

NATION BRAND EFFECT ON NEW PRODUCT: A RESEARCH ON NEW TURKISH ELECTRIC AUTOMOTIVE BRAND TOGG

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Abstract

Just like institutions, commercial enterprises, political parties, legal entities, and individuals, the communication activities of countries also possess invaluable potential that should not be left to chance. The concept of nation branding holds great significance within these communication and marketing activities. Similar to how commercial brands can achieve substantial and indirect gains through their abstract brand values, countries can also attain significant successes in the international arena with their nation brands. This study examines the impact of nation branding on purchase intention for new products. Türkiye's new electric car brand, TOGG, is selected as the new product. E-WOM is also included in the research as another variable that has a very large part in new product communication pieces. A quantitative design was used in the research. In the research phase, studies were conducted with 374 participants from 63 different countries. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the effects between variables.

Keywords: Nation Branding, New Product, TOGG, E-Wom, Purchase Intention.

JEL Classification: M31, M37, D12, L62.

ULUS MARKA DEĞERİNİN YENİ ÜRÜNLERE ETKİSİ: YENİ TÜRK ELEKTRİKLİ OTOMOBİL MARKASI TOGG ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Kurumlar, ticari işletmeler, siyasi partiler, tüzel kişilikler ve bireyler gibi, ülkelerin de iletişim faaliyetleri büyük bir potansiyele sahiptir ve rastlantılara bırakılmamalıdır. Ulus markalaşması kavramı, bu iletişim ve pazarlama faaliyetleri içinde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Ticari markalar, soyut marka değerleri aracılığıyla dolaylı ve önemli kazanımlar elde edebildiği gibi, ülkeler de ulus markaları sayesinde uluslararası arenada önemli başarılar kazanabilmektedirler. Bu çalışma, ulus markalaşmasının yeni ürünlere yönelik satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir ve Türkiye'nin yeni elektrikli otomobil markası TOGG, çalışmada yeni ürün olarak ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca, yeni ürünlerin iletişim süreçlerinde önemli bir rol oynayan elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim (e-WOM) değişkeni de araştırmaya dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmada nicel bir tasarım benimsenmiş, 63 farklı ülkeden 374 katılımcı ile veri toplanmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkilerin değerlendirilmesi için yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ulus Markalama, Yeni Ürün, TOGG, E-WOM, Satın Alma Niyeti.

JEL Sınıflaması: M31, M37, D12, L62.

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1. Introduction

Competition has evolved from interpersonal rivalry to intergroup and international competition. In the contemporary era, nations increasingly seek economic and political advantages through their nation brands. Similar to organizations, countries must build, manage, and protect their brands to remain competitive (Fetscherin, 2010).

A strong nation brand provides advantages for both countries and their domestic brands, particularly by creating favorable perceptions of products. The image of a nation is closely linked to the quality and diversity of its exports (Sun, Paswan, & Tieslau, 2016). However, unlike commercial brands, nation brands are complex and cannot be managed through conventional branding practices alone (Anholt, 2010). Nevertheless, countries with stronger nation brands generally enjoy greater international demand for their products and are often perceived as wealthier and higher in quality. As exports are a major source of national income, the development of new products is especially important. Accordingly, New Product Development has become a key driver of growth across industries such as biotechnology, software, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and automotive manufacturing (Schilling & Hill, 1998).

New products introduce new technologies, values, and usage patterns, which may create consumer uncertainty (Özer & Tang, 2019). Their primary strength and weakness both stem from their novelty. Therefore, successful new product performance depends on balancing perceptions of novelty and familiarity. In this process, nation brand value and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication play important roles in enhancing familiarity and trust (Özer & Tang, 2019).

This study examines the newly introduced Turkish electric vehicle brand TOGG, which entered production in 2023, as a representative new product. The research aims to investigate the effects of Türkiye's nation brand value and e-WOM communication on purchase intention toward TOGG-branded electric vehicles.

2. Theory

2.1. Nation Branding

The literature offers diverse perspectives on definition, scope, and dynamics of nation branding. This diversity stems from the concept being addressed by various disciplines, including international relations, economics, advertising, and marketing.

The term *nation branding* was first explicitly introduced by Simon Anholt in 1998, although its foundations appeared in his earlier work (Anholt, 1996; Anholt, 1998). Through a series of studies, Anholt played a pioneering role in the development of the field (Anholt, 2002; Anholt, 2003; Anholt, 2004; Anholt, 2007; Anholt, 2008; Anholt, 2010). However, he was not the sole contributor. British advertiser and academic Wally Olins also significantly influenced the conceptualization and popularization of nation branding through his contemporary studies (Olins, 1999; Olins, 2002; Olins, 2003; Olins, 2005).

According to Fan (2006), nation branding cannot be captured by a single comprehensive definition. In general, it refers to efforts to support and improve a nation's image through branding and marketing communication activities. Similarly, Kaneva (2011) defines nation branding as the reconstruction of national identity through marketing and branding practices.

Despite conceptual similarities, nation branding differs substantially from commercial branding. Unlike trademarks, which are legally protected and relatively controllable, nation brands are shaped by numerous actors and factors beyond direct control (Fan, 2006). A nation's image can be influenced by a wide range of representatives, including citizens, politicians, products, and institutions, making nation branding far more complex than managing a commercial brand. Anholt identified six key dimensions that both influence and reflect a nation brand: tourism, exports, governance, culture and heritage, investment and migration, and people (Anholt, 2003; Anholt, 2004; Anholt, 2005a; Anholt, 2005b; Anholt, 2006).

