

Dissertation

# The Impact of Social Media on Brand Loyalty: Airline Industry in Turkey



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## Abstract

Within the developing technology, the number of promotion alternatives has increased and thus the competition has reached a wider area in airway markets. Keeping the traditional methods in the market prevents a company from the competition. Therefore, the role of social media in new trends is a curiosity for today's marketing approaches. The paper aims to research the impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty. Airline industry in Turkey was chosen as sample study. Factors such as trust, satisfaction and expectation that affect brand loyalty in social media were evaluated. The findings provided a great number of marketing methods which airline company should take into account. Basically, the study demonstrated that updating social media frequently with the relevant contents, providing satisfaction and meeting brand expectations through social media are significant factors in creating brand loyalty.

The research was conducted on airline companies in Turkey. The sample group was chosen from people using an airline company at least once in Turkey. The questionnaire was prepared through Google Form and sent to respondents via email and Facebook. Random sampling method was used in the research and analysis was made by One-Way Anova test, Chi-Square test and T-test. The research shows that brand loyalty factors in social media are related with trust, service satisfaction, interactive communication and benefit from company. It is observed that interactive communication and meeting brand expectations in social media are also important.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Brand Loyalty, Social Networks, Airline Industry.



Tez Özeti

# Sosyal Medyanın Marka Bağlılığına Etkisi: Türkiye'deki Havayolu Endüstrisi\*



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## Öz

Gelişen teknoloji içerisinde, tanıtım kanalı alternatiflerinin sayısı zamanla arttı ve havayolu piyasasında rekabet çok daha geniş bir alana yayılmıştır. Piyasada geleneksel yöntemlerle devam etmek şirketlerin yarış dışı kalmalarına neden olmaktadır. Bu nedenle yeni yönelimlerde sosyal medyanın rolü günümüz pazarlama yaklaşımları açısından bir merak konusu olmuştur. Sosyal medyada marka bağlılığını etkileyen güven, memnuniyet ve beklenti gibi faktörler değerlendirilmiştir. Bu tezin bulguları bir havayolu şirketinin dikkate alması gereken bir dizi pazarlama yöntemi sunmaktadır. Esas olarak bu çalışma, marka bağlılığı yaratmak amacıyla oldukça önemli faktörlerden memnuniyet yaratmak ve marka beklentilerini karşılamanın konuya ilişkin içeriğin sosyal medya vasıtasıyla sıklıkla güncellenmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki havayolu şirketleri üzerine yapılmıştır. Örnek küme, hayatında en az bir defa herhangi bir havayolu şirketini kullanmış Türkiye'de yaşayan insanlar arasından seçilerek oluşturulmuştur. Bu anket, Google Form kullanılarak oluşturulmuş olup katılımcılarına e-posta ve Facebook vasıtasıyla gönderilmiştir. Araştırmada rastgele örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmış olup uygun analiz yöntemleri olarak Tek Faktörlü Varyans Analizi, Ki-kare Testi ve T-testi seçilmiş ve uygulanmıştır. Yapılan araştırma, sosyal medyada marka sadakati faktörlerinin güven, hizmetten memnuniyet, etkileşimli iletişim ve şirketten yararlanma ile ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca bulgular, interaktif iletişimin ve sosyal medyada marka beklentilerinin karşılanmasının da önemli olduğunu göstermiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Medya, Marka Sadakati, Sosyal Ağlar, Havayolu Endüstrisi.

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## 1. Introduction

The world has changed significantly since the invention of the internet through the ways people use it. As an example, sharing platforms have transformed dramatically. People used to send brochures via mail, meet their needs in real life face to face, but today they can create their own websites. They have started to explain their own problems or happinesses in social media. Especially, generation Y embraced the use of internet widely compared to previous generation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, social media has become a centre of marketing for marketers to understand consumers' behaviour and identify their attitudes towards the brands.

Firstly, companies should understand why consumers usually choose a specific brand. For many years, marketing experts have implemented several methods to create and keep alive the brand loyalty on consumer's mind, such as 4P marketing mix strategies, and brand elements. Also professionals found new ways like sponsorships, events or face-to-face activities (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Improvements in technology have evolved in terms of marketing as social media marketing prevails as a strategic driver for companies to compete in the market.

