydum.				

Marka Öngörülebilirliği:

	[Marka]'yı aldığımda tam olarak ne beklediğimi biliyorum.				
	Her zaman [Marka] 'un nasıl bir performans göstereceğini doğru olarak tahmin edebilirim.				
*	[Marka] kalitesinde tutarlı değil.				

	[Marka] istikrarlı olarak performans gösteriyor.					
*	[Marka] 'un performansı oldukça değişken olma eğilimindedir. Bir dahaki sefere satın alırken nasıl performans göstereceğinden emin olamıyorum.					
	[Marka] 'nın nasıl performans göstereceğini biliyorum. [Marka]'nın performansına her zaman güvenilebilir.					

Marka Yeterliliği:

	[Marka] bu hizmet kategorisinde en iyisidir.					
*	Diğer çoğu [Marka] bundan daha iyidir.					
	[Marka] diğer markalardan daha iyi performans gösteriyor.					
	[Marka] diğer markalardan daha etkilidir.					
	[Marka] ihtiyaçlarımızı diğer markalardan daha iyi karşılar.					

Marka güvenilirliği:

	[Marka] güvенеbileceğiniz bir isme sahip.					
	[Marka] 'nın hizmet talepleri inandırıcıdır.					
	[Marka] söz verdiği şeyi sunar.					
	[Marka], verdiği sözleri teslim etme yeteneğine sahiptir.					
	Zamanla, [Marka] ile olan deneyimlerim, onun sözlerini tutmaya devam ettiğini gösterdi, tam olarak.					
	[Marka] bana yetkin olan ve ne yaptığını bilen birini hatırlatıyor.					

Algılanan özgün:

[Marka]'nın diğer denetim servis markalarına nazaran çok ön plana çıktığını hissediyorum.					
Bence [Marka] diğer marka denetim hizmetlerinden farklıdır.					
[Marka] diğer denetim hizmet markaları arasında benzersizdir.					
[Marka] diğer denetim hizmeti markalarından çok farklı ürünler sunmaktadır.					

Daha yüksek fiyat ödemek için istekli:

[Markalı] denetim hizmeti almak için diğer markalara göre daha yüksek bir fiyat ödemeye hazırım.					
[Marka] için diğer denetim hizmeti markalarına ödenenden çok daha fazlasını ödemeye hazırım.					
Başka bir markaya geçiş yapmam için çalıştığım [Marka]'nın hizmetlerinin fiyatının çok artması gerekir.					
Diğer marka denetim hizmetlerine nazaran bu [Marka]'ya daha fazla ödeme yapmaya hazırım.					

Marka'ya aşinalık:

[Marka] 'ya çok aşinayım.					
[Markayı] çok iyi tanıyorum.					

Ürün kategorisi katılımı:

Denetim hizmetlerine çok dahil oldum.					
Denetim hizmetleri söz konusu olduğunda kendimi iyi görüyorum.					
Denetim hizmetleri benim için çok önemli.					

Marka imajının tutarlılığı:

[Marka] hakkında her şey tutarlıdır.					
[Marka] denetim hizmetleri yıllardır tutarlı olmuştur.					
[Marka] 'ın fiyatlandırması genel imajıyla eşleşiyor.					
[Marka] 'ın tanıtımlardaki imajı yıllardır tutarlı.					

* Öğeler ters ölçeklenmiştir.



Appendix D: Additional Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Yemeni data set		Turkish data set	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Brand Reputation	4.08	0.510	3.97	.515
Q1: [Brand] has a reputation for being good.	4.48	0.558	4.15	.705
Q2: [Brand] has a reputation for being unreliable.	4.20	0.743	4.24	.657
Q3: Other people have told me that [Brand] is not good.	3.79	0.940	3.62	1.021
Q4: Other people have told me that [Brand] is reliable.	4.15	0.653	4.24	.657
Q5: [Brand] is reputed to perform well.	4.28	0.520	4.12	.619
Q6: I have heard negative comments about [Brand].	3.62	0.916	3.50	1.070
Brand Predictability	3.90	0.461	3.85	.597
Q7: When I buy [Brand], I know what exactly to expect.	4.16	0.585	4.03	.820
Q8: I can always anticipate correctly how [Brand] will perform.	3.87	0.599	3.85	.803
Q9: [Brand] is not consistent in its quality.	3.71	0.799	3.79	.877
Q10: [Brand] is performing consistently.	3.95	0.648	3.80	.841
Q11: [Brand]'s performance tends to be quite variable. I can't always be sure how it will perform the next time I buy it.	3.70	0.752	3.83	.851