Figure. 1. Anholt's nation brand hexagon



Source: Anholt, 2003; Anholt, 2004; Anholt, 2005a; Anholt, 2005b; Anholt, 2006

2.1.1. Türkiye and Turkish Nation Branding

Türkiye (the Republic of Türkiye) is a transcontinental country located between Western Asia and Southeast Europe, bordering Bulgaria, Greece, Syria, Georgia, Iran, Armenia, and Iraq. With a population of approximately 84 million, a secular democratic system, and a mixed economy, Türkiye's strategic location has made it an important center for trade, tourism, and culture (Baker, 2023). Despite advantages such as its rich cultural heritage, diverse population, tourism potential, and favorable climate, Türkiye has not yet achieved a leading position among the world's most valuable nation brands.

Measuring nation brand value is considerably more complex than measuring commercial brands because it encompasses a broad range of factors, including economic performance, culture, social norms, and national image. Assessing nation brand value provides important insights for policymakers and reflects a country's international standing and competitiveness. Consequently, monitoring and improving nation brand value has become a strategic objective for many countries.

Several organizations evaluate nation brands through global rankings. The four most widely recognized indices are the Anholt-Ipsos Index, Brand Finance Index, FutureBrand Index, and Bloom Consulting Index. According to these indices, Türkiye's nation brand performance remains relatively modest. Türkiye's most recent rankings are presented below:

Table 1. Türkiye's Nation Brand Rankings

<i>Index</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Türkiye's Nation Brand Rank</i>
<i>Anholt-IPSOS</i>	2023	47.
<i>Brand Finance</i>	2024	34.
<i>Future Brand</i>	2020	51.
<i>Bloom Consulting</i>	2024	16.

Source: Anholt- IPSOS Nation Brand Index, 2023; Brand Finance, 2024; Future Brand, 2020; Bloom Consulting, 2024

A nation's brand value is closely linked to its economic prosperity. Key dimensions of nation branding, particularly tourism and exports, contribute directly to national wealth, while economic success further strengthens nation brand perceptions. Thus, the relationship between nation brand value and prosperity is mutually reinforcing.

Exports play a central role in this process. The image of a country influences perceptions of the quality of its products, while the quality and diversity of exported products contribute to the

nation's image (Sun, Paswan, & Tieslau, 2016). Countries with stronger nation brands are generally more successful in attracting demand in international markets. Likewise, nations exporting a wider range of products tend to achieve higher GDP levels and are often perceived as wealthier and more advanced.

A positive nation image and reputation also benefit domestic brands through the country-of-origin effect, a well-established concept in marketing literature (Nart, 2008). As globalization has expanded international trade, consumers have increasingly evaluated products based on their country associations. Research suggests that consumers in developed countries often favor domestic products, whereas those in developing countries tend to perceive foreign products as higher in quality (Kotler & Gertner, 2000). Consequently, country image contributes to brand image and product evaluations, highlighting the importance of developing competitive products in new categories to strengthen both nation brand value and economic development.

2.2. New Product

Advances in technology and changing consumer expectations can render existing products obsolete, threatening organizational profitability and sustainability (Paksoy, 2017). Consequently, organizations must continuously renew their offerings and develop new products. A new product refers to a commercial product or service not previously introduced to the market (Bozkurt & Ergen, 2016). Reflecting the growing importance of innovation, more than 250,000 new products are launched globally each year (Wong, 2010). Accordingly, New Product Development (NPD) has become a key driver of growth across industries such as biotechnology, software, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and automotive manufacturing (Schilling & Hill, 1998).

In this context, innovation and new product development are strategic necessities rather than optional activities. However, not all new products achieve market success, and successful products may generate different levels of return. Annacchino (2006) categorizes the returns of new product classes as follows:

Table 2. New Product Classes and Potential Returns

New Product Categories	Development Time	Potential Contribution to Economy	Potential Economic Contribution to Organization	Profit Margin Potential
New products for the world	Longest	Highest	Highest	Highest
New products for the enterprise	Long	High	High	High
New products arising from modernization of existing products	Short	Low	Medium	Medium
Repositioning of existing products	Shortest	Low	Medium	Medium
Cost-reduced new products	Very Short	Low	Medium	Medium
Additional products	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium

Source: Annacchino, 2006

As shown in the table above, the expected returns from each new product vary significantly. In this context, it can be observed that products classified as innovative tend to have higher returns compared to other new products. However, the production of advanced technology products, often regarded as technological marvels, demands substantial capital and labor investment. While R&D efforts can strategically position a company for success, they also carry the risk of substantial losses in the event of failure. The production of high value-added products is a key determinant of the competitive position of a company. The same principle applies to countries; for instance, nations like Switzerland and Germany, which focus on high value-added products (e.g., watches, automotive, appliances), tend to exhibit significant wealth. Conversely, countries that predominantly produce lower value-added products in larger quantities (e.g., raw materials, spare parts, outsourced production) typically experience much lower gains.

2.2.1. Classification of New Products and High Involvement New Products

The product concept is one of the most important concepts for marketing and marketing communication. It constitutes the first and basic stage in product marketing activity processes (Ekşi, 2017). Therefore, updating existing products and developing new products enables an institution to survive and compete in the market (Ekşi, 2017). In parallel with this, according to

Prins and Verhoef (2007) the successful introduction of new products is very important for the long-term performance of companies.

