

The Importance of Brand Equity and Branding in Terms of Product / Service Preference and Internationalization: An Analysis of Civil Air Transportation with Marketing Strategies

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Abstract

In this study, by emphasizing the importance of brand equity and branding in terms of internationalization, the effects of quality brand perception and a strong brand positioning on product/service preference in civil airline transportation have been tried to be explained in line with service marketing strategies and through descriptive content analysis method. The data collected from the literature about civil air transport companies with the traditional compilation method have evaluated in detail through descriptive content analysis. According to the results obtained, it has been understood that the customer-consumer satisfaction factors to be obtained from the purchased products/services and their differences from competing businesses should be explained to customers/consumers in detail, and suggestions have been made to civil airline companies in order to be more preferred and gain customer loyalty.

1. Introduction

In product/service presentation, attracting the attention and interest of consumers/customers, arousing their purchasing desire, and enabling them to take action for purchasing behavior are the primary goals of businesses. As Fettahlioğlu (2014: 28) states, "store atmosphere factors both inside and outside the store are seen as an important marketing tool in terms of attracting consumers' attention, influencing their purchasing behavior and creating customer loyalty". In case the products and services are purchased by the individuals who make up the target audience, more information can be obtained about the product/service offered to the market and one-to-one experience can be gained regarding the benefits to be obtained. The product/service experience and appreciation of the customer/consumer audience can have a positive impact on all the products/services offered by the business and turn into brand loyalty over time. In particular, the feeling of satisfaction generated by the services in the target audience can further increase the loyalty to the business that offers the service product and therefore to the brand.

The separation of businesses from their competitors in global competition conditions and their involvement in the minds and emotions of consumers can be ensured by strong branding (Özbaysal and Onay, 2018: 181). Koçak (2018: 110) drew attention to the following factors in a study on

positioning in terms of its effect on the re-preference of the airline company:

- Price referring to cheapness,
- Fast, effective, smooth and accessible website services,
- Free, varied and delicious on-board catering,
- About safety, referring to a smooth and safe journey,
- Concentrating on baggage services that will ensure timely, fast and complete transportation of baggage to passengers, advertising and promotion in these areas and positioning their brands.

While ensuring passenger satisfaction with complete services, services such as politely directing passengers to their seats by flight attendants before the flight service, offering quality refreshments, smooth completion of passenger and baggage handling service after the flight, etc. can create a positive brand value perception among passengers and the same airline firm can be preferred by passengers again. Businesses that have a positive place in the eyes of the customer/consumer and come to the fore with quality, expand their product range by giving more importance to branding, and giving priority to internationalization to be able to compete on a global scale. Reproduction of the destination countries, offering charter and scheduled flight options, adding the latest design aircraft to the fleet to create a safe and comfortable flight perception, offering comfortable and economical ticket options, high variety and quality of food and beverages offered during the flight, frequent flights to distant countries providing

a price discount on subsequent trips through the points awarded to passengers, etc. practices, while creating a quality brand perception in the customer/consumer audience, may contribute to the internationalization of the civil aviation business through branding.

As a result of the literature review; it has been observed that a point of view in line with the service marketing strategy regarding the importance of brand equity and branding in terms of product/service preference and internationalization has not been developed and analysis has not been carried out for air transport businesses. In this study, which has been produced following the aim of contributing to the acquisition of different perspectives in academic studies and from the perspective of service marketing strategies, it has been understood that the products/services offered by the civil airline transport businesses should be increased by considering the principle of suitability for individuals from different countries, adding new features to the products and diversifying them, and it has been seen that the brand equity and branding concepts should be focused on to increase the quality perception in the target audience. In addition, it has been scrutinized that growth strategies, new investments, branding, and internationalization should be given priority to ensure and protect the brand equity and thus, it has been concluded that the customer/consumer satisfaction and loyalty obtained will be the most important gain.

In this study, which has been produced following the aim of contributing to the acquisition of different perspectives in academic studies and from the perspective of service marketing strategies, it has been understood that the products/services offered by the civil airline transport businesses should be increased by considering the principle of suitability for individuals from different countries, adding new features to the products and diversifying them, and it has been seen that the brand equity and branding concepts should be focused on to increase the quality perception in the target audience. Accordingly, the study begins with the conceptual framework, supported by citations, and includes sections on methodology, which includes information on traditional review method and descriptive content analysis, discussion, which analyzes the situation in Turkey by mentioning the place and importance of branding and internationalization in civil airline operations, and conclusions and recommendations.

2. Conceptual Framework

In this part of the study, product and service concepts, the importance of brand, brand value and branding for product/service, the impact and importance of brand and branding on customer preferences in civil air transport, and the place of efforts for product/service and brand preference in civil air transport are discussed.