In terms of using social media marketing, companies need to understand the effect of social media on brand and loyalty. When companies intend to be successful and profitable through social media marketing, they need to take three primary factors into consideration. One of them is building brand loyalty which is vital for them in increasing profitability. Brand loyalty can be conceived as the last stage of consumer brand resonance symbol with a brand (Keller, 2013). When the brands obtain positive, significant and exclusive meaning in the minds of consumers, they turn their perspective into irreplaceable and irresistible place. A loyal customer is said to be more valuable than standard customer.

In airline industry, there are many opportunities to use social media efficiently, such as increasing sales, informing passengers about campaigns of flight tickets, rewarding passengers who use the specific airline company most. For instance, they give free flight tickets for places where customers would like to go. Social media provide a platform where companies improve their relationships with customers. For instance, Facebook has more than 1.55 billion active users and 51% of those are able to use it for business target (Muruganandam, 2016). Rising number of social media users cannot be ignored as companies target to create brand loyalty that can be turned into profitability and growth. Airline companies usually use Facebook & Twitter to introduce themselves to people, interact with their current and potential customers, increase sales and create brand loyalty.

In this paper Turkey was selected as sample country because internet users rate reached 58% with 46.28 million people in 2016 ("Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, Hanehalkı Bilişim Teknolojileri Kullanım Araştırması, 2016," 2016). At the same time, the number of active social media users reached 42.00 million people with 53% of internet access. The country is also graded the 12<sup>th</sup> among the top countries using the internet. Limitations in the study are mainly accessibility to sample size, time restriction and lack of reliable data. The participants sometimes may not want to spend their time to fill in the questionnaire or they may not provide trustworthy data.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Social Media**

Early stage of social media began with the invention of Usenet which Ellis and Tom Truscott (Duke University) composed in order to enable internet users to write public posts under one platform. However, the age of social media in today's context started 26 years ago. Susan and Bruce Abelson created "Open Diary" which can be considered as initial social media channel, so as to bring people together who write online diary (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In fact, "weblog" word was found by users accidentally.

Kaplan and Haenlein consider the user-ended Web 2.0 as a big step for social media. Social media sites are tools that enable users to create content based on any ideology and also users are able to exchange it (Tatar & Eren-Erdoğan, 2016). Social web sites allow users to keep in contact with the other people around the world by generating profiles and sending invitation through application. It gives them opportunity to access friends' profiles, send messages and e-mails. After a period of time (2003–2004), Web 2.0 was updated to Web 3.0 and Web 4.0, allowing users to share data, create social communities and find out the new ways for enterprises (Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2009). That is the reason why Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace etc. are called user-generated media.

### **2.2. Social Media Marketing**

Today, customers ignore old-fashioned means of communication while they lose their trust and belief in them (Leung, 2013). Although traditional marketing methods are still effective, today's consumers predominantly stay away from using these techniques compared to previous years. Moreover, using traditional methods might be found annoying by consumers and the brand could be affected negatively.

In the globalizing world, companies should choose the right online platform and best strategy to reveal them and boost sales of their products. One of the main strategies to promote the brand is word of mouth and so social media is a new way to spread it. Word of mouth marketing is to offer unforgettable features and experiences about product or service and to make it shared by customers among their friends and attract potential customers' attention in order to promote the brand. This strategy is one of the most influential ways to make advertisement (Marrs, 2015).

Developing technology ensures customers to keep in touch with brands. These connections build brand trust and loyalty by rising involvement, engagement and awareness. According to Toffler, being active in Social Media channels as a company is an indicator of having desire on both sides, producer and customer, and this is called "prosumer" (Toffler, 1980).

### **2.3. Social Media Tools**

There are many forms of social media. Some brands become global while others stay local. Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Myspace, YouTube and etc. can be given as examples of social media tools. Social media can be classified into 5 groups ("What Is Social Media? | OrangeSoda," 2010):

1. Social news websites: Reddit, Digg.
2. Social sharing websites: Vimeo, YouTube, Flickr.
3. Social networking: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace.