Literature presents various classifications of the concept of new products, many of which exhibit similarities with each other (Bozkurt and Ergen, 2016). One of the most prominent and widely used classification approaches is proposed by the American consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. in 1982 (Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, 1982). According to this classification, new products are categorized as follows in the table below:

Table 3. Booz, Allen and Hamilton's New Product Classification

New Product Categories	Definition	Additional Comments
New products for the world	Pioneer products with unique qualities, innovations	Lead to the creation of new markets and marketplaces.
New products for businesses	Products that enable organizations to enter the market for the first time	Lead to expansion of product diversity.
Supplementary products	Products that complement existing product groups (Enhanced or limited versions of existing products)	Lead to expansion within a specific product line and range.
New products emerging from the modernization of existing products	Enhanced versions of products on the market with higher perceived quality and functionality	Lead to modernization of products or increase in variety.
Repositioned existing products	Versions of existing products introduced in another geographical market or market segment	Introduce new categories to the market.
Cost-reduced new products	Versions of existing products produced and presented with similar functionality but at a lower cost	Help reduce service and supply costs.

New products can be evaluated from multiple perspectives. From a consumer behavior perspective, they offer the advantage of novelty while simultaneously creating perceptions of risk. Therefore, perceived risk and involvement are among the most important variables influencing consumer responses to new products.

As product involvement increases, perceived risk also tends to increase, affecting attitudes and purchase intentions. Accordingly, new products can be classified as low-involvement or high-

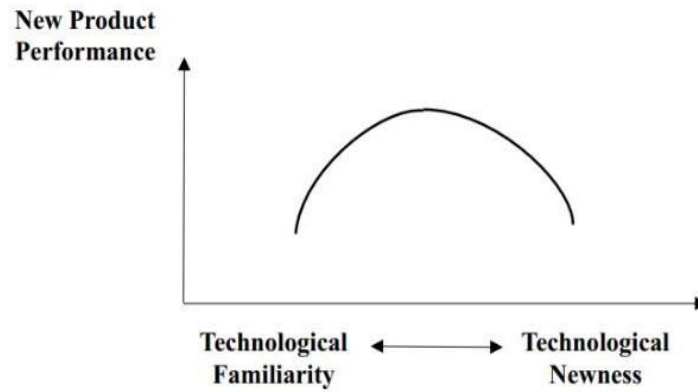
involvement products. Bowen and Chaffee (1974) define involvement as the expected benefits or rewards consumers associate with a product. Higher involvement generally leads to more complex decision-making and information-processing activities. Consequently, high-involvement new products are often perceived as riskier and may face greater consumer resistance than low-involvement products.

Price is widely recognized as a key determinant of involvement. According to Coşkun (2018), most high-involvement products are characterized by relatively high prices, with exceptions such as personal care and children's products, where involvement is primarily driven by health-related concerns.

Because consumers tend to perceive greater risk when purchasing unfamiliar products, particularly high-involvement products, establishing familiarity and trust is essential. In this regard, effective communication strategies become critical for reducing uncertainty and encouraging adoption.

According to Özer and Tang (2019), successful new product performance depends on balancing perceptions of novelty and familiarity. As illustrated in Figure 2, achieving this balance during both product development and marketing can enhance new product performance.

Figure 2. Success of New Product



Source: Özer and Tang, 2019

The TOGG brand vehicles, which are the focus of this study, belong to the automotive sector and therefore fall into the category of high-involvement products. Consequently, the purchase decision for such products typically results from extensive mental processing and persuasion within the consumer's mind.

2.2.2. Turkish Electric car TOGG As a New Product

A new electric car named TOGG, was launched in Türkiye in 2023. It is quite possible to consider electric vehicles within the category of new products. In this context, when the literature is examined, it is evident that the emergence of revolutionary new products creates an entirely new competitive environment. However, at the same time, as emphasized in previous sections, new products are perceived as riskier by consumers (Özer and Tang, 2019; Wong and Tong, 2012) However, this disadvantage applies not only to TOGG but also to Tesla, Nio, and potential future electric automotive brands. This disadvantage will diminish and eventually disappear with the widespread adoption of electric vehicles and other battery-powered vehicles.

First disadvantage for TOGG, aside from being a new product, is being a new brand. While TOGG and its executives often emphasize that the electric automotive sector represents a new competitive landscape where perceptions are not as rigid as in the traditional automotive sector, studies in the literature suggest otherwise. As mentioned under the new product heading, consumers still prioritize aspects they have experienced before even with new products (Özer and Tang, 2019). In summary, according to this research, consumers seek familiarity with new products. This implies that established brands in the traditional automotive category would have a competitive edge if they enter this sector.

Furthermore, another disadvantage for TOGG's brand stems from the concept of nation branding, which this research also considers. Despite Türkiye having many advantages and high potential, it is not feasible to say that Türkiye or any Turkish-origin brand can compete internationally in the automotive sector. Numerous studies indicate that consumers pay attention to the nationality of the brand when purchasing a car (Wang and Yang, 2008; Fetscherin and Toncar, 2010; Roman, Manicola, and Manole, 2018).

It is a reality that Türkiye is not among the primary nation brands sought after when purchasing automobiles. However, there are examples of countries and nations that have not previously been prominent in various categories but have entered competition and achieved success. A notable example is South Korea's ascent led by Samsung. Consumer perceptions can evolve over time with consistent and coherent messaging. As of now, TOGG emerges as an endeavor that faces many disadvantages but is also pursued with high motivation and effort.

The literature indicates that another crucial factor influencing the purchase of new products is electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication processes. Especially in product categories perceived as high-risk, such as TOGG, e-WOM plays a significant role as a

communication tool. Within the framework of e-WOM research models, it is considered as another variable.