2.1. The Concept of Product and Service

In parallel with the changing and developing demands of consumers/customers, businesses are engaged in the design, production, distribution, pricing, and promotion activities and strive to offer products/services that will be preferred. Products/services are offered to become a brand preferred by the customer/consumer and to create satisfaction, "objects offered to requesters to meet a need or request" (Anbarci et al., 2012: 180) or it can be defined as the sum of equities. What makes the product/service important is that it has features that will attract the attention of consumers/customers, arouse the

desire to buy, and create satisfaction. While this requires a lot of effort and effective strategies to be achieved by businesses, it has become a necessity to design/present new and high-quality products/services and branding that brings effective, results to achieve competitive success and to be a preferred brand in the market. However, Kahn et al., as (2002: 185) mentioned, it is not enough for the quality to meet the customer/consumer expectations or just to comply with the specifications, the product or service must exceed the customer/consumer expectations. To exceed customer/consumer expectations, products/services must have useful information and this information may add equity to the lives of their customers/consumers. Exceeding the expectations of customers/consumers and providing information that adds value to their lives should be supported by advertising and image efforts. As Otalık and Koçak (2015: 89) point out, especially commercial airlines need to use some information about their destinations in their advertisements to create a global image with positive messages.

In today's competitive conditions, information assets constitute an important place in the product/service content. The correct planning and implementation of knowledge-intensive activities allow businesses to work more efficiently, to ensure quality in output and expansion in the scope of products/services offered. Thus, in each of the stages from the birth of the product/service idea to its commercialization, the new product development process can have increasing content and features with the contributions of employees from all levels of external supporters/organizations (Kulaklı, 2005: 99). Manufacturers are increasingly engaged in services and as a result offer different services along with products. However, although the variety of services seems promising in theory, in strategy practice, combining services with product offerings does not always lead to the expected performance results (Kuijken et al., 2017: 33). Therefore, the services and qualifications offered concerning the concrete products offered to the market are highly important. White goods, electronic tools, cleaning supplies and tools, clothes, foods, etc., which have emerged with the contributions of different segments at different levels and have been presented to the market presentation, delivery, installation, warranty, maintenance, etc. of the product as well as concrete products services that cover benefits are also of great importance for businesses and consumers/customers. In addition to such benefits offered in addition to concrete products, there are also some services offered directly to customers/consumers, which can be a product in itself and meet the different demands of the target audience. Transportation, communication, accommodation, education, diagnosis/treatment, personal care, cable TV broadcasting, internet connection, massage, etc. benefits directly to the services offered can be given as an example. Customer/consumer satisfaction may be more important in such services and businesses may engage in more marketing efforts to become a brand preferred by customers/consumers.

2.2. The Importance of Brand, Brand Equity, and Branding in Product/Service Preference

"When the consumption process that starts from the birth of individuals is examined, it can be seen that the needs in infancy, childhood, youth, and old age are different. Consumer behavior is affected by demographic, economic, social, psychological and situational factors" (Armağan and Taşdelen, 2012: 86) and these factors shape the

product/service preference. While purchasing products and services, individuals may purchase a well-known, expensive brand due to the demographic, economic, social, psychological, and situational factors they are in, or on the contrary, they may prefer a more suitable brand in terms of price but lower in terms of quality and benefit. Due to the different factors that arise in product/service preference, consumers/customers may have to keep their information about brands up to date. Because every brand may not keep its quality level and functionality up to date or not be able to adapt to technological developments and requirements. For this reason, while brands have to provide many different requirements to compete better, customers/consumers have to make their preferences by comparing with other brands that offer similar products/services for the same needs and exist in the market.

Brand beyond being a name, it is described as a business entity that adds identity and personality to the product, is shaped by the perceptions of consumers/customers, and guides the target audience in product/service preferences. A brand is a tool that creates or shapes the relationship between a business and consumers/customers (Can, 2007: 225). A brand is the most important element that allows it to be easily recognized by consumers/customers in the market, to differentiate or stand out from other brands with its name, shape, packaging, logo, color, and appearance. The quality of the services offered in civil airline transportation, which is one of the important sectors where the brand name, logo, and color stand out, and the level of satisfaction created by the target audience are the most important factors in the re-preference of the business. Options to purchase tickets through an agency or online, check-in procedures completed without any problems (boarding statement), fast final checks before boarding, on-time/non-delayed departure and landing service, spacing between seats complying with standards, food/drinks served during the flight it is one of the reliable brands, the food and beverage service is on time, the hostesses are interested and friendly, etc. services will be decisive in the re-preference of the civilian airline transport business, as well as providing a quality brand perception and brand equity in consumers/customers.

If the service performance offered is above expectations, customers/consumers will give positive equity to the product/service. Positive equity, it will cause arousing a sense of pleasure in the audience, a state of emotional attachment to the brand will appear, the choice made will be rational, and thus high customer loyalty will appear (Ramadonna et al., 2019: 105). To gain high customer loyalty and to be a preferred civil airline transportation business, it is necessary to design the products/services offered following the consumer/customer group working in different sectors and to explain the difference or more from the products/services of other airline transportation businesses, with the right marketing strategies. To create the satisfaction that ensures customer loyalty, there is a need to promote at the right time, in the right place, and with the right methods to work with agencies that provide widespread and high-quality service to carry out sales with reasonable price strategies, and above all, a strong brand positioning is needed. Thus, while brand equity is formed in the target audience and branding is in question, it is possible to become competitive in the international dimension.

