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# Antecedents of Private-Label Brand Purchase Intention: An Experimental Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Recent decades have witnessed a growing attention toward private-label brands (PLBs), which also have become of critical importance in emerging markets. Building on this, the main purpose of this empirical research is to investigate the differential influences of individual factors (i.e., socio-demographic aspects, individual differences, and perceptual variables), contextual factors (i.e., distinctive packaging, price promotion, and store image), and attitude toward PLB on PLB purchase intention in an emerging-market context. To serve this purpose, a scenario-based experimental design ( $N = 351$ ) was used. The findings of the study reveal that prior experience with PLBs, the degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues, store image, and attitude toward PLB are precursors of PLB purchase intention, which was found to be inversely related to age, level of purchasing risk, distinctive packaging, and price promotion. This empirical inquiry is expected to provide useful insights into the PLB literature, as it unveils how PLB implications may vary in an emerging-market context.



## KEYWORDS

Emerging country;  
experiment;  
private-label brands;  
purchase intention;  
store brands

## Introduction

Private-label brands (PLBs) are “those sold under retailers’ (or wholesalers’) own labels rather than the brand name of a national manufacturer” (Burton et al. 1998, 294), which provide considerable benefits to both consumers and manufacturers (Koschate-Fischer, Cramer, and Hoyer 2014). In terms of consumers, PLBs may constitute favorable product alternatives with lower prices and acceptable quality levels (Pauwels and Srinivasan 2004), while retailers are able to gain higher retail margins, achieve increased store loyalty, and have greater negotiation power against national brand manufacturers, by means of the inclusion of PLBs into their portfolios (Ailawadi, Pauwels, and Steenkamp 2008). Depending upon these issues, recent decades have witnessed an escalating growth and penetration of PLBs, echoing significant changes in competitive dynamics of retailing and shifts in consumers’ consumption patterns (Cuneo et al. 2019; Milberg, Cuneo, and Langlois 2019).

Market shares of PLBs have experienced a global rise (Bodur, Tofighi, and Grohmann 2016), such that in 2016 PLB market share in globe accounted for 16.7%, with an annual growth rate of 0.4% (Nielsen 2018). Besides, in the U.S. PLB sales reached an amount of \$143.4 billion within the year 2019, which increased by approximately \$14 billion since 2015 (Nielsen 2019). European consumers’ attention toward PLBs is also enormous; PLBs captured 31.4% of total market share within the European region in 2016 (Nielsen 2018). It has been stated that at least every third item sold in Europe is a PLB; even more remarkably, among European countries, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom registered the highest PLB market shares at or above 50% (PLMA (Private Label Manufacturers Association) 2019). Being one of the countries recording the highest PLB market share levels ever, Turkey is of notable value regarding PLB growth, in which PLB market share climbed to nearly 29% (PLMA (Private Label Manufacturers Association) 2019).

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Resting on the burgeoning interest in PLBs, numerous empirical studies have been devoted to understanding the drivers of PLB purchase intention particularly in the context of developed economies (e.g., Bockholdt, Kemper, and Brettel 2020; Miquel et al. 2017; Walsh, Shiu, and Hassan 2012). On the other side, underlying factors of consumers' intention to buy PLBs in emerging markets are also worth exploring (Diallo 2012; Herstein et al. 2017), primarily owing to significant differences prevailing across developing and developed nations (Wright et al. 2005), and emerging economies' huge potential to further improve marketing science (Burgess and Steenkamp 2006). In particular, it has been firmly acknowledged that important idiosyncrasies exist in emerging countries' PLB markets; and thus, consumer behavior of PLBs offers distinctive implications for retailers in emerging economies (Herstein et al. 2017). This also accentuates the requirement for formulating peculiar strategies for PLB marketing in emerging-market settings (Aw and Chong 2019). In this sense, there have been several research attempts to examine PLB practices in emerging markets in respect of consumer's as well as manufacturer's perspective; however, the coverage of these studies has been specifically intensified on BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) (Diallo 2015).

Drawing on the aforementioned reasons and the suggestion that Turkey represents an ideal research setting to study PLBs (Altıntaş et al. 2010; Konuk 2020), the research objective of this study is to explore the interplay of individual factors (i.e., socio-demographic aspects, individual differences, and perceptual variables), contextual factors (i.e., distinctive packaging, price promotion, and store image), and attitude toward PLB on PLB purchase intention. This empirical inquiry is expected to offer novel insights into the PLB literature, as it indicates the antecedents of PLB purchase intention in an emerging-market context and sheds light on how PLB implications may differ in an emerging country.