Variables	Yemeni data set		Turkish data set	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Q12: I know how [Brand] is going to perform. [Brand] can always be counted on to the performance I expect.	4.04	0.605	3.81	.817
Brand Competence	3.69	0.557	3.69	.669
Q13: [Brand] is the best one for this category of service.	3.96	0.832	3.71	.955
Q14 (*): Most other [Brand]s are better than this one.	3.23	0.996	3.66	.854
Q15: [Brand] performs better than other brands.	3.66	0.811	3.70	.770
Q16: [Brand] is more effective than other brands.	3.75	0.777	3.61	.868
Q17: [Brand] meets my needs better than other brands.	3.87	0.746	3.77	.800
Brand Credibility	4.02	0.427	3.99	.710
Q18: [Brand] has a name you can trust.	4.28	0.603	4.18	.835
Q19: [Brand]'s service claims are believable.	4.04	0.625	4.05	.768
Q20: [Brand] delivers what it promises.	4.00	0.646	3.99	.877
Q21: [Brand] has the ability to deliver what it promises.	4.08	0.570	4.05	.813
Q22: Over time, my experiences with [Brand] had led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.	3.69	0.733	3.83	.875
Q23: [Brand] reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what he/she is doing.	4.02	0.605	3.85	.919

Variables	Yemeni data set		Turkish data set	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Perceived Uniqueness	3.69	0.575	3.68	.872
Q24: I feel that [Brand] really stands out from other audit service brands.	3.85	0.728	3.87	.870
Q25: I think that [Brand] is distinct from other brands of audit service.	3.80	0.765	3.74	1.019
Q26: [Brand] is unique from other audit service brands.	3.68	0.671	3.60	1.056
Q27: [Brand] offers very different products than other audit service brands.	3.45	0.721	3.53	1.002
Willingness-to-pay a price premium	3.44	0.652	3.30	.902
Q28: I am willing to pay a higher price for [Branded] audit service than for other brands.	3.69	0.938	3.42	1.131
Q29: I am willing to pay a lot more for [Brand] than other audit service brands.	3.51	0.880	3.26	1.144
Q30: The price of [Brand] services would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand.	3.20	0.789	3.37	1.090
Q31: I am willing to pay more for [Brand] over other brands of audit service.	3.36	0.873	3.16	1.047



Appendix E: Skewness and Kurtosis Analysis Results

Variables	Yemeni data set			Turkish data set		
	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Reputation						
Q1: [Brand] has a reputation for being good.	4.48	-.428	-0.860	4.15	-.647	0.659
Q2: [Brand] has a reputation for being unreliable.	4.20	-.711	0.299	4.24	-.397	-0.248
Q3: Other people have told me that [Brand] is not good.	3.79	-0.475	-.117	3.62	-0.774	.229
Q4: Other people have told me that [Brand] is reliable.	4.15	-0.374	.209	4.24	-0.397	-.248
Q5: [Brand] is reputed to perform well.	4.28	.230	-0.475	4.12	-.462	1.136
Q6: I have heard negative comments about [Brand].	3.62	-.122	-.792	3.50	-.484	-.199
Brand Predictability						
Q7: When I buy [Brand], I know what exactly to expect.	4.16	-.037	-.225	4.03	-1.105	2.081
Q8: I can always anticipate correctly how [Brand] will perform.	3.87	-.369	.769	3.85	-.536	.056
Q9: [Brand] is not consistent in its quality.	3.71	-.382	-.183	3.79	-.794	.908
Q10: [Brand] is performing consistently.	3.95	-.513	.992	3.80	-.520	.350
Q11: [Brand]'s performance tends to be quite variable. I can't always be sure how it will perform the next time I buy it.	3.70	-.221	-.189	3.83	-.604	.414

Variables	Yemeni data set			Turkish data set		
	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q12: I know how [Brand] is going to perform. [Brand] can always be counted on to the performance I expect.	4.04	-0.290	0.760	3.81	-0.530	0.534
Brand Competence						
Q13: [Brand] is the best one for this category of service.	3.96	-.877	1.377	3.71	-.461	-.227
Q14 (*): Most other [Brand]s are better than this one.	3.23	-.199	-.266	3.66	-.053	-.658
Q15: [Brand] performs better than other brands.	3.66	-.273	.230	3.70	.040	-.527
Q16: [Brand] is more effective than other brands.	3.75	-.432	1.009	3.61	-.304	.117
Q17: [Brand] meets my needs better than other brands.	3.87	-.373	.422	3.77	-.571	.693
Brand Credibility						
Q18: [Brand] has a name you can trust.	4.28	-.768	3.302	4.18	-1.280	2.380
Q19: [Brand]'s service claims are believable.	4.04	-.402	.909	4.05	-1.092	2.001
Q20: [Brand] delivers what it promises.	4.00	-.674	1.548	3.99	-1.055	1.165
Q21: [Brand] has the ability to deliver what it promises.	4.08	-.483	2.103	4.05	-.829	.839
Q22: Over time, my experiences with [Brand] had led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.	3.69	-1.146	2.145	3.83	-.663	.566
Q23: [Brand] reminds me of someone who is competent and knows what he/she is doing.	4.02	-0.281	0.717	3.85	-0.902	1.152