Today, individuals can easily access many products/services with the effect of technology and

communication facilities/conveniences, collect information about manufacturing businesses, reach comments on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers/consumers who have purchased products/services before, and determine their preferences accordingly. For example, a consumer who is considering buying a mobile phone but is undecided between two brands can read the comments of other customers/consumers about the products on different web pages or social media networks and decide which brand to prefer accordingly. Being aware of this situation, mobile phone brands make more efforts to design high-quality, long-lasting, and stylishly designed models that will meet the different communication needs of consumers. As Durmaz and Dağ (2018: 490) stated, although many brand-related features are taken into account, consumers' inclination towards other features makes the brand's originality more prominent and is effective in marketing. At this stage, the concept of branding comes to the fore and a challenging competitive environment is formed.

It is very difficult to get rid of market competition because competitors spend time and money getting their products/services to market. Especially for commercial aircraft, competitors already have established products at competitive prices, full financing opportunities, and reliable product support (Florence et al., 2020: 17). This is a compelling factor for businesses trying to brand. The branding process is related to the fact that anonymous products/services have a name, logo, and symbol. The naming of the product/service with a certain name or symbol brings the brand to the forefront in a sustainable competitive environment, but it is not enough for a product/ service to be branded in an intensely competitive environment (Aktepe and Şahbaz, 2010: 70). Successful product branding strategies focus on the image that organizations create in their customers' minds of their products. This image-building process largely focuses on communication with customers and their personal experiences with the organization's products and services. This traditional perspective in the branding process creates a basis for conceptualizing the branding of employees who offer products and services, but employee branding is also based on the understanding and practice of in-house marketing (Miles and Mangold, 2008: 67). While the qualifications and performances of the employees, who can be seen as business assets and take part in the provision of services, can lead to their branding as a business and brand equity, they can affect the purchasing behavior of individuals who benefit from the services positively or negatively.

2.3. Brand, Branding, and Customer Preference in Civil Air Transportation

Branding does not only affect the consumption patterns and shopping tendencies of the individuals that make up society but also determines the product development and sales/marketing strategies of the businesses (Hacıoğlu Deniz, 2011: 243). Considering civil airline transportation, expanding the services offered in terms of content/scope and being able to be offered in different formats/channels, not compromising on quality, easy access to services, and most importantly if they are compared to other businesses customers, when they prefer the civil airline transportation the fact that they feel more privileged and happy, the business can emerge as the determining factors in brand preference.

In recent years, the brand has become a concept that has become important in marketing components and that

marketing science has emphasized. For this reason, businesses use the brand to make their customers feel the power of their products or services (Süzen, 2022: 842). The situation in civil airline transportation also requires exactly this. Namely security, speed, comfort, treats, ground transportation and goods transportation, smiling face, etc of services to individuals the provision in full and at the expected level are the most important and powerful features of the civil airline transportation business that make it stand out as a brand. Apart from providing services by highlighting its strong features, some elements can be mentioned to differentiate from competitors and to make the brand stand out. The seats should be in a way that allows the passengers to travel comfortably, the food/drinks offered are varied in accordance with their dietary habits and diet food/beverage service is available, and communication devices/channels and digital screens are open throughout the journey, there are no or least delayed flights, and there are safety and security issues. related measures etc opportunities can be listed as brand elements that affect the preference and satisfaction of individuals of all ages. In today's conditions, it can be said that the concept of health is another factor added to the brand elements. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the measures taken for the health of individuals and additional measures have had a positive impact on the brand perception of the target audience, while forcing civilian airline transportation businesses in terms of time and cost. However, during the Covid-19 epidemic period, the measures taken for the health of individuals and additional measures had a positive effect on the brand perception of the target audience, while challenging the civil airline transportation businesses in terms of time and cost.

According to the 2019 annual report of China Airlines, there was an increase of 0.10% in the number of passengers carried, 0.35% in passenger capacity, and 1.88% in passenger traffic compared to the previous year revenue was NT\$96,177 billion (New Taiwan Dollar), up 2.05% year over year. This rate constituted 65.71% of the total operating income. In 2019 by businesses service quality, corporate governance, sustainable results, aviation security, international certifications, green energy, carbon reduction and an excellent performance have been showcased in many aspects of marketing, including corporate (<https://news.china-airlines.com>). However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the 60% decrease in passenger traffic experienced worldwide has put all stakeholders in the civil aviation sector in a difficult situation in terms of financial sustainability. The fact that international airline travel increases the transmission rate of the epidemic has caused countries to close and restrict airline borders, and the concern of illness has caused passengers to worry about their trust and loyalty to airlines (Semercioğlu and Abay, 2021: 1). Despite all the negativities, the mask, social distance, hygiene and contact measures taken and applied by the civil airline transportation businesses to protect the health of the passengers during the Covid-19 epidemic that lasted for 2.5 years, and the additional products and services offered free of charge, eliminate the concerns, and the brand equity, it can be stated that it provides protection and affects customer/consumer preference positively.