### **Conceptual framework and hypotheses development**

Individual factors (i.e., socio-demographic aspects, individual differences, and perceptual variables),

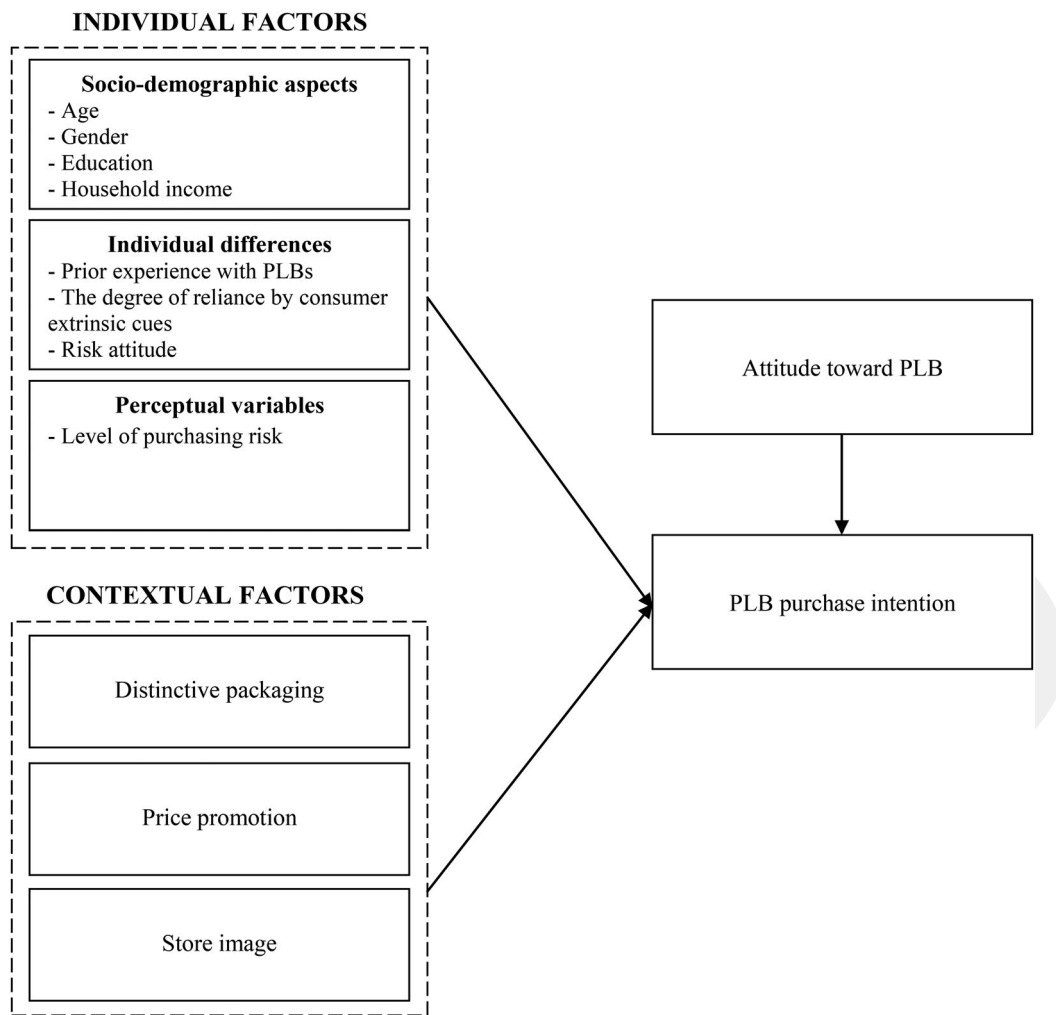
contextual factors (i.e., distinctive packaging, price promotion, and store image), and attitude toward PLB are expected to be conducive to PLB purchase intention. Drawing on this conceptual framework (Figure 1), the research hypotheses ( $H_1$ - $H_{12}$ ) were formulated.

#### ***The link between individual factors and PLB purchase intention***

##### ***The link between socio-demographic aspects and PLB purchase intention***

Building on the fact that PLBs are frequently regarded as lower-priced products compared to national brands (Lamey et al. 2007; Nies and Natter 2010), it has been supported that PLBs need to specifically attract consumers with different demographic backgrounds (Shukla, Banerjee, and Adidam 2013). In this sense, a wealth of research has been devoted to understanding the impact of socio-demographic variables on attitude toward and purchase intention of PLBs (e.g., Glynn and Chen 2009; Moore and Carpenter 2010; Ngobo 2011). In particular, coupled with accumulated shopping experience and market-related knowledge, older consumers are assumed to be engaged in more sophisticated decision-making processes, whereas younger consumers more tend to rest on simple heuristics to choose brands (Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996; Sherman, Schiffman, and Mathur 2001). Besides, consumers with higher age are less likely to face time pressures and enjoy more shopping; and thus, their proneness to have positive attitudes toward PLBs is expected to be higher (Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk 2001; Shukla, Banerjee, and Adidam 2013).