4. Social addressing websites: Yahoo Answers, Wikipedia.
5. Social bookmarking websites: Stumble Upon.

In addition, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classified social media tools from general to specific categories according to their characteristics: blogs, social networking sites, content communities, collaborative projects, virtual social and game worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

#### **2.4. Advantages of Using Social Media for Companies**

To survive in developing market and protect their competitive advantage in the sector, companies need to get use of social media tools. They provide advantages for them like decreasing the cost, being trendy and building trust and loyalty towards the brand.

By using social media, trust can be ensured by implementing transparency, which can help to solve problems by approaching with open attitude (Hartzel et al., 2011). When customer's problem is solved through social media, their trust and satisfaction is refreshed. Either Twitter or Facebook helps companies to strengthen communications, create awareness, motivation and right exposure which means strategy enhance profitability of the company. Moreover, by using social media, the companies become able to introduce themselves as they wish and get rid of misunderstandings and rumours (Grieve, Witteveen, & Tolan, 2014).

Furthermore, the improvement of marketing trends means that marketing expert should be able to create and preserve a relation which has been set by customers. Another advantage is that social media allows companies to see their competitor posts and they can rethink about their campaigns (Copp, 2016).

However, there are disadvantages. Social media experts need to manage social media accounts carefully to avoid from negative comments and misunderstandings (Dekay, 2012). For instance, Onur Air, one of the airline companies in Turkey, shared the following message on Facebook: "we will make a donation of 0.5 TL for every follower that you will add.". This was after the devastating earthquake happened in 2011 in Van. Following this, people began to blame them on Facebook for being unethical. Onur Air deleted some of the bad comments on Facebook. Some people carried topics to Twitter and it became a chaotic issue. Company shared a new comment "we apologize from our followers for the misunderstanding". This comment made the situation worse and Onur Air became a notorious Trend Topic in Twitter and eventually they lost money and followers on Facebook and Twitter (Sungur, 2011).

#### **2.5. Role of Social Media in Airline Industry**

The airline industry is one of fast adapting industries in social media platforms and their tools in order to improve. Social media is used as a tool for brand development, building brand loyalty, fostering customer experience and also improving passenger's travel experiences, such as handling passenger's problems and responding to customers' feedback by utilizing social media tools (Majumdar, 2015).

One of main targets of using social media in airline industry is maintaining and increasing brand awareness, loyalty and offering a pleasant experience according to their customers' preferences. In virtual platform, to identify customers' wish and so create loyalty can be provided by an efficient use of social media.

There are many benefits of social media for the airline industry. Firstly, airline companies reduce cost of advertisement thanks to social media. Managing social media accounts gives them a chance to see customers' reactions towards promotional campaigns and their comments. It helps to understand whether airline companies are on the right way or not.

Secondly, getting feedback improves the service level of the companies. In airline industry, passengers may have problems like catering service during flight, long waiting time before departure or lack of service in VIP lounge at the airport. Travellers can write a comment and sometimes record a video about those issues in social media, by means of which the problem can be solved and the situation can be improved.

Using social media effectively, companies improve brand awareness and engagement with customers. For example, Turkish Airlines uses Twitter quite effectively by using hashtags (Ashraf, 2015). In addition, using keywords or signs provide companies to keep in contact with customers, examine their requirements and receive feedbacks instantly. Once the target market was reached, companies can re-engage with customers and contents which they are interested.

## **2.6. Brand Loyalty**

Keller (1993) defines "brand loyalty" as a kind of attitude towards product or service to trigger repeated purchasing behaviour. Previous scholars highlighted that attitudinal and behavioural factors are main features to measure loyalty (Keller, 1993).

Once customers become loyal to a brand, they become more willing to stay loyal and usually do not intend to change it. Companies find loyal customers more profitable than finding new consumers because especially loyal customers are usually not affected by increasing prices and they are not much sensitive compared to regular customers (Rageh Ismail, TC Melewar, Lim, & Woodside, 2011). Loyal customers have a kind of commitment to the brand, which is quite difficult to acquire. Consequently, brand loyalty can be seen in favourable word of mouth and repeated purchase. These two factors change company's profitability (Krystallis & Chrysochou, 2014).