2.2.3. E-Wom and It's Effect on New Products

Word-of-mouth communication has evolved through the digital revolution, shifting consumer information exchange to online platforms. This form of communication is referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Pollach, 2006). Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, e-WOM enables messages to reach larger audiences and allows consumers to communicate with less social pressure due to the absence of face-to-face interaction (Phelps et al., 2004).

The importance of e-WOM is particularly evident in new product markets. Because consumers have limited experience with newly introduced products, they often perceive them as riskier than established alternatives (Bilgen & Zoghi, 2017). In addition, new products frequently face positioning challenges, as existing brands may already occupy favorable positions in consumers' minds (Ries & Trout, 2001). Consequently, gaining consumer acceptance becomes more difficult, especially during the initial purchase stage.

In such situations, consumers rely heavily on external information sources, particularly other consumers. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of word-of-mouth communication in new product adoption (Arndt, 1967; Lopez & Sicilia, 2013; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Messages shared by consumers are generally perceived as more credible than company-generated communications such as advertising or public relations activities.

Compared with traditional marketing communication tools, e-WOM offers broader reach, richer information, and greater opportunities for interaction (Stephen & Galak, 2010). It also enables consumers to access information that is more relevant to their specific needs and expectations. As a result, e-WOM plays a critical role in reducing uncertainty, building trust, and facilitating the adoption of new products. Given the distinctive characteristics of new products, communication strategies should be designed to address consumers' information needs and perceived risks. In this context, e-WOM represents one of the most influential communication tools in new product marketing.

3. Method

A quantitative research design was adopted to examine the proposed relationships. Data were collected using structured measurement instruments and analyzed through statistical techniques in line with Creswell (2018). Following the assessment of the measurement model, the

structural model was tested. In addition, descriptive statistics for the study variables were reported.

3.1. Data Collection and Analysis

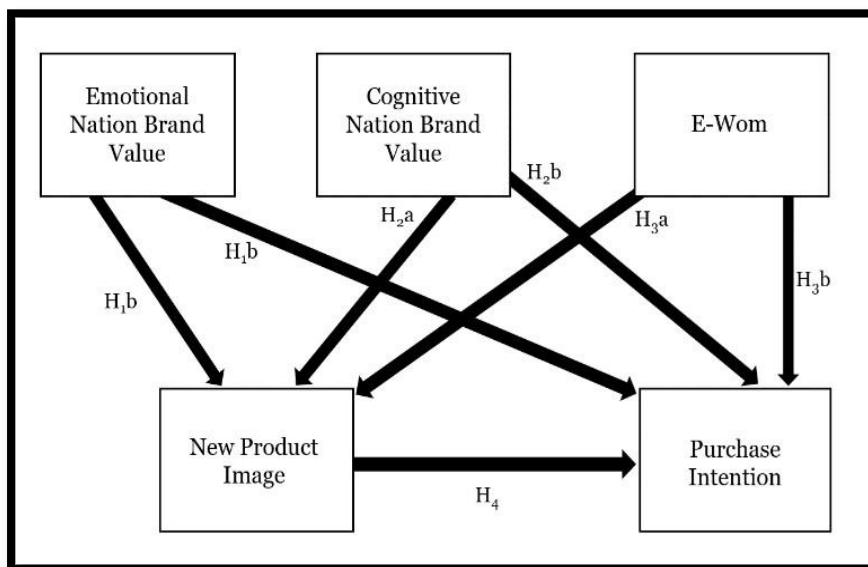
In this research, a survey study was conducted with 374 participants for data collection. The data sets resulting from the surveys filled out by participants were processed after necessary preprocessing and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 and LISREL 8.80 programs. The proposed hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM).

In this research these hypotheses are tested:

- H1a: The Emotional Dimension of Nation Brand influences New Product Image.
- H1b: The Emotional Dimension of Nation Brand influences Purchase Intention.
- H2a: The Cognitive Dimension of Nation Brand influences New Product Image.
- H2b: The Cognitive Dimension of Nation Brand influences Purchase Intention.
- H3a: Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communication influences New Product Image.
- H3b: Electronic Word-of-Mouth Communication influences Purchase Intention.
- H4: New Product Image influences Purchase Intention.

The model diagram is shared in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Tested Research Model



The scales used to measure nation brand value (emotional and cognitive dimensions), electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), new product image, and purchase intention were adapted from previous studies. The primary sources were Haubl's (1996) study, *A Cross-National Investigation of the Effects of Country of Origin and Brand Name on the Evaluation of a New Car*, and Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold's (2011) study, *Brand Equity Dilution Through Negative Online Word-of-Mouth Communication*.

The study targeted non-Turkish citizens in order to assess international perceptions of Türkiye's nation brand value and the TOGG brand. University students were selected as the target population because previous research identifies younger individuals as potential future automobile consumers (Newman & Dolich, 1979; Achtnicht, 2012; Krueger, Rashidi, & Rose, 2016; Fu et al., 2022).

Accordingly, the population consisted of 2,219 international students enrolled at Anadolu University during the 2022–2023 academic year (Anadolu University, 2024). A questionnaire prepared via Google Forms was distributed to all students through their university e-mail addresses. A total of 395 responses were collected, of which 374 were deemed valid and included in the analysis. Given the population size, a minimum sample of 328 respondents was required at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Therefore, the final sample of 374 participants was considered sufficient. The respondents represented 63 different countries.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the relevant literature.