In terms of gender, drawing on the notion that "gender is a topic richly worth studying in its own right" (Fischer 2015, 1718), significant differences are apt to exist across men and women regarding PLB purchase behavior (Kurtuluş and Ertekin 2015; Miquel et al. 2017). Owing to their generally higher involvement in shopping activities, women are considered mavens (Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk 2001), for whom hedonic shopping value is higher (Mishra 2014). In this respect, women are suggested to be more eager



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

to develop favorable attitudes toward PLBs (Miquel et al. 2017). Concerning education, as well-educated consumers are not mostly financially limited and less rely on price-quality associations, they are more successful at understanding the differences between national brands and PLBs (Dawes and Nenycz-Thiel 2013; Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996). This is also evident in the extant literature reporting that education gives rise to positive attitude toward PLBs (e.g., Burton et al. 1998; Moore and Carpenter 2010). As for household income, dependent upon the general perception of PLBs as being less expensive offerings; and thus, enabling important savings (Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996), consumers with lower income have more willingness to prefer PLBs (Shukla, Banerjee, and Adidam 2013). Accordingly, empirical evidence provides support that the more household income, the less consumers'

inclination toward buying PLBs (e.g., Dick, Jain, and Richardson 1995; Glynn and Chen 2009). Hence, the pertinent research hypotheses are

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Age positively influences PLB purchase intention.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Women more intend to purchase PLB than men.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Education positively influences PLB purchase intention.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Household income negatively influences PLB purchase intention.

#### ***The link between individual differences and PLB purchase intention***

It has been widely acknowledged that consumers' previous experience is of great significance in anticipating future purchase behavior

(Bogomolova and Millburn 2012). Specifically, the initial engagement in PLBs plays a crucial role in determining consumers' proneness to further buy PLBs in different product categories (Miquel-Romero, Caplliure-Giner, and Adame-Sánchez 2014), as prior experience is closely intertwined with brand familiarity (Laroche, Kim, and Zhou 1996), and ultimately, positive attitudes toward PLBs (Zielke and Dobbelstein 2007). In a similar vein, consumers with no sufficient experience are more prone to approach PLBs with skepticism (Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996), because strong brand associations can be built by means of accumulated brand experiences (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). Remarkably, consumers' favorable direct experiences with PLBs have been advocated to be such considerable that through enhancing brand equity long-lasting PLB loyalty is assumed to be established over national brands (Ailawadi and Keller 2004; Lamey et al. 2007). Therefore, it was posited that

H<sub>5</sub>: Prior experience with PLBs positively influences PLB purchase intention.

Cue utilization theory argues that consumers make interpretations about the quality of a product on the basis of the cues that it includes (Burnkrant 1978). Covering both intrinsic (e.g., product ingredients) and extrinsic cues (e.g., brand name, logo, and packaging), available product cues provide a critical foundation for consumers' decision-making processes (Richardson, Dick, and Jain 1994). It has been defended that when consumers do not have direct experiences with a product - in case of the lack of intrinsic cues -, they use extrinsic information to evaluate brand offerings (Bodur, Tofghi, and Grohmann 2016). In parallel with these, empirical evidence highlights that by virtue of the fact that PLBs are commonly seen as low quality products with respect to extrinsic cue information; consumers' level of reliance by extrinsic cues exerts a negative impact on attitude toward PLBs (e.g., Mandhachitara, Shannon, and Hadjicharalambous 2007; Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk 2011; Richardson, Dick, and Jain 1994). Taking these into consideration, it was hypothesized that

H<sub>6</sub>: The degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues negatively influences PLB purchase intention.

Important quality differences are accepted to be apparent between national brands and PLBs, and PLBs are frequently perceived as more vulnerable regarding product quality (Bauner et al. 2019). The higher variations in quality among different PLB categories therefore raise the risk that a specific PLB will fail to satisfy (Burton et al. 1998). Correspondingly, referring to a consumer's assessment of the essence of risk and the degree to which the consumer dislikes the risk (Pennings, Wansink, and Meulenbergh 2002), risk attitude serves as a boundary factor in PLB purchase behavior (Thanasuta 2015). Notably, risk-averse consumers, who avoid encountering negative consequences, have more tendencies to favor national brands over PLBs with inferior quality (Shannon and Mandhachitara 2005; Sinha and Batra 1999). Putting it differently, designing PLBs based upon low brand equity enables national brands with strong brand associations to attract more the quality-seeking market segment (Olson 2012). As a result, the related hypothesis is

H<sub>7</sub>: Risk attitude negatively influences PLB purchase intention.