In previous years and today, it can be stated that the priorities that positively affect the preferences of individuals/passengers traveling by plane are safety, speed, comfort, and price. However, the fact that civil aviation businesses offer some innovations and differences other than the advantages and conveniences provided to passengers may

ensure positive results in customer/consumer preferences. As Sanyal and Hisam (2016: 355) mentioned today, as customers/consumers have a wide range of options to choose the airline product/service that suits their needs, civil airlines are constantly working on in-flight product/service development and innovation (innovation) to differentiate themselves from their competitors. These efforts can positively affect passenger/customer service and satisfaction and can be decisive in the preference and success of the entire organization and therefore the brand.

2.4. The Place of Efforts Aimed for Product/Service and Brand Preference in Civil Airline Transportation

Marketing complex effective and commercially competitive products/services of design, production, and promotion of a system of measures for the creation, in the minds of the target audience and potential customers from other competing products/services and is based on the determination of how the fixation differ from (Ryapukhin and Kalugina, 2021: 37). In brand preference product/service offering, effective market positioning of the brand, product/service offering of the brand as a model or as a whole, etc. factors are important. As Canöz (2017: 194) stated, the services offered by civil airlines or the understanding of service are shaped according to the model applied. Full service and service quality understanding prevails in businesses operating with different types and sizes of aircraft in a wide geographical area, requiring different classes of service and connecting/long flights, large fleet structure, complex service planning and process, and implementing the traditional airline transportation model. An average understanding of quality applies to businesses that reduce their costs by abandoning some of the services offered, offering products/services at cheap prices, and preferring a low-cost airline transportation model.

Despite all the efforts, as in other sectors, there may be some disruptions and problems in civil airline operations. Delays in flight service, disruptions in land transportation/port service, problems in online check-in, ticket sales at different prices instead of the price promised in advertisements, airport-related delays, poor quality or stale food and drink served on the plane, distances between seats less than previously stated, passengers being dissatisfied with the services provided by the stewardesses, etc to compensate for the dissatisfaction and complaints that may arise from the problems, it may be necessary for the civil airlines to solve the problems and try to entice the passengers with additional products/services and to offer discounts and guarantees on subsequent product/service purchases.

Passenger planes are produced in line with the needs and demands of civil airlines, and the impact of the designed products and brands on many risks that may arise is quite high. In response to this great risk, the responsibility of civil airline transportation businesses is that the efforts to be carried out for product/service and brand preference are focused on success and results. Thus, the risk rate taken by a certain industrial segment will be reduced. Among the issues that civil airline transportation businesses should pay attention to regarding their efforts towards product/service and brand preference national and international media, digital media, web, search engines and social media channels also occupy an important place. Promotion and presentation of new products/services in the media or digital environments, price reductions, discount coupons, sharing accurate information against false/slandorous

and incomplete information, and informing the target audience are among the activities required for competition. Developing similar or superior strategies by following the prominent strategies of rival brands and businesses, reaching more individuals through new and different social media channels, etc activities will lead to positive results in the preference of the brand and the prolongation business' life span. These gains are directly related to the digital marketing strategies that are followed and implemented. As Işıl (2021: 43) mentioned, airline businesses are trying to adapt to digital marketing strategies to adapt to the strengthening and developing digital markets. To survive in the growing civil aviation industry, businesses trying to develop various digital campaigns and marketing tools must have the most appropriate digital marketing strategy.

3. Methodology

Traditional reviews are studies that synthesize findings, results, and evaluations by examining two or more studies published on a specific subject, and compiling information obtained from different sources and in different ways without following a specific method (Yılmaz, 2021: 1460). Accordingly the review article's, it can be stated that it has created by summarizing the results obtained from previous studies or accumulations. A review article is important in terms of revealing the general trend on the subject studied, reaching generalizations, and covering primary sources and research on the subject, but it is not generally accepted as a research article.

Descriptive content analysis, the determination of the literature on the researched subject based on certain criteria, regardless of whether it is quantitative, qualitative or mixed, is based on the process of determining and interpreting descriptive data related to the literature. The main purpose of descriptive content analysis is based on descriptive data, the aim is to reveal how the subject to be examined is handled by the researchers and how it tends over time, by making use of various topics created before or after the compilation (Bellibaş, 2018: 1).