4.1. Validity, Reliability, and Structural Equation Modeling

Before creating the model and research, the scales were subjected to reliability tests based on the collected data. The data obtained within this scope are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Items and Reliability Values

Factor	Cronbach Alpha (α)	Number of Items
Nation Brand Value (Emotional)		
Nice ¹		
Friendly ² Pleasant ³	0,930	4
Peaceful ⁴		

Nation Brand Value (Cognitive)				
Competent ¹	0,960	4		
Reliable ²				
State of the Art ³				
Successful ⁴				
E-Wom				
General Persuasiveness ¹⁻²⁻³	0,862	7		
General Credibility ⁴⁻⁵				
Susceptibility to Online Product Reviews ⁶⁻⁷				
New Product Image (TOGG)				
Passenger Safety ¹	0,978	10		
Reliability ²				
Perfection ³				
Quality ⁴				
Appealing ⁵				
Sleek ⁶				
Desirable ⁷ Excellent ⁸ Favourable				
⁹ Pleasing ¹⁰				
Purchase Intention				
Further Information ¹			0,942	4
Dealership Visit ²				
Test Drive ³				
Wise Purchase ⁴				

According to Cronbach, a scale reliability coefficient (α) between 0.80 and 1.00 indicates a high level of reliability (Cronbach, 1951). The "Cronbach's Alpha" reliability analyses conducted revealed that the sub-dimensions (items) of the 5 factors included in the model are highly reliable.

In the structural model prepared for confirmatory factor and path analysis, a five-factor structure was established. Following the initial confirmatory factor analysis, modification indices were examined to improve the fit of the measurement model. Modification indices were examined to improve the fit of the measurement model.

Based on theoretical justification and the modification index recommendations, covariance paths were added between several error terms belonging to items within the same construct. No items were removed from the model. After implementing these modifications, the revised model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit values.

Table 5. Measured Model Fit Indicates

$\chi^2= 1064.04, df=364; \chi^2/df = 2.9$
GFI= .84
CFI = .98
AGFI= .80

NFI= .98
RMSEA= .07

According to the relevant literature, χ^2/df values below 5, GFI, CFI, AGFI, and NFI values above 0.80, and RMSEA values below 0.10 indicate acceptable model fit (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Simon et al., 2010; Hooper et al., 2008; Kline, 2011; Marsh, 2007). As presented in Table 5, all goodness-of-fit indices met the recommended thresholds, indicating that the model demonstrated an acceptable level of fit.

Following the assessment of model fit and reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. According to Hair et al. (2017), CR values should exceed 0.70 and AVE values should exceed 0.50. As shown in Table 6, all constructs satisfied these criteria, except for one e-WOM item. However, because the corresponding CR value exceeded the recommended threshold, convergent validity was considered acceptable (Malhotra & Dash, 2016).

Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square roots of AVE values with inter-construct correlations. As reported in Table 7, the square roots of AVE values were greater than the corresponding correlations, confirming discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Overall, the findings support the validity and robustness of the measurement model.

Table 6. Standardized factors, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the measurement model

Factor	Item	Standardized λ	CR	AVE
Emotional Nation Brand Value(ENBV)	ENBV 1	,810	,933	,776
	ENBV 2	,910		
	ENBV3	,889		
	ENBV 4	,912		
Cognitive Nation Brand Value(CNBV)	CNBV1	,944	,962	,863
	CNBV2	,877		
	CNBV3	,942		
	CNBV4	,950		
e-WOM	EWOM1	,698	,867	,486
	EWOM2	,643		
	EWOM3	,604		
	EWOM4	,561		
	EWOM5	,817		
	EWOM6	,691		

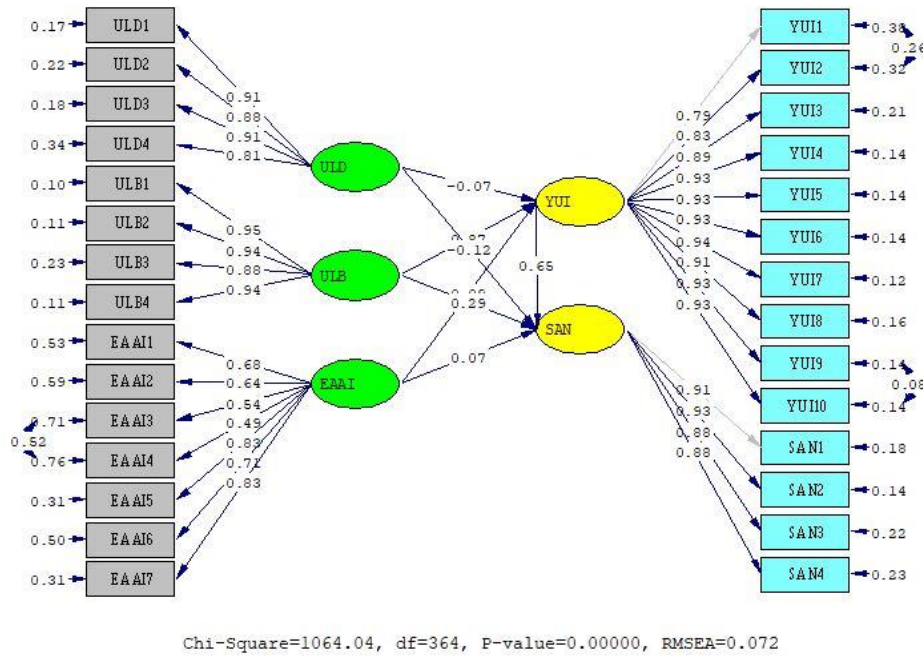
	EWOM7	,823		
New Product Image (NPI)	NPI1	,940		
	NPI 2	,938		
	NPI 3	,914		
	NPI 4	,938		
	NPI5	,923	,978	,816
	NPI6	,923		
	NPI7	,927		
	NPI8	,883		
	NPI9	,834		
	NPI10	,799		
Purchase Intention	PI1	,906		
	PI2	,929		
	PI3	,882	,944	,809
	PI4	,879		