Brand loyalty can be said to be a kind of dogmatic behaviour. This affects customers' purchasing behaviour towards specific brands in every shopping and appraising predetermined names in their mind (Assael, 1984). Customers frequently select brands which they are satisfied, confirmed and they respect (Vazifehdoust, Rahnama, & Mousavian, 2014). Creating and having brand loyalty is no doubt cheaper than personal selling, customer training and advertising (Mittal & Lassar, 1998).

Aaker (1995) stressed that brand loyalty is the degree of customer's commitment to the brand. Brand loyalty can be used in order to decrease marketing cost, find new customers and create commercial leverage effect to companies (Aaker, 1995).



**Figure 1:** Brand Pyramid (Aaker, 1995)

There are different levels in the pyramid to ensure brand loyalty depending on customers. Switchers in the pyramid are identified as customers, who constantly change brands because of low switching costs. Habitual/satisfied customers are the people who tend to buy the same brand again and again however they do not have emotional relation with the specific product. Satisfied customers are identified as the people who are loyal to the brand due to repeated satisfactions in terms of customer's expectations and needs (Aaker, 1995). People like the brand and have an emotional attachment to it. Committed buyers are customers who are almost volunteer brand ambassadors because of having strong trust and values to the brand (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013).

## 2.7. Factors Influencing Brand Loyalty

Key factors that influence brand loyalty are mainly brand trust, perceived value, customer satisfaction, commitment and constant purchasing behaviour. Scholars define positive effects of having brand loyalty to enhance profitability significantly (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011), increased competitive advantage and market share (Iglesias, Ind, & Alfaro, 2013)

Recent researches have demonstrated that brand loyalty has multidimensional construction and it is one of the ways to find a new way in order to measure customer loyalty. However, authors have not reached a conclusive agreement yet in terms of measurement. Some researchers say that satisfaction, trust and involvement factors are important while others highlight the importance of experience and commitment (Iglesias et al., 2013).

### 2.7.1. Brand Commitment

Brand commitment can be explained as customer's request to keep relationship with the brand and be involuntary to switch brands. Therefore, authors suggest that commitment has a direct relationship with loyalty. Further, commitment is related to trustworthiness in long term in order to maintain consumers' desire toward the brand (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013).

### 2.7.2. Brand Trust and Satisfaction

Brand trust is being eager to rely on the brand on a stable performance. Loyal customers are more enthusiastic to pay more for the brand because they find out some special

value in the brand that other brands are not able to provide (Wel, Alam, & Nor, 2011). When uncertainty or fear of competitive advantage occurs in market, trust plays an important role in decreasing doubt (Chiu, Huang, & Yen, 2010). Brand trust makes customers feel comfortable.

Some authors put forward that satisfaction and trust has an undoubted relation. Trust emerges when satisfaction is created in consumers mind (Zhou, Jin, Vogel, Fang, & Chen, 2011). Strong feeling of trust and commitment to the brand makes customers less price sensitive and willing to pay more. This exclusiveness arises from trustworthiness of brand.

Customer satisfaction improves loyalty towards the brand (Dick & Basu, 1994). Youl and John (2010) figured out that satisfied customers are most likely to consume the same brand further (Forsido, 2012). Trust and satisfactions are two coherent factors. Since satisfaction creates trust, satisfied customer tends to purchase the same brand repeatedly in long term. Also, satisfied customers are likely to spread positive word of mouth which means they would recommend the brand to their family, friends (Maheshwari, Lodorfos, & Jacobsen, 2014).

### **2.7.3. Behavioural and Attitudinal Loyalty**

Brand loyalty has been separated into two classifications: Behavioural loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioural loyalty in terms of brand loyalty is to show constant purchase of a specific brand as such amount of purchase (Chahal & Bala, 2010) both EFA and CFA analysis were applied for finalisation of scale and model testing respectively. The findings of the study support all three hypotheses i.e. brand equity is the resultant factor of attitudinal loyalty and results in behavioural loyalty (Model1. Customers are labelled to be loyal towards brand when they represent frequent purchasing behaviour (Eren-Erdogmus, Cobanoglu, & Budeyri-Turan, 2015). However, behavioural loyalty is inadequate to express how customers are encouraged to buy the same brand all the time.