### *The link between perceptual variables and PLB purchase intention*

Albeit a considerable enhancement in PLBs concerning perceived image and quality, consumers still identify PLBs as second-rate options; that is strongly caused by perceived risks attached to those products (Beneke et al. 2012; Mieres, Martin, and Gutiérrez 2006). Encompassing primarily financial, functional, physical, social, and psychological risk (Solomon 2015), perceived risk in the context of PLBs has been firmly suggested to be investigated in order to shed light on why consumers are more inclined to prefer national brands over PLBs (Beneke et al. 2013; Liljander, Polsa, and Van Riel 2009; Sinha and Batra 1999). In this sense, it has been found that PLBs with greater "search" characteristics rather than "experience" attributes are more likely to be bought by consumers because

of lower level of perceived risk (Batra and Sinha 2000). Prior empirical research has also revealed that perceived risk in general (e.g., Beneke et al. 2013; Beneke, Brito, and Garvey 2015; Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao 2011), financial, functional, physical, and time risk associated with PLBs in particular (e.g., Beneke et al. 2012; Liljander, Polsa, and Van Riel 2009; Sheau-Fen, Sun-May, and Yu-Ghee 2012) is negatively correlated with perceived value and purchase intention of PLBs. Thus,

**H<sub>8</sub>:** Level of purchasing risk negatively influences PLB purchase intention.

### ***The link between contextual factors and PLB purchase intention***

#### ***The link between distinctive packaging and PLB purchase intention***

Anchored on the cue utilization theory, packaging constitutes one of the extrinsic cues and acts as a communication medium that gives signals to consumers about the quality of a product (Underwood, Klein, and Burke 2001). In that vein, consumers make critical interferences about national brands and PLBs by relying on package designs (Sarkar, Sharma, and Kalro 2016), which are of strategic importance, mainly due to high amount of stock keeping units in retailers, shelf layout in which competitive stock keeping units are closely placed, and consumers' restricted time spent for shopping (Steenkamp, Van Heerde, and Geyskens 2010). Packaging has been seen as one of the potential reasons for PLB failures (Hyman, Kopf, and Lee 2010; Mandhachitara, Shannon, and Hadjicharalambous 2007); for this reason, most of retailers have been making attempts to reduce quality and feature differentiation between national brands and PLBs by means of applying to copycat packaging (Choi and Coughlan 2006; Olson 2012). However, the pursuit of distinctive packaging strategy has been notably proposed for PLB retailers to successfully compete against national brands (Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk 2009; Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996). Building on these,

**H<sub>9</sub>:** Distinctive packaging positively influences PLB purchase intention.

### ***The link between price promotion and PLB purchase intention***

Being defined as "temporal price dispersion where manufacturers and retailers offer periodic short-term price cuts" (Lal 1990, 247), price promotion strategy has been widely recognized as being strictly related to the establishment of brand loyalty (Allender and Richards 2012). Based on this, price promotions play an essential role in the rivalry among national brands and PLBs (Nies and Natter 2010; Sethuraman and Mittelstaedt 1992), such that intensive price promotions are able to decrease the perceived quality gap between national brands and PLBs by nudging consumers toward concentrating principally on price (Steenkamp, Van Heerde, and Geyskens 2010). In addition, premium PLBs are apt to be launched in product lines experiencing heavy price promotions to attract consumers (Ter Braak, Geyskens, and Dekimpe 2014). Even though price promotions have been more extensively employed by national brand producers compared to PLB owners (Bogomolova et al. 2015), they allow retailers to boost the sales of PLBs with low market performance (Olbrich, Jansen, and Hundt 2017). Herewith, it was postulated that

**H<sub>10</sub>:** Price promotion positively influences PLB purchase intention.

### ***The link between store image and PLB purchase intention***

According to James, Durand, and Dreves (1976, 25), store image represents "a set of attitudes based upon evaluation of those store attributes deemed important by consumers" and comprises a valuable factor to be regarded in the scope of PLBs (Vahie and Paswan 2006). This is since consumers have tendency to assess PLBs as an extension of the brand name of the related retailer (Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao 2011), PLBs are both exclusive to a particular retailer and possessed by that retailer (Collins-Dodd and Lindley 2003), and positive brand associations of a specific store are likely to decline the degree of perceived purchasing risks faced by consumers (Liljander, Polsa, and Van Riel 2009; Semeijn, Van Riel, and Ambrosini 2004). Dependent upon these suggestions, favorable store

image does not only have a positive impact on attitudes toward and purchase intentions of PLBs in a direct way (e.g., Garrett, Lee, and Chu 2017; Liu and Wang 2008; Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao 2011); but also in an indirect manner, through strengthening perceived quality and trust (e.g., Liljander, Polsa, and Van Riel 2009; Konuk 2018; Mostafa and Elseidi 2018). As a result, it was hypothesized that

$H_{11}$ : Store image positively influences PLB purchase intention.