Table 7. Discriminant Validity for the Measurement Model

	ENBV	CNBV	EWOM	NPI	PI
ENBV	0,881				
CNBV	0,624	0,929			
EWOM	0,375	0,148	0,697		
NPI	0,506	0,836	0,19	0,903	
PI	0,412	0,767	0,203	0,840	0,899

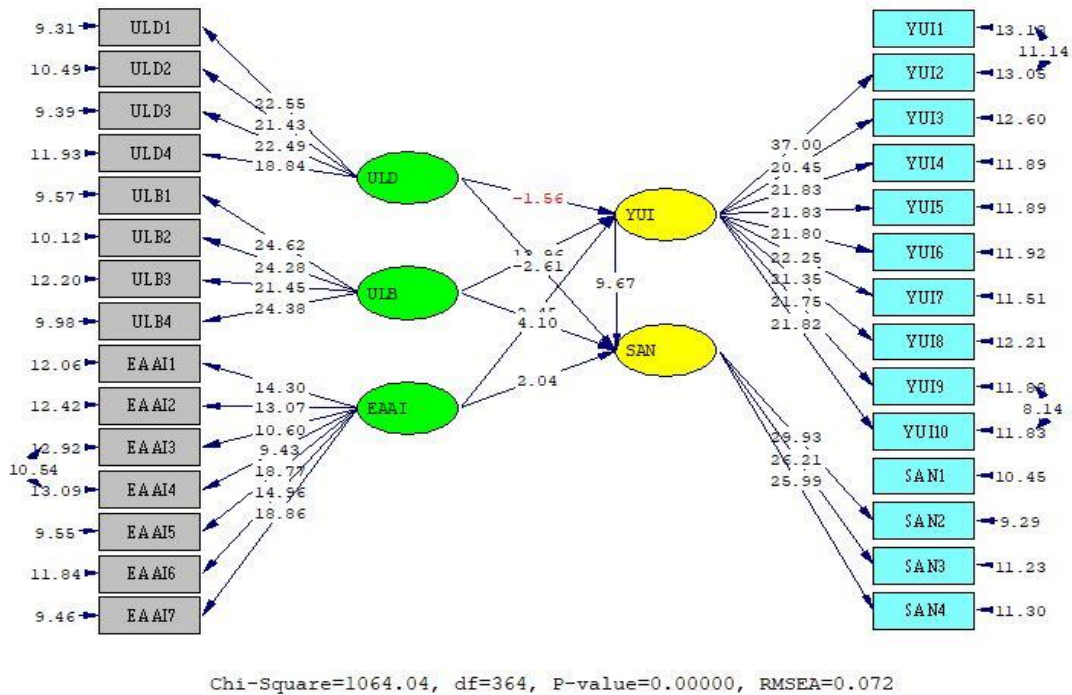
After conducting the tests for CR (Composite Reliability) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted), the testing of the structural model was initiated. Figure 4 shows the loading values of the items. As illustrated in the diagram, the factor loadings of the items range from 0.49 to 0.95, and all items meet the minimum acceptable loading thresholds. The path coefficients presented in 4 (which are standardized regression coefficients) describe the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables within the model. The findings related to these effects, along with the t-values presented in Figure 5 that demonstrate the significance of the predicted relationships, will be interpreted in the following section.

Figure 4. Path Diagram (Standardized Values)



The significance of the structural relationships was evaluated using t-values. As shown in Figure 5, all path coefficients were statistically significant except for the relationship between the emotional dimension of nation branding and new product image ($t = -1.56$), which did not meet the significance criterion (Yılmaz, 2004).

Figure 5. Path Diagram (t-values)



The relationships between latent variables and observed variables in the model were examined. In interpreting the relationships, the following values, derived from Schober, Boer, and Schwarte's findings on the interpretation of correlation coefficients (2018: 3), were used as a basis:

- 0.00-0.10: very weak
- 0.10-0.39: weak
- 0.40-0.69: moderate
- 0.70-0.89: strong
- 0.90-1.00: very strong

Table 8. Correlation Matrix

	ENBV	CNBV	EWOM	NPI	PI
ENBV	1.00				
CNBV	0.63	1.00			
EWOM	0.38	0.12	1.00		
NPI	-0.071	0.87	0.088	1.00	
PI	-0.12	0.29	0.074	0.66	1.00

The emotional and cognitive dimensions of nation branding were moderately and positively correlated ($r = 0.63$). The emotional dimension also showed a weak positive correlation with e-WOM ($r = 0.38$) and a weak negative correlation with purchase intention ($r = -0.12$), whereas its relationship with new product image was not statistically significant.

The cognitive dimension was weakly correlated with e-WOM ($r = 0.12$) and purchase intention ($r = 0.29$), but showed a strong positive correlation with new product image ($r = 0.87$).

E-WOM exhibited very weak positive correlations with both new product image ($r = 0.08$) and purchase intention ($r = 0.07$). Finally, new product image was moderately and positively correlated with purchase intention ($r = 0.65$).