This study is a traditional review article produced by using the literature on brand, brand equity, branding, and internationalization. In the study, previous studies on the concepts of branding and brand equity have been examined in detail and the data obtained from the related studies have been synthesized. In the study, the relationship between the concepts of brand, brand equity, branding, and internationalization has been tried to be explained with the approach of stages by showing a descriptive approach based on traditional compilation. In the study, the importance of brand equity and branding' for product/service preference and internationalization have been tried to be explained in the form of a descriptive approach and stages based on traditional compilation. In addition, the customer and brand preference, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty gains that can be achieved as a result of branding and internationalization efforts have been evaluated with an explanatory approach.

4. Discussion

In this part of the study; the effect of branding on internationalization and its use in civil aviation, branding, brand equity and internationalization in terms of civil airline transport in Turkey and marketing of civil aviation products

and services in Turkey are evaluated from a controversial perspective.

4.1. The Effect of Branding on Internationalization and Its Use in Civil Aviation

Branding has tremendous potential for international marketing. Branding is considered to be an important element of international marketing strategy and a driving force in internationalization. Specifically, two mechanisms have been added to branding beyond what the current global brand literature considers. In the first one, importance is given to managerial cognition related to branding, which is coded as brand orientation. In the second one, the repositioning of international brands takes place in terms of contributing to performance (Wong and Merrilees, 2007: 384-385). Civil airline businesses that would like to be competitive in international markets should prioritize branding, which has a significant impact on internationalization and develop marketing strategies that appeal to citizens of different countries. While positioning, the design and use of a logo with shapes, symbols, colors, and words that distinguish the brand from other brands and arouse interest can contribute to the formation of an international business perception in the target audience. Briefly, while determining the brand name, logo, and symbol is the first step toward branding, it is also the first step toward internationalization. The figure below may be more descriptive in relation to branding, brand equity, internationalization, and customer satisfaction, which are intertwined and are assumed to be customer loyalty at the top.

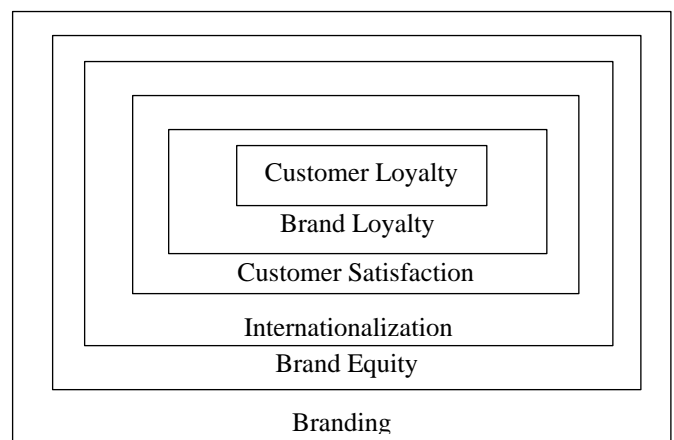


Figure 1. Stages from Branding to Customer Loyalty

Source: Produced by the author

As can be seen from Figure1, it can be stated that the purpose of branding and brand equity is to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty, and internationalization is an important stage that serves this purpose and contributes to the competitiveness and growth of the products/services and thus the brand/business. Carried out at these stages, determining the brand logo and symbols that may occupy a place in the minds, determining a memorable brand name, participating in international fairs and promotions, resorting to visually impressive advertisements in the media, digital tools, and social media, etc. with the activities, positive results such as target audiences in different countries buying products/services, associating themselves with the brand and recommending it to their surroundings are tried to be achieved.

Brands provide dissemination in different countries and popular cultures (Cayla and Arnould, 2008: 86). Consumers may not see any difference between products and brands in

terms of physical elements and other criteria. Each marketer has adopted a different approach to attracting consumers, and therefore branding plays a vital role in gaining a foothold in the minds of consumers. Branding is a powerful tool in the hands of management that differentiates a product from the products of its competitors (Akram et al., 2014: 49). For example, THY's logo, designed inspired by the wild goose, emphasizes the ability of the wild goose to fly in the sky for a very long time and from a very high altitude. It can be said that THY gives a positioning message to its customers and consumers in the form of 'we can fly high for a long time and we can safely transport you, our equited passengers, to the place you want to go' with the logo symbolizing the wild goose. Behind the success of brands that arouse cognitive and emotional interest and form loyalty, in addition to the presence of impressive logos and symbols, there is the creation of high-quality and strong brand perception and correct positioning. To achieve a strong brand positioning and internationalization, target-oriented and correct management activities should be carried out by civil aviation business managers who absorb the importance of branding, interactive communication should be established with employees and branding strategies should be transferred correctly. In addition, the use of colors and logos will take place and attract attention to the brand name and symbols, transferring the meanings of trust and quality to the brand logo/symbols in promotions to the target audience in promotions in national/international media, digital media, and open spaces, emphasizing convenience and comfort will have a positive effect on the internationalization of the brand. Ensuring the price and benefits balance for customers/consumers and ensuring that the music/song played in promotions is in a style that can be liked by citizens of different countries, etc. the elements will also contribute to the branding of brands/organizations and therefore to their internationalization.