### **The link between attitude toward PLB and PLB purchase intention**

Anchored on the primary tenets of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) and theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1985, 1991), attitudes stem from the beliefs of individuals, each of which connect the behavior with a specific consequence, meaning concisely that attitude predicts behavioral intention. Specifically, attitude toward PLBs is described as “a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner due to product evaluations, purchase evaluations, and/or self-evaluations associated with private label grocery products” (Burton et al. 1998, 298), which acts as a facilitator in comprehending consumers’ purchase intentions to PLBs (Miquel et al. 2017; Walsh, Shiu, and Hassan 2012). With respect to the attitude theory, general predispositions toward PLBs are reflected in actual market behavior (Garretson, Fisher, and Burton 2002). In the pertinent literature, the empirical findings are mostly in line with these approaches, concluding that positive PLB attitude is a precursor of PLB purchase intention (e.g., Jin and Suh 2005; Lin, Marshall, and Dawson 2009; Miquel et al. 2017). Hence,

$H_{12}$ : Attitude toward PLB positively influences PLB purchase intention.

## **Methodology**

### **Experimental design**

In an attempt to test the proposed relationships among the theoretical constructs of interest, a

scenario-based experimental design was employed in this study. To enhance the validity of the empirical findings (Pérez-Santamaría, Martos-Partal, and Garrido-Morgado 2019), four different product categories of PLBs were determined for the experiment, namely, yogurt, milk, pasta, and bathroom tissue, which are among the most frequently sold PLB products in Turkey (Platin 2018), and for each of which questionnaires were separately developed. Initially, a pilot study was performed to ensure about the comprehensibility of the scenarios, artistic manipulations, and measurement items. A within-subjects experimental process dependent upon a 2 (national brand vs. PLB) x 2 (distinctive packaging vs. regular packaging) x 2 (30% price discount vs. no discount) x 2 (supermarket vs. discount store) factorial design was pursued in this research. Across all 16 experimental treatments, short scenarios were presented to the respondents with a visual representation of the distinctive/regular product packages, and each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the product categories.

### **Measures**

Socio-demographic aspects of the participants were treated on the basis of age, gender, education, and monthly household income. Moreover, individual differences (i.e., prior experience with PLBs, the degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues, and risk attitude), perceptual variables (i.e., level of purchasing risk), and attitude toward PLB were measured on five-point Likert scales adapted from the pertinent literature (Appendix). Specifically, the measures of prior experience with PLBs and the degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues were derived from Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk (2001) and Richardson, Jain, and Dick (1996), respectively; while the measurement scale for risk attitude was gathered from Weber, Blais, and Betz (2002). Besides, the study of Tan (1999) was the source of the level of purchasing risk scale, and the instrument of Liu and Wang (2008) was employed to capture the respondents’ PLB attitude. As for evaluating the PLB purchase intention construct, a single-item measurement, anchored by 1= “definitely not buy”, and 10= “definitely buy”, was utilized.

## Sample

In total, 351 questionnaires for the four product categories - yogurt (95), milk (90), pasta (86), and bathroom tissue (80) - were collected. In respect of the demographic profile of the sample (Table 1), 59.8 per cent of the respondents are female and 40.2 percent are male. The age breakdown of the sample demonstrates that most of the respondents (i.e., 39.8%) are between 21 and 30 years old. Regarding educational attainment, more than half of the sample (i.e., 52.1%) holds a bachelor's degree. Finally, in the sample 34.5 per cent of the respondents have a 2499 TL or less monthly household income.

## Findings and discussion

### Measurement model

Confirmatory factor analysis was first performed to assess unidimensionality and validity of the theoretical constructs (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The fit indices of the measurement model (i.e.,  $\chi^2$  (142<sub>df</sub>) = 347.24,  $p=0.00000$ , NNFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.064, SRMR = 0.043) demonstrate a satisfactory fit between the factor structure and the data (Table 2). With regard to internal consistency, composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values differ in the range between 0.49 and 0.94, which signals potential reliability problems about the risk

attitude scale. Nevertheless, since reflective measurement items are developed with a shared cause, which can be assumed to be inter-correlated, "internal consistency among formative indicators is not applicable" (Wilcox, Howell, and Breivik 2008, 1226). Owing to the inclusion of the formative indicators, the low level of internal consistency can be acceptable for the risk attitude scale. Besides, taking the positive and statistically significant t-values ( $p < 0.01$ ) into consideration, convergent validity was verified for the measurement model. Discriminant validity was also ensured, as the average variance extracted estimates are greater than the shared variances for each pair of constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981) (Table 3).

### Regression analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis was implemented to test the hypothesized conceptual framework of the study. This is because a hierarchical process enables to understand the incremental impact of each set of independent variables on the dependent variable (Eren Erdoğmuş, Bodur, and Yilmaz 2010). In this sense, the influences of individual factors, contextual factors, and attitude toward PLB on PLB purchase intention were examined in a sequential order (Table 4). In a detailed way, Model 1 covers the direct relationship between

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of the sample.