Attitudinal loyalty has been existed since the birth of behavioural loyalty. This factor mainly focuses on customer's psychological attachment or commitment to the brand. This approach questions brand loyalty. Evaluation of attitudinal loyalty alone is not enough. Thus, scholars emphasize brand loyalty between these two approaches to understand brand loyalty (Ishaq, Hussain, Asim, & Cheema, 2014).

### **2.7.4. Perceived Quality**

Perceived quality is another factor for customers to choose the brand to buy. Customers tend to be loyal to the brand when the brand meets their expectation. Well perception quality of service or product develops the satisfaction of consumers.

Perceived quality boots the financial position of companies due to customer's loyalty and satisfaction. Durability, user friendliness, excellent performance and prestigious features are common terms to evaluate the quality of service/brand (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013).

## **2.8. Effect of Social Media On Brand Loyalty**

After Web 2.0 was implemented, companies transformed their social media strategy from only giving information about product/service into providing a platform to communicate with customers, understand their needs, evaluate recommendations and share experiences among users (Köksal, 2012).

Solving problems of businesses by communicating with customers individually is an effective way to create brand loyalty. Using social media platforms help companies to achieve the followings (Gáti & Markos-Kujbus, 2012):

- To build trust and loyalty.
- To convince customers with positive approach and to make customers communicate with brand deeply.
- To provide interactive communication platform for both customers and businesses.
- Retain current customers and gain potential consumer.

In Turkey, 1.5 billion people visit social media sites per day regularly. 47% of social media users follow at least one brand and 30% of users are connected to social networks via smart phones. Wave 5 reports demonstrated that (it has been implied in 54 countries with 37.600 people), 72% of participants who interact with a brand in a social media environment think positively about the brand (Lupfer, 2009).

- 71% of participants want to buy a product or service that interacted in social media.
- 66% of contributors have brand loyalty.
- 63% of participants recommend brand's social media page to friends.

Another research has been made on Facebook users. The researchers concluded that on Facebook, fans are more committed to the brand than those who do not follow any brand (*Presented by Syncapse in Association with HotspeX, 2010*).

## **2.9. Social Media Marketing Effect On Brand Loyalty in Airline Industry**

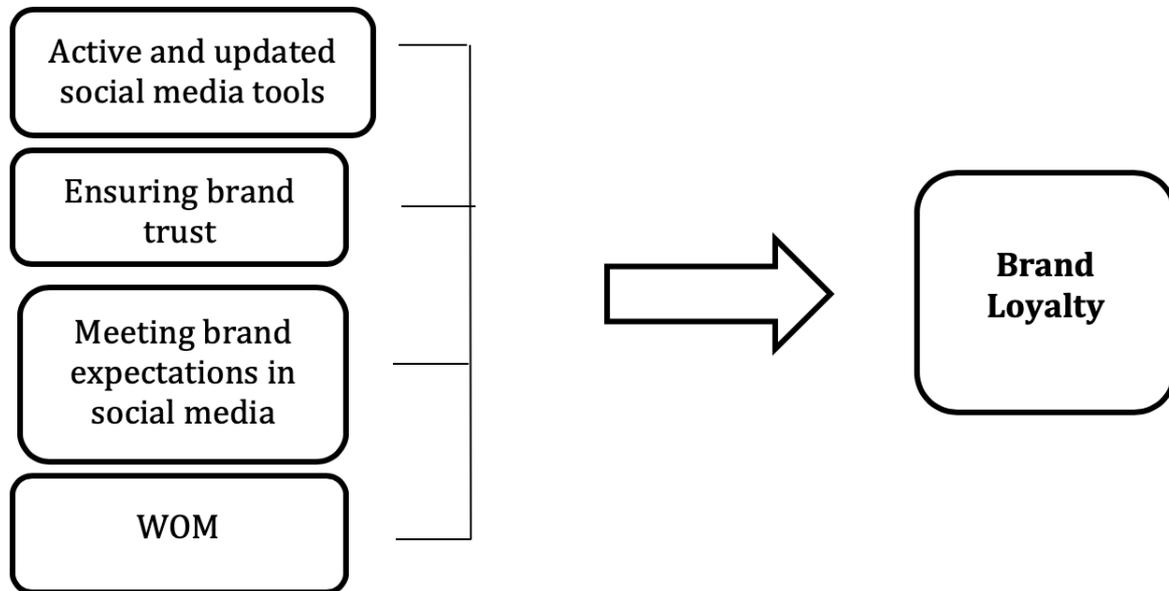
It is known that in the social media environment, the interactive communication of brands with individuals increases the rate of positive thinking about the brand, people recommend the brand online to others, become more willing to buy the product or service (Köksal, 2012). Building brand loyalty is bound up with activities of the brand in social media such as announcing campaigns, sharing popular content and its relevancy in social media and proposing different applications (Erdoğan & Çiçek, 2012). In addition, SMM (interactions, WOM, entertainment and customization) affects the intention of buyers' purchasing directly in order to create relationship between brand and equity.