Branding that emerges institutionally gives specific messages in line with the targets and reduces information getting and transaction costs of customers/consumers by reducing the information overload problems caused by the branding of product/service ranges (Burt and Sparks, 2002: 196). Harun and the others (2018) as pointed out marketers of civilian airline carriers should strengthen in-flight services, place great emphasis on consumer reviews on social media, and continue to train and upskill their employees to develop their brands. These efforts will help civil airline businesses maintain and maximize their operations in the long term, and contribute to their efforts to serve their customers in the best way through branding efforts.

The reason for the existence of the enterprises is the customers and to use the competitive advantage, they must understand the demands and demands of the customers well and act accordingly (Çağlar and Türk, 2023: 142). Thus, the right methods and practices can be determined to ensure customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty will be facilitated as customers/consumers who gain certain advantages in terms of information acquisition and transaction costs can easily access content related to products/services. It can be expected that the brand/business with which the loyalty is formed will be preferred in the next product/service purchases in the masses where the brand loyalty is formed. Individuals from different countries are satisfied with the products/services offered by a civil aviation business, identify themselves with the brand, and communicate comfortably with the employees, the logo and brand name create positive

emotional and cognitive connotations on them, and the formation of brand loyalty, etc. effects it can be possible for product/service preferences to be positive.

4.2. Civil Airline Transportation in Turkey in Terms of Branding, Brand Equity, and Internationalization

A brand is a name, symbol, shape or a combination of these that determines the identity of manufacturers' or sellers' products and distinguishes them from competitors. The brand may have different goals for businesses and customers/consumers, but the common goal is to make effective use of the brand and branding in a strategic sense (Alan and Yeloğlu, 2013: 14). Nowadays, a brand has ceased to be a logo, name, identity or sign, and has become a collection of traces in the memory of customers/consumers due to the influence of advertising, those who use the product/service, and social activities (Gemci et al., 2009: 105). Creating a memorable brand name for a product/ service requires, first of all, providing a competitive advantage. Therefore, to have a positive place in people's minds, businesses are trying to make their brands a power that can influence the masses and gain their loyalty (Bilsel Engin, 2016: 278). It can be stated that the way to gain a positive place in the minds of the masses starts with branding. In this respect branding, customer equity, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction are important for gaining. Prominent in branding, differentiation and competition with the effect of factors such as brand and design harmony, customer service, using technology at a high level, product/service features being higher and higher quality than competitors, being the first business to enter the market in line with the needs in the market, and marketing strategies being more functional in terms of content and application advantage can be achieved.

Differentiation in a new or existing market, branding, creation of brand equity, and protection of brand equity is as difficult as important tasks to gain competitive advantage. It is necessary to establish and follow certain strategies against the disruptions and problems that may arise. Altunışık (2015: 334) states that strategies such as compensating customers against product/service malfunctions and complaints, solving problems, providing service guarantees, and monitoring consumer behavior after compensation are important for brand equity. It should be known that the efforts to solve the problems that arise should be aimed at protecting brand equity. Marketing efforts are carried out to ensure customer satisfaction and protect brand equity in civil airline transportation businesses, as in service businesses, and these efforts are also a requirement of marketing strategies. It can be said that the primary priority of civil airline transportation businesses in Turkey is to ensure customer satisfaction to create brand equity and brand loyalty. As Topal et al., (2018: 119) stated, the service quality perceived by domestic and international passengers in Turkey from the services provided by domestic airline businesses has reflections on customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behavior of customers.

Ensuring and protecting brand equity in terms of branding and being able to compete in international markets should be among the priority marketing strategies of Pegasus, Anadolu Jet, Atlas Jet, Sun Express, and other civil aviation businesses operating in the civil aviation sector in Turkey. Its logo is in the form of a red wing, the use of turquoise color as the dominant color in inflight designs, the flight attendants wear stylish dresses with traditional colors, commercials with Turkish and foreign famous actors are filmed and broadcast on

national/international media channels, etc. it can be stated that the activities are the factors that enable Turkish Airlines to be successful in branding and internationalization. In addition, it can be seen in national media channels and digital networks that Pegasus is making more marketing efforts to compete with Turkish Airlines on a national and international scale and trying to highlight its brand with different services.

Although there have been recent economic crises in Turkey, the civil air transport sector has made good use of the opportunities that have emerged and has provided important developments in the airport terminal and ground handling services, maintenance/repair and renewal services, food/beverage services, design/production, and training. According to Aksoy and Dursun (1067), between 2003 and 2023, the number of passengers in Turkey increased from 30 million to 130 million, while the number of passengers worldwide increased from 3.4 billion to 4.1 billion. In other words, Turkey's passenger growth rate is higher than the world average. In parallel with the rapid developments in the aviation sector in the world, Turkey; With the records broken in the number of aircraft traffic and passengers, investments that set an example to other countries, developments in the domestic and international flight network, and regulations on flight and aviation security, it has become an internationally important position in civil airline transportation. Being a council member of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which determines the international aviation rules in 2016, Turkey is a country that contributes to flight safety and aviation safety at an international level. The worldwide success of Turkish Airlines, Turkey's public-autonomous airline business and also its most valuable brand, is the result of the importance given to civil airline transportation (Aksoy and Dursun, 2018: 1060).