Profile indicators	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	210	59.8
Male	141	40.2
<b>Age</b>		
20 years or younger	25	7.1
21–30 years	140	39.8
31–40 years	63	18.0
41–50 years	55	15.7
51 years or older	68	19.4
<b>Education</b>		
Primary school degree	23	6.5
Secondary school degree	79	22.5
Bachelor's degree	183	52.1
Master's or higher degree	66	18.8
<b>Monthly household income</b>		
2499 TL or less	121	34.5
2500 TL–3499 TL	71	20.2
3500 TL–4499 TL	49	14.0
4500 TL–5499 TL	41	11.7
5500 TL–6499 TL	20	5.7
6500 TL–7499 TL	18	5.1
7500 TL–8499 TL	7	2.0
8500 TL or more	24	6.8

**Table 2.** Summary of measurement model.

Factor	Scale items	Standardized loadings	t-value	$\alpha$	$\rho$	Average variance extracted	Mean score	Standard deviation	Item mean score	Item standard deviation
<b>Prior experience with PLB</b>	PE1	0.83	– <sup>a</sup>	0.94	0.94	0.71	2.69	0.96	2.88	1.02
	PE2	0.85	19.64						2.44	1.17
	PE3	0.80	17.87						2.58	1.11
	PE4	0.84	19.07						2.91	1.05
	PE5	0.87	20.46						2.68	1.17
	PE6	0.86	20.14						2.65	1.08
<b>The degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues</b>	EC1	0.76	– <sup>a</sup>	0.75	0.76	0.52	2.53	0.85	2.62	1.09
	EC2	0.75	10.11						2.50	0.98
	EC3	0.64	9.71						2.47	1.05
<b>Risk attitude</b>	RA1	0.64	– <sup>a</sup>	0.49	0.50	0.34	1.82	0.82	1.77	0.98
	RA2	0.51	2.74						1.87	1.03
<b>Level of purchasing risk</b>	PR1	0.73	– <sup>a</sup>	0.82	0.82	0.53	2.58	0.79	2.51	0.98
	PR2	0.86	13.66						2.60	0.94
	PR3	0.63	10.90						2.28	1.03
	PR4	0.68	11.69						2.64	0.97
<b>Attitude toward PLB</b>	AP1	0.87	– <sup>a</sup>	0.82	0.90	0.70	3.10	0.78	2.92	0.95
	AP2	0.86	20.06						3.60	0.90
	AP3	0.81	18.49						2.73	1.04
	AP4	0.80	18.06						3.17	0.96

Fit statistics:  $\chi^2 (142_{df}) = 347.24$ ,  $p = 0.00000$ , non-normed fit index (non-NFI) = 0.91, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.92, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.91, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.064, 90% interval of RMSEA = 0.056; 0.073, standardized root mean square residual (standardized RMR) = 0.043.

<sup>a</sup>Item fixed to set the scale.

**Table 3.** Construct correlation matrix.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1. Prior experience with PLB		0.0007	0.019	0.104	0.343
2. The degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues	–0.026		0.002	0.031	0.002
3. Risk attitude	–0.139**	0.044		0.014	0.010
4. Level of purchasing risk	–0.322**	0.177**	0.120*		0.077
5. Attitude toward PLB	0.586**	0.040	–0.102	–0.278**	

Note: Values below the diagonal indicate correlation estimates among constructs, and values above the diagonal indicate squared correlations.

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 4.** Multiple regression analysis of PLB purchase intention.

	Regression models				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<b>Socio-demographic aspects</b>					
Age	–0.045**	–0.066***	–0.069***	–0.069***	–0.063***
Gender	–0.042**	–0.023*	–0.023*	–0.023*	–0.016
Education	–0.017	–0.018	–0.016	–0.016	–0.019
Household income	–0.003	–0.005	–0.003	–0.003	–0.003
<b>Individual differences</b>					
Prior experience with PLBs		0.134***	0.123***	0.123***	0.080***
Consumer extrinsic cues		0.077***	0.083***	0.083***	0.078***
Risk attitude		0.008	0.009	0.009	0.010
<b>Perceptual variables</b>					
Level of purchasing risk			–0.038**	–0.038**	–0.028**
<b>Contextual factors</b>					
Distinctive packaging				–0.098***	–0.098***
Price promotion				–0.253***	–0.253***
Store image				0.308***	0.308***
<b>Attitude toward PLB</b>					
F-value	5.109***	21.405***	19.618***	124.178***	116.496***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.004	0.026	0.027	0.196	0.200
$\Delta R^2$	0.004***	0.022***	0.001**	0.169***	0.004***

\*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.1$ .

socio-demographic aspects and PLB purchase intention, and was significant at  $p < 0.01$  level, while Model 2 and Model 3 contain linear impacts of individual differences and perceptual variables, and were also significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, Model 4 - significant at  $p < 0.01$  level - investigates joint effects of individual and contextual factors on PLB purchase intention, and Model 5, which was significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), explores all three sets of determinants of PLB purchase intention (i.e., individual factors, contextual factors, and attitude toward PLB).