	NPI (New Product Image)		PI (Purchase Intention)	
	<i>t</i> -values	Path Coefficient (Regression Coefficient)	<i>t</i> -values	Path Coefficient (Regression Coefficient)
ENBV	-1.56	-0.07	-2.61	-0.12
CNBV	13.96	0.87	4.10	0.29
EWOM	2.45	0.09	2.04	0.07
NPI	-	-	9.67	0.65

Table 9. Summary Table of T-Values and Regression Coefficients

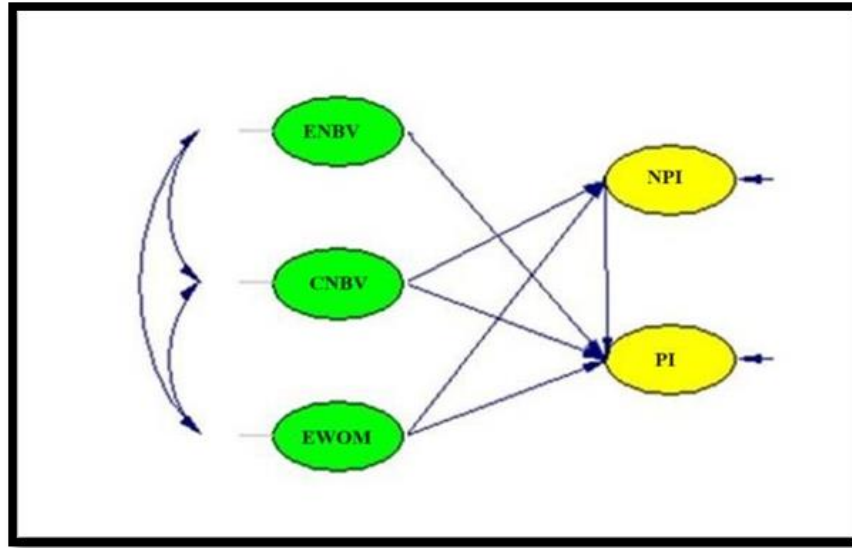
Table 9 presents the results of the regression equations for the relationships established in the developed model. R^2 represents the total regression coefficient for all relationships between the latent variables and the observed variables in the established equation.

Table 10. Structural Equation

$NPI = -0.071 * ENBV + 0.86 * CNBV + 0.088 * EWOM$	$R^2 = 0.71$
$PI = 0.66 * NPI - 0.12 * ENBV + 0.29 * CNBV + 0.074 * EWOM$	$R^2 = 0.73$

The latent variable *new product image* was explained by the emotional and cognitive dimensions of nation branding and electronic word-of-mouth communication, accounting for 71% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.71$). Similarly, *purchase intention* was explained by nation branding, electronic word-of-mouth communication, and new product image, accounting for 73% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.73$). These results indicate that the proposed model has strong explanatory power. The developed structural model is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Developed Model



The regression analysis results indicate that the primary factor influencing the new product perception and purchase intention for TOGG, a Turkish electric vehicle brand, is not the emotional dimension of nation brand value, but rather its cognitive dimension. In summary, it is shown that participants' cognitive perceptions are more significant than their emotional feelings towards a nation or country. One potential trigger for this situation is that TOGG, the product discussed in this study, is in the new product category. As frequently noted in the literature, consumers perceive significantly higher risks associated with new products (Bilgen & Zoghi, 2017, p. 145). On the other hand, the TOGG brand is a high-interest product in the form of an electric vehicle brand. Given that TOGG vehicles are high-interest and thus perceived as high-risk products, it is quite natural for consumers to lean towards making rational rather than emotional decisions. In this context, the formation of consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions towards TOGG is derived from the cognitive dimension of nation brand value.

Table 11. Testing Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Effect Size	β (Standardized)	Result
<i>H1A</i> : The Emotional Dimension of Nation Branding has an effect on New Product Image.	-	-0.07	Not Supported
<i>H1B</i> : The Emotional Dimension of Nation Branding has an effect on Purchase Intention.	Weak	-0.12	Supported

H2A: The Cognitive Dimension of Nation Branding has an effect on New Product Image.	Strong	0.87	Supported
H2B: The Cognitive Dimension of Nation Branding has an effect on Purchase Intention.	Weak	0.29	Supported
H3A: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has an effect on New Product Image.	Very Weak	0.09	Supported
H3B: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has an effect on Purchase Intention.	Very Weak	0.07	Supported
H4: New Product Image has an effect on Purchase Intention.	Moderate	0.65	Supported

Table 11 summarizes the hypothesis testing results regarding the effects of nation branding dimensions, e-WOM, and new product image on consumer perceptions and purchase intention. The findings indicate that the emotional dimension of nation branding does not significantly affect new product image, but has a weak positive effect on purchase intention. The cognitive dimension shows a strong positive effect on new product image and a weak positive effect on purchase intention.

Both hypotheses related to e-WOM were supported, although the effects on new product image and purchase intention were very weak. Finally, new product image was found to have a moderate positive effect on purchase intention, confirming H4.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

After the establishment of the structural model and hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics were reported for the main constructs of the study: Türkiye's emotional and cognitive nation brand value, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), new product image (TOGG), and purchase intention.

Table 12 presents the descriptive statistics for Türkiye's emotional nation brand value (ENBV). The results indicate that participants evaluated Türkiye positively on all emotional attributes, with relatively high mean scores. The highest-rated item was "Türkiye is beautiful as a country," while the lowest was "Türkiye is peaceful as a country." Overall, the arithmetic mean ($M = 5.64$) suggests a strong positive emotional perception of Türkiye among respondents.