Company can create customer satisfaction through social media marketing. Satisfaction is one of the drivers of brand loyalty. Lonoff (2015) says that the company must be ready to help when customer has any issue or problem and he adds that social media is one of the effective ways to solve that problem quickly and instantly (Lonoff, 2015). Customers may want to ask questions about purchasing flight tickets or complain about flight service and so on. Hence, companies need to meet their customers' needs. The airline companies can also turn negative comments into the positive, hence customers will be more satisfied when they see their demands are considered and it helps to create brand loyalty.

Brand expectation is another term that creates brand loyalty. As long as the company is able to supply demands, customer will be more loyal to the brand (Comcowich, 2016). In the airline industry, companies should identify their customers' expectation via most used social media by target customers. With increasing mobile technology, majority of people use social media as news website and they prefer to see alerts in their page (Radcliffe & Levy, 2016). Instead of directing them to main website, companies can offer flight information in social media.

## 2.10. Model Development and Hypothesis

The research model shows the centre and details of the study within the scope of the research purpose; social media concept and social media marketing, internet-based communication and interaction, brand loyalty and the related research scales in airline industry. The model proposes that social media marketing has an impact on brand loyalty. The research model and hypothesis can be seen below:



*Figure 2: Proposed Model*

H1: Active and up-to-date posts of the company in social media affect brand loyalty.

H2: WOM on social media affects brand loyalty.

H3: Satisfaction in social media enhances brand loyalty.

H4: Flight satisfaction affects consumer behaviour towards brand in social media.

H5: There is a positive relationship between transparency of company in social media and brand loyalty.

H6: Meeting brand expectations in social media affects brand loyalty positively.

## 3.0. Research Methodology

For data collection, numerical information about social media marketing and brand loyalty was used. For instance, the use of a closed ended questionnaire was designed by using 5 point Likert Scale. The main focus is /was analysing the primary data. The sample group included 121 people who live in Turkey. To analyse data statistically, it was recorded in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows Version 20.0 program. The data analysis process was based on the objectives and hypotheses of the research presented in the first and second chapters. To analyse the data, frequency and percentage methods were used. The suitability of normal distribution of quantitative data was tested with T test, correlation, the chi-square and Anova. Significance level was measured as  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0, 01$ . Reliability was checked by using Cronbach's Alpha through SPSS program and it was found that study is reliable. Data collection tool was 5 point Likert Scale questionnaire.

The questionnaire was created by using Google Form. It was targeted to find 121 random consumers that frequently travel to different parts of the world from Turkey for either

professional reasons or studies. The questionnaire was sent to the Turkish students who are educated in the United Kingdom and to the people who are over 18 in Turkey. Sample group was selected randomly. Also their marital status was taken into consideration. Snowball method was used to send the questionnaire. Therefore, the participants were asked to forward it to their friends or relatives who travel frequently.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Findings and Comments

The sample is consisted of 46% male and 54% female. The average age of sample group is 25-34, 51% of participants. Most of the sample group have university degree with 64%, while 24% of them have high school degree. The majority income level is in range of 1001-2000 TL with 30% rate among participants. Income level of 22% of the participants' is between 501-1000 TL. 5% of them declared that their income level is 2001-3000 TL. 61% of the participants are single, while 39% of them are married.