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis reveal that individual factors, contextual factors, and attitude toward PLB are able to explain 20.0 per cent of total variance in PLB purchase intention ( $p < 0.01$ ). Concerning the linkage between socio-demographic aspects and PLB purchase intention, on the contrary to  $H_1$ , age was found to be negatively correlated with PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.063$ ;  $t = -4.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The reason behind this empirical evidence can be attributed to the suggestion that since younger consumers attach more importance to utilitarian shopping value (Mishra 2014), they more tend to purchase PLBs than older consumers (Dick, Jain, and Richardson 1995). On the other side, gender ( $\beta = -0.016$ ;  $t = -1.31$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), education ( $\beta = -0.019$ ;  $t = -1.31$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and household income ( $\beta = -0.003$ ;  $t = -0.23$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), all registered insignificant influences on PLB purchase intention, which lends no support to  $H_2$ ,  $H_3$ , and  $H_4$ . This is in harmony with some other empirical findings in the context of PLBs, concluding that neither gender and education nor household income has a significant relationship with PLB consumption (e.g., Diallo 2012; Reinders and Bartels 2017).

Among individual differences, in line with  $H_5$ , prior experience with PLBs gives rise to PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.080$ ;  $t = 5.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which provides support for the notion that accumulated PLB experiences facilitates the establishment of strong brand associations, and ultimately, a solid brand equity (Richardson, Jain, and Dick 1996; Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000). This is in turn fosters enduring PLB loyalty (Ailawadi and

Keller 2004; Lamey et al. 2007). However, in opposition to both  $H_6$  and  $H_7$ , the degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues and risk attitude exert a positive and an insignificant effect on PLB purchase intention, respectively ( $\beta = 0.078$ ;  $t = 6.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $\beta = 0.010$ ;  $t = 0.82$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Regarding the positive influence of the degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues on PLB purchase intention, it can be interpreted that due to the continuous progress in PLBs' image as to extrinsic cues; and thus, the decrease in price and quality differentials between PLBs and national brands (Pérez-Santamaría, Martos-Partal, and Garrido-Morgado 2019), in recent years consumers have started more favorably perceive PLBs with respect to extrinsic cue information (Wang, Torelli, and Lalwani 2020). On the other side, the finding unveiling the insignificant effect produced on PLB purchase intention by risk attitude is remarkable; but, even though PLBs are generally seen as more unstable in quality than national brands (Bauner et al. 2019), premium PLBs with top-quality also exist in marketplace (Geyskens, Gielens, and Gijsbrechts 2010). Hence, it is not necessarily valid to claim that risk-averse consumers are less likely to buy PLBs (Burton et al. 1998; Thanasuta 2015).

In terms of the association between perceptual variables and PLB purchase intention, the findings validated  $H_8$ , showing that the level of purchasing risk is negatively related to PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.028$ ;  $t = -2.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This confirms that when consumers ascribe higher level of perceived purchasing risks to PLBs, they avoid using those products to prevent unfavorable consequences (Sheau-Fen, Sun-May, and Yu-Ghee 2012; Sinha and Batra 1999; Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao 2011). Moreover, in relation to the link between contextual factors and PLB purchase intention, the results fail to verify the positive impact of distinctive packaging on PLB purchase intention, indicating that the constructs are inversely correlated ( $\beta = -0.098$ ;  $t = -8.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ );  $H_9$  was therefore rejected. This is probably because copycat packaging is assumed to lower the perceptual quality and feature gaps between PLBs and national brands, and ultimately, to enhance attitude toward the retailer (Choi and Coughlan 2006; Olson 2012).

Another noticeable finding in this study pertains to the negative association between price promotion and PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = -0.253$ ;  $t = -21.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is inconsistent with  $H_{10}$ . In this respect, it has been suggested that although price promotions play a critical role in boosting the sales of national brands and the attractiveness of retailers (Garretson, Fisher, and Burton 2002), consumers of PLBs mostly prefer to see PLBs with steady prices for the reason of saving their time devoted to comparing price offerings, which underlines that the retailers should implement a low price promotion share for PLBs (Olbrich, Jansen, and Hundt 2017). Furthermore, in concert with  $H_{11}$ , the empirical results provide ample evidence that store image is conducive to PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.308$ ;  $t = 25.81$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This approves prior stream of research on PLB, reporting that positive store image, which reinforces perceived value, quality, and trust toward PLBs, is a significant precursor of PLB purchase intention (e.g., Liljander, Polsa, and Van Riel 2009; Konuk 2018; Mostafa and Elseidi 2018). Finally, as predicted in  $H_{12}$ , attitude toward PLB favorably influences PLB purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.077$ ;  $t = 5.09$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It implies that since attitudes toward PLBs echo real market behavior (Garretson, Fisher, and Burton 2002), a consumer's good predisposition toward PLB yields to more intention to buy PLB (e.g., Jin and Suh 2005; Lin, Marshall, and Dawson 2009; Miquel et al. 2017).