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Nation Brand Value

Emotional Nation Brand Value (ENBV)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (s)	Sample Size (n)
Türkiye is beautiful as a	5.76	1.314	374

country (ENBV1)			
Türkiye is friendly as a country (ENBV2)	5.65	1.423	374
Türkiye is pleasant as a country (ENBV3)	5.60	1.313	374
Türkiye is peaceful as a country (ENBV4)	5.52	1.462	374
Arithmetic Mean	5.64	1.378	374
<i>1=Totally Disagree</i>		<i>6=Totally Agree</i>	

Table 13 reports the descriptive statistics for Türkiye’s cognitive nation brand value (CNBV). Compared to the emotional dimension, cognitive evaluations are relatively lower. The highest mean value is observed for “Türkiye is competent as a country,” while the lowest is for “Türkiye is a state-of-the-art country.” The overall mean (M = 4.39) indicates a moderate level of cognitive brand perception.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics for the Cognitive Dimension of Nation Brand Value

Cognitive Nation Brand Value (ENBV)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (s)	Sample Size (n)
Türkiye is competent as a country (CNBV1)	4.48	1.778	374
Türkiye is reliable as a country (CNBV2)	4.47	1.754	374
Türkiye is a state of art as a country (CNBV3)	4.18	2.023	374
Türkiye is successful as a country (CNBV4)	4.44	1.812	374
Arithmetic Mean	4.39	1.841	374
<i>1=Totally Disagree</i>		<i>6=Totally Agree</i>	

Table 14 presents participants’ evaluations of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). The results show that respondents actively use online reviews in their decision-making processes, particularly before making purchase decisions. However, perceived credibility of online reviews is relatively lower compared to usage intensity, indicating a cautious attitude toward e-WOM content (M = 5.30).

Table 14. Descriptive Statistics for Electronic Word-of-Mouth

E-Wom	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (s)	Sample Size (n)
Online product reviews influence my decision to purchase the product (E-WOM1)	5.63	1.319	374
Before making an important purchase decision, I review other users' comments about the product online (EWOM2)	5.89	1.298	374
I find online product reviews to be credible (EWOM3)	4.55	1.492	374
I trust product reviews made by other consumers (EWOM4)	4.60	1.536	374
I frequently read online reviews from consumers to ensure that I have purchased the right product and to know which product/brand leaves a good impression (EWOM5)	5.48	1.369	374
I frequently refer to other consumers' online product reviews to help me choose the right product/brand (EWOM6)	5.28	1.709	374
I often gather information from online consumer product reviews before purchasing a specific product/brand (EWOM7)	5.67	1.382	374
Arithmetic Mean	5.30	1.443	374
1=Totally Disagree			6=Totally Agree

Table 15 shows descriptive statistics for TOGG's new product image. Participants generally perceive TOGG positively in terms of functional attributes such as safety and reliability. However, affective and symbolic evaluations such as "excellent" or "desirable" receive lower scores. The overall mean ($M = 4.51$) suggests a moderately positive but not strong product image.

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics for TOGG's Image as a New Product

New Product Image (NPI)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (s)	Sample Size (n)
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As a Turkish car, TOGG provides passenger safety (NPI1)	5.02	1.595	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is reliable (NPI2)	4.93	1.618	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is perfection (NPI3)	4.30	1.795	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is quality (NPI4)	4.63	1.787	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is appealing (NPI5)	4.59	1.724	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is sleek (NPI6)	4.42	1.693	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is desirable (NPI7)	4.36	1.730	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is excellent (NPI8)	4.19	1.867	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is favorable (NPI9)	4.37	1.786	374
As a Turkish car, TOGG is pleasing (NPI10)	4.37	1.817	374
Arithmetic Mean	4.51	1.741	374
<i>1=Totally Disagree</i>		<i>6=Totally Agree</i>	

Finally, Table 16 presents purchase intention toward TOGG. Respondents demonstrate higher willingness to seek information and test drive the vehicle, while direct purchase intention remains relatively lower. The overall mean ($M = 4.39$) indicates a moderate level of purchase intention.

Table 16. Descriptive Statistics for Purchase Intention on TOGG

Purchase Intention (PI)	Mean(\bar{x})	Standard Deviation(s)	Sample Size (n)
When considering buying a new electric car, I would seek more information about the Turkish automotive brand Togg (PI1)	4.70	1.818	374
When considering buying a new electric car, I would visit an authorized dealer for the Turkish automotive brand Togg (PI2)	4.18	2.088	374
When considering buying a new electric car, I would like to take a test drive with the Turkish automotive brand Togg (PI3)	5.07	1.932	374

When considering buying a new electric car, I would think it wise to purchase the Turkish automotive brand Togg (PI4)	3.61	1.879	374
Arithmetic Mean	4.39	1.929	374
<i>1=Totally Disagree</i>	<i>6=Totally Agree</i>		

5. Results and Recommendations

This study examines the effects of Türkiye's nation brand equity (emotional and cognitive dimensions) and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) on TOGG's brand image and purchase intention. TOGG was conceptualized as a new product due to its emerging status in the automotive market. The research model was developed based on literature highlighting the role of e-WOM in new product diffusion (Figure 6).

Data were collected from 374 international students representing 63 countries, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The results (Table 10) show that the cognitive dimension of Türkiye's nation brand is the main determinant of TOGG's new product image, while the emotional dimension has no significant effect. Participants demonstrated generally positive emotional perceptions of Türkiye, but relatively weaker cognitive evaluations.

Similarly, both brand image and purchase intention for TOGG remain limited. This pattern is consistent with the high-involvement nature of electric vehicles, where perceived risk leads consumers to rely more on cognitive evaluations.

e-WOM has a statistically significant but weak effect on both new product image and purchase intention, which may be associated with homogeneous response patterns in the dataset.

Overall, cognitive nation brand perceptions appear more influential than emotional ones in shaping evaluations of both Türkiye and TOGG. Strengthening cognitive brand associations is therefore critical for improving international perceptions of emerging national brands.

The study concludes with Socrates' view on reputation formation, as cited by Fan (2010, p. 102):

"The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear."

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