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THE EFFECTS OF BRANDING IN AIRLINE COMPANIES ON PURCHASING PREFERENCES OF DOMESTIC PASSENGERS' IN AIRLINE SELECTION: A RESEARCH IN KONYA

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EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

The brand is used to describe a word mark, term, sign, symbol, design or services. Branding adds value to products and services. This value consists of experiences such as familiarity achieved by people using the brand, reliability, and risk reduction. The perceptual aspect of a brand is psychologically in a customer's mind (Kotler, 2000: 396-397).

Considering the volume and rate of growth in the airline industry throughout the world, the importance of branding is increasing in the companies operating domestic flight services. Businesses increase their power and commercial reputation in their sectors as well as they get competitive advantage, high rates of profit and more market share by branding (Chen & Chang, 2005; Pakdil & Aydın, 2007; Forgas et al., 2010, Vlachos & Zhibin, 2014).

Airline businesses offer a variety of services to customers, including ticket booking, purchasing, airport ground servicing, on-board and on-arrival (post-arrival) services. Airline services also include support services caused by disruptions such as lost baggage handling and service for delayed passengers (Tsaour, Chang & Yen, 2002: 107).

Brand is the word mark, term, word, symbol, design, sign, image, color or various components of these which determine and describe the goods and services of the manufacturer or retailer and also distinguish from the products competitors release (Aaker, 1991; Dalrymple & Parsons, 2000). According to Blackwell et al. (1995), the customer, who wants to make a purchase decision, will go through a process of identification, research, evaluation, purchasing and feedback. The customer is affected by many internal and external factors in the process of purchasing a product or service (Nelson, 1970; Deaton & Muellbauer, 1980; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010).

The population of the study is the passengers who buy domestic airline tickets via travel agencies in Konya. Sample number is calculated as 291 people. The questionnaire forms, which were prepared in Turkish, were conducted by the employees in travel agencies and the data were obtained in May 2018.

It has been observed that the brand is perceived as a confidence and a word mark by domestic passengers and it is imprinted on their mind with these values in the study examining how domestic passengers, who buy airplane tickets via travel agencies in Konya, consider the brand factors in airline companies as a selection component and also how they perceive the branding issue in airline companies. Domestic passengers, who get tickets via

agencies, stay loyal to the brand of airline companies in consequence of obtaining guarantee of quality and having confidence in it.

Similar results are found with the studies that denote the correlation between the brand of the airline companies and purchasing preference of the customers in the literature. It is found that airline companies raise a brand awareness (Pramudya, Sudiro & Sunaryo, 2018), increase perceived quality (Saleem, Zahra & Yaseen, 2017), create a positive brand image (Chen & Chang, 2008; Atalık, 2005b; Pramudya, Sudiro & Sunaryo, 2018), provide a brand safety ((Pramudya, Sudiro & Sunaryo, 2018; Saleem, Zahra & Yaseen, 2017; Jeng, 2016), take a positive brand attitude (Westberg & Kenneth, 2005), build a brand loyalty (Ford, Paparoidamis & Chumpitaz, 2014; Yiğit, 2011; Selver, 2015) by means of branding efforts and all these factors are positively related to purchasing preference of domestic passengers.

In future studies to eliminate the existing limitations and restrictions of this study, different researches can be conducted for passengers in metropolis such as Istanbul, where airlines fly more intensively and airports serve more different passenger types. Another suggestion is that international passengers can be included and the effects of their different social, cultural and economic characteristics according to their nationalities on purchasing preferences can be searched in future studies.