### Implications, limitations, and future research directions

This empirical inquiry is intended to contribute to the brand management literature in different ways. *First*, this study improves the extant knowledge of PLBs by enlightening the drivers of PLB purchase intention in an emerging-market context. *Second*, it broadens and deepens the understanding of PLBs by investigating the confluence of individual factors, contextual factors, and attitude toward PLB on PLB purchase intention in an integrated fashion. And, *third*, it unveils the differential influences of distinctive packaging, price promotion, and store image on PLB purchase intention through experimental manipulations.

### Managerial implications

The findings of this empirical research offer useful managerial insights. Firstly, it would be wise for brand managers and retailers to focus more on younger consumers to boost the sales and market shares of PLBs. In this respect, tailoring market segmentation and positioning strategies on the basis of age is expected to be more effective to target potential and existing PLB consumers. Secondly, considering the statistically significant impact of prior experience with PLBs on PLB purchase intention, firms should make considerable attempts to create and increase PLB awareness and consumers' familiarity with PLBs by means of intensive integrated marketing programs and campaigns. Besides, building on the cue utilization theory (Burnkrant 1978) and the philosophy of continuous improvement in PLBs (Kim and Takashima 2019), this study puts special emphasis on the requirement for a strong and solid PLB image notably strengthened by extrinsic cue information (e.g., price, brand name, and logo), which also enables to decrease the degree of perceived purchasing risk associated with PLBs; and thus, to boost consumers' inclination to buy those products.

Furthermore, this research cautions practitioners about the relevance of contextual factors to PLB purchase intention. In particular, executives are recommended to reduce the perceptual quality and feature gaps between PLBs and national brands in terms of packaging, and to apply to consistent pricing strategies with no or low levels of price promotion, in order to reinforce place in the minds of consumers. In addition, retailers should enhance their store image by investing more in store atmospherics (e.g., décor, lighting, and color scheme) and service quality, which would attract consumers' attention to purchase PLBs. Another critical managerial implication of this research is that a powerful PLB equity established via strong PLB associations would help retailers gain consumers with positive attitudes toward PLBs, and eventually, generate more revenues from those products.

### Limitations and future research directions

It is also essential to highlight the limitations of this study. First, as this empirical investigation only covers the most widely preferred PLB product categories in Turkey, the results are confined to standard PLBs and a specific emerging market economy. Accordingly, the conceptual framework of this study should be tested on other PLB types, namely, economy and premium PLBs. Second, in an attempt to confirm external validity, it has been suggested to analyze the conceptual model of this research in other contexts. In this regard, it would be of critical importance for devoting research attention to compare and contrast different emerging markets and/or emerging markets with developed economies. Third, despite the robustness of the experimental design, this paper is dependent upon one study and examination. Hence, it would be particularly worthwhile to design and contain additional experimental manipulations in the same empirical inquiry, and to embark on a longitudinal research in order to provide novel insights into the evolution of PLB purchase intention. Fourth, referring back to the challenges of the formative risk attitude scale used in this study, in further research it would be better to employ measurement indicators with reflective nature to assess respondents' risk attitude. Finally, the inclusion of different factors such as brand hate, the degree of reliance by consumer intrinsic cues, and advertising effectiveness into the theoretical model, and the analysis of the moderating/mediating role of attitude toward PLB in the linkages between individual/contextual factors and PLB purchase intention would be fruitful. Related to these, exploring the reasons for any observed differences between emerging markets and developed economies, which are deeply rooted in cultural and business environments, also merits special interest.

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## Appendix. Operationalization of constructs

Construct	Item code	Items	Source
<b>Prior experience with PLB</b>	PE1	I buy PLBs	Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk (2001)
	PE2	I look for PLBs when I go shopping	
	PE3	In my shopping cart, there are PLBs from different product categories	
	PE4	Till today I take advantage of PLBs	
	PE5	For long time I have been using PLBs	
	PE6	In shopping, I would rather PLBs	
<b>The degree of reliance by consumer extrinsic cues</b>	EC1	The more famous the brand name of a grocery item, the better the quality	Richardson, Jain, and Dick (1996)
	EC2	The more shelf space the brand has, the safer the brand	
	EC3	If a package of a product is good, then it means that the ingredients are also high in quality	
<b>Risk attitude</b>	RA1	I like gambling, when needed	Weber, Blais, and Betz (2002)
	RA2	I cheat on exams	
<b>Level of purchasing risk</b>	PR1	Using PLBs may cause danger to my health or safety	Tan (1999)
	PR2	When I buy and use PLBs, I cannot get the exact payback for what I spent	
	PR3	Since PLBs do not serve the purpose, the possibility of my works to delay is high	
	PR4	When I buy and use PLBs, the possibility of being deceived is high	
<b>Attitude toward PLB</b>	AP1	For most product categories, the best buy is usually the PLB	Liu and Wang (2008)
	AP2	I think that buying a PLB is reasonable	
	AP3	I am happy to see PLBs in the market	
	AP4	I like PLBs	