Variables	Yemeni data set			Turkish data set		
	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Uniqueness						
Q24: I feel that [Brand] really stands out from other audit service brands.	3.85	-.314	0.001	3.87	-.947	1.536
Q25: I think that [Brand] is distinct from other brands of audit service.	3.80	-0.516	0.905	3.74	-0.756	0.224
Q26: [Brand] is unique from other audit service brands.	3.68	.076	-0.316	3.60	-.693	0.027
Q27: [Brand] offers very different products than other audit service brands.	3.45	.072	-0.230	3.53	-.643	0.250
Willingness-to-pay a price premium						
Q28: I am willing to pay a higher price for [Branded] audit service than for other brands.	3.69	-.659	0.334	3.42	-.281	-0.814
Q29: I am willing to pay a lot more for [Brand] than other audit service brands.	3.51	-.344	-.258	3.26	-.179	-.814
Q30: The price of [Brand] services would have to go up quite a bit before I would switch to another brand.	3.20	-.495	.106	3.37	-.473	-.435
Q31: I am willing to pay more for [Brand] over other brands of audit service.	3.36	-0.44	0.02	3.16	-0.39	-0.48



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T.C.
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Education

- MBA master program, 2019, The graduate school (institute) of social sciences, Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul – Turkey.
- Baccalaureate degree in accounting, 2008, Commerce and Economic Faculty, Sana'a University, Sana'a – Yemen.

Professional Experience

- Assistant Manager – Audit & Assurance, December 2008 – February 2017, Audit & Assurance, Deloitte & Touche (M.E), Sana'a – Yemen Office.
- Senior Internal Auditor, March 2019 – till now, Madar Group, Istanbul – Turkey.
- Finance Officer / Internal Auditor, October 2016 – October 2017, Integral Media – Huff Post Arabi, Istanbul – Turkey.
- Part time Internal Auditor, March 2013 – December 2014, Ultimate for solutions training and consulting, Sana'a – Yemen.

Voluntarily working experiences

- Couch in the Company training program for two teams (one university students and one high school team), May – December 2014, INJAZ (Juniors Achievements) Yemen, Sana'a – Yemen.

- Coordinator for Training Committee in Youth Advisory Council, February 2007 – August 2009, Youth Economic Development Center, Youth Leadership Development Foundation, Sana’a – Yemen.

Harvard Business Publishing on line, Micro-Certification Programs

From 2013 – till 2015 the below programs were taken, Sponsored by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited:

- Developing and Executing Innovation.
- Conflict Resolution.
- Developing Talent through Feedback and Coaching.
- Developing Yourself and Your Career.

In addition of: The Global Consumer Business Foundation Learning Curriculum by Deloitte Global Industry Learning – July 2014.

English and Computer courses

- Microsoft office specialist 2007 (Word, Excel, Power point, Access, Outlook) from 1/ May till 3/ June 2010, Ultimate for solutions training and consulting, Sana’a – Yemen.
- IC3: Internet and Computing Core Certificate from 1/ March till 12/ April 2008, Ultimate for solutions training and consulting, Sana’a – Yemen.
- Completion of 9th level, of English Diploma course, 10/ July – 10/ September 2006, Excellent degree - Canadian Center, Sana’a – Yemen.
- English Diploma for six months, Intermediate level, December 2003 – May 2004, La – Contessa Collage, Nairobi – Kenya.

Training programs

- ILO Refresher Training of Trainers Workshop (RTOT) on “My First Business” (MFB) training programme, 24 – 26 June 2014, The International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sana’a - Yemen.

- ILO Training of Trainers Workshop (TOT) on “My First Business” (MFB) training programme, 30 November – 5 December 2013, The International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sana’a - Yemen.
- Know About Business (KAB) Training of Facilitators Workshop, 16 – 26 July 2011, The International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sana’a - Yemen.
- Practical training in banks system, in Islamic Yemeni Bank, as part of university graduation training program, 2008, Commerce and Economic Faculty - Sana’a University. Sana’a – Yemen.
- Training of Trainers course, for two weeks, 17 – 31 March 2007. Youth Leadership Development Foundation, Sana’a – Yemen.

Languages

Arabic (mother tongue).

English (very good level).

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