4.3. Marketing of Civil Aviation Products and Services in Turkey

The official start of the first aviation movements in Turkey dates back to the Ottoman Period with the start on the military field after the Italian air attack during the Tripoli War in 1911-1912. Civil aviation activities started in 1912 with the construction of a small square and two hangars in Sefaköy, located near Atatürk Airport (Istanbul Dinçer and Taskiran, 2016: 195). Accordingly, it can be said that each new development initiates the emergence of a new sector and the activities of the civil aviation sector in Turkey started in 1912. Although developments such as the Çanakkale War that took place between 1915-1916 and the War of Independence that started in 1919 initiated the development of the aviation sector in terms of the defense industry, the vehicles/equipment needed by the army, equipment, weapons, clothing, food, etc. Since the materials had to be transported by air, the process that started for military purposes later led to the emergence of civil air transport. The global economic recession, which started with the 1929 Economic Depression and continued with the global economic crises in 1948, 1958, 1960, 1980, 1982, 1990, 1994, 2001, and 2008, emerged with the Covid-19 epidemic between 2020-2022, and which broke out in 2022 with the effect of serious events such as the Russia-Ukraine War, positive developments could not be achieved in international civil air transport in Turkey as well as in the world. The global economic recession that started with the 1929 Economic Depression and continued with the global economic crises in 1948, 1958, 1960, 1980, 1982, 1990, 1994, 2001, and 2008, and the global economic recession that

emerged with the Covid-19 epidemic that between 2020-2022, and in 2022 Russia-Ukraine with the effect of serious events such as the war, positive developments could not be achieved in international civil air transport in Turkey as well as in the world. Despite the problems on an international scale, things have developed a little differently on a national scale. With the opportunities and investment incentives that emerged in the civil aviation sector, the marketing activities of products/services became easier, and the developments achieved at the national level were carried to the international dimension in the next period.

Marketing orientation is a certain philosophical way of correct understanding of all circles consisting of customers, competitors, marketers and suppliers, with a strategic approach to meet their real and imaginary needs (Calle Piedrahita et al., 2020: 98). Identifying and meeting the needs of individuals and therefore the society in detail with accurate analyzes can positively affect the perception of quality. In ordinary and extraordinary situations, this becomes even more important for service businesses where satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on customers'/consumers' perceptions of quality is a determining factor. It is a natural result that civil air transport businesses are affected by the difficulties and extraordinary situations affecting the service sector. As in the world, the civil airline transportation sector in Turkey has gone through a very difficult period during the coronavirus epidemic. However, as in many major airline businesses serving globally, a rapid adaptation to the epidemic process has been achieved in Turkish businesses, most of the civilian passenger transportation has been stopped for a certain period of time, and all measures related to the health and safety of their passengers have been taken and implemented.

As the rapidly spreading Covid-19 epidemic could not be brought under control, and the country's administrations imposed travel restrictions on other countries and domestic routes, the aviation industry came to a standstill, and it was observed that global measures were similarly implemented for the Turkish civil aviation industry (Macit and Macit, 2020: 110). With the circular published on March 27, 2020, only Turkish Air Lines (THY) allowed domestic flights to 14 destinations, and all domestic and international flights of other airlines were stopped, but cargo flights, government agency flights, emergency health, and technical flights were excluded from the circular. While the uncertainty about the epidemic continued, air cargo transportation activities continued, especially for basic products, THY has played a vital role in the rapid delivery of drugs, medical equipment and materials, organs, or other important items (Şen and Bütün, 2021: 116). As a result of these developments, it can be said that brand trust and loyalty have emerged by creating a sense of trust in the target audience through the measures taken and applied related to the health and safety of passengers.

Civil aircraft, according to the type of transportation performed in accordance with the nature of the tasks performed and the characteristics of the product, and the destination; passenger transport, cargo transport, special purpose transport, mainline transport, regional or local transport, etc. it has a clear classification in forms (Kalugina, 2021: 4). It can be seen that the service that occupies the largest place in the sector within this classification is passenger transportation. For this reason, it would not be wrong to state that more importance should be given to the quality of service in civil airline transportation. Because the perception of quality products/services formed in the customer/consumer audience

positively affects brand equity and contributes to increasing the competitiveness of businesses. Considering the civil airline transportation companies in Turkey, it is seen that Turkish Airlines stands out more in terms of quality service. Ataman et al., in a study where the quality of service offered in the airline market for business purposes was measured and suggestions were tried to be determined a way to improve the five quality dimensions of the service provided (2011: 73), they concluded that Turkish Airlines is very close to meeting expectations and found that the physical characteristics are the closest to meeting expectations. In addition, according to the 2021 annual report (<https://investor.turkishairlines.com/tr>) it has been determined that significant distances have been covered in important issues of ground handling services such as departure timing and baggage disruption rate, and satisfaction at passenger contact points continues to increase. Accordingly it is understood that Turkish Airlines, which has a leading position in civil airline transportation in Turkey, tries to ensure customer/consumer satisfaction by focusing on quality in the marketing of products/services.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

To be a preferred brand, products/services must be promoted at the right time, through the right channels, to the right audiences, and appropriate marketing efforts should be undertaken. For this purpose, firstly it is necessary to create a quality brand image in the target audiences. After the quality brand image and perception to be formed, it will be easier for the formation of brand equity and loyalty in the audiences addressed. But above all, the important point is that the products/services offered must-have features that will create real satisfaction. The job of aviation businesses that offer flight services, especially in the field of civil aviation, is a little more difficult and complex. Because flight service such as ticket reservation/sale, brokerage/agency, transportation of passengers/baggage to the airport, transportation of passengers/baggage from the airport to the city center, ground handling services including baggage handling/control and security control, refreshments and announcements, guidance by stewardesses, before the flight, during and after the flight, etc covers many services. It is quite difficult for civil airline transportation businesses, where customer/consumer satisfaction can be formed by ensuring that the products/services offered are in integrity/harmony and that there are no disruptions, to become a preferred brand. One of the most accurate strategies against this difficulty in being a preferred brand is brand positioning.

A positioning strategy is about creating, communicating, and maintaining distinctive differences that will be noticed and equited by the customers with whom the firm most wishes to develop a long-term relationship. A successful positioning requires managers to understand the preferences of customers, their understanding of equity, and the characteristics of their competitors' offers (Lovell and Wirtz, 2011: 61). A brand that creates a perception that it is different, interesting, and functional can always be a reason for preference on the target audience. For this reason, priority should be given to reflect the parties and advantages that are different from competitors to the products/services by considering branding and internationalization targets when brand positioning is made. Civil air transportation businesses, who want their brand to be preferred more in national/international markets, should explain/offer their target audience the satisfaction factors to be

obtained from their products/services, additional benefits, differences, and advantages from other brands in an accurate and detailed manner.

With the increasing number of aviation companies and flights, the competition in the aviation sector in Turkey has intensified, and it can be predicted that the sector will grow even more with the increase in the number of airports opened over time. The perception of high service quality and the resulting customer satisfaction in civil aviation businesses, where the growth potential is evident, is decisive in the competition. Businesses that want to maintain or increase their competitiveness need to correctly determine customer/consumer expectations and do the necessary work to meet these expectations (Çırpın and Kurt, 2016: 85). Among these works, branding, internationalization, and brand equity creation activities are included in the first place for businesses. Customer satisfaction and loyalty can occur as a result of the quality product/service perception and customer/consumer preference that may occur in the target audience with the brand equity. As with many service sector representatives, ensuring customer/consumer satisfaction should be the main goal for civilian airline transportation companies. Because product/service experiences can be shared by the satisfied masses on social media, blogs, or websites, so that the products/services, and therefore the brand, can be promoted to potential customers and other audiences without the need to spend additional money and effort.

In line with service marketing strategies, the following recommendations can be offered for civil airline transportation businesses to make products/services more preferred in national and international markets and to create customer loyalty by emphasizing the brand, brand equity, branding and internationalization:

- At the national/international level, different content and innovations that will attract attention should be added to the products/services offered before, during and after the flight, to the factors that are preferred such as safety, speed and reasonable price.
- To create a strong and high-quality brand perception and to be successful in national and international markets, it is necessary to have successful expert graphic designers make logo, symbol and brand name designs.
- It should not be overlooked that customer/consumer satisfaction, which is created by the effect of strong and quality brand perception, can positively affect the preferences of customers/consumers in their next product/service purchases.
- It should be seen as a necessity to follow growth strategies, to attach importance to/continue new investments, to give priority to branding and internationalization to ensure and protect brand equity.
- In line with branding and internationalization, it should be ensured that product/service contents have features that can appeal to individuals from different countries and that they are included in promotions accurately and effectively.
- The primary purpose should be in airline businesses that, offer comprehensive or uniform products/services, to provide products/services that can create a quality brand perception, and to gain customer preference, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty by making use of branding and internationalization.
- The positive results achieved are not an end, it should always be taken into account that the brand/business should be differentiated from its competitors in terms of product/service at national and international levels and that the product/service content should be updated and enriched at regular intervals.

• Always keeping customer/consumer satisfaction at the forefront, making effective promotions to potential customers, etc. It should not be forgotten that the continuation of the activities is the requirement that positively affect the brand and customer/consumer preference.

Ethical approval

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest with any person or institution.

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