### 4.2. Results and Analysis

*Table 1: Correlations*

Correlations				
		Brand Loyalty	Interactive Communication	Brand Expectation
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	,469**	,588**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000
	N	121	121	121
<b>Interactive Communication</b>	Pearson Correlation	,469**	1**	,577**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000
	N	121	121	121
<b>Brand Expectations</b>	Pearson Correlation	,588**	,577**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	
	N	121	121	121

\*\* . Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis was used to find out whether there are relations between variables. As a result of correlation analysis, positive and increasing relationship was found between interactive communication, brand loyalty and brand expectations in social media. Therefore, it is possible to say that when interactive communication increases in social media it has a positive effect on brand expectation. There is a positive relation between brand expectation and brand loyalty. When brand expectation increases, brand loyalty increases. Correlation rate is over 0,5. It means these two factors tend more to interact with each other in social media.

**Frequency Analyses:****Table 4.2: The reasons why people follow airline company in social media-Multiple Frequency Analysis**

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
<b>The reason</b>	to join competition organised by social media.	13	5,7%	10,7%
	friend or family recommendation	13	5,7%	10,7%
	to show satisfaction to company.	11	4,8%	9,1%
	to be notified about campaigns	91	40,1%	75,2%
	to get the chance to find tickets.	74	32,6%	61,2%
	to see company's popular content	21	9,3%	17,4%
	Other	4	1,8%	3,3%
<b>Total</b>		227	100,0%	187,6%

<b>Case Summary</b>						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>The reason to follow companies</b>	121	100,0%	0	0,0%	121	100,0%

According to multiple frequency analysis, 40% of participants follow brands in social media to be notified about campaigns and 32% for buying the cheapest fly ticket and 9% for seeing company's popular content. 4.8% of them like to see pictures that company share.

**Table 3: Reasons to unfollow brand in social media- Multiple Frequency Analysis**

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
<b>Reason to unfollow</b>	I never unfollow.	2	0,9%	1,7%
	If they share something against to my political view.	29	13,4%	24,0%
	If only they post something based on youth and children interest.	4	1,9%	3,3%
	If my flight is delayed frequently.	73	33,8%	60,3%
	If others offer better price.	54	25,0%	44,6%
	If I cannot contact with company from social media when I need it.	22	10,2%	18,2%
	If the company does not make discount which I want	13	6,0%	10,7%
	If I do not find their post funny.	15	6,9%	12,4%
	If the company stop sponsoring the institution I like.	4	1,9%	3,3%
<b>Total</b>		216	100,0%	178,5%

According to multiple frequency analysis, 33% of participants unfollow the brand because of frequent delay of flight. 25% of participants give up following the brand since other companies offer cheaper prices and only 10% of them think about unfollowing the company if they cannot contact with it when they need. Only 1,9 % of them consider company's sponsor relationship with other institutions.

In conclusion, it is accepted that there are many trends affecting brand loyalty. Factors that have direct link to create brand loyalty through social media are identified.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings and implications for the hypotheses were evaluated and discussed based on previous theories and research. There would be a lack of information about the relations between social media marketing and brand loyalty in the airline industry. The link between these factors was figured out, those hypotheses being only an assumption.

Considering the findings, airline companies are able to create brand loyalty through social media as long as they provide active and timely contents and meet customer's expectations via social media instantly. So as to survive in competition, companies need to create customer loyalty upon considering the fact that there is a variety of transportations and new airline companies rise.

It is proved that interactive communication, brand expectation and brand loyalty in social media are positively interlinked. Companies can measure how effective interactive communication to build brand loyalty in social media is or how the level of brand loyalty increases the brand expectation.

The brand loyalty factor in social media mainly depends on people's economic situation. Therefore, it can be said that people who participated in the questionnaire tend to find out the cheapest fly ticket without regarding the brand. Drivers of brand loyalty based on theory such as trust, satisfaction, and perceived quality are identified. One of the drivers of the brand in social media is WOM but the main factor is price. Therefore, loyal people are assumed to be more price sensitive, however, it is opposite for Turkish Airlines company.

A positive attitude on consumer behaviour particularly loyalty in social media is responsiveness. Ensuring popular contents and satisfaction would be expected to make them less price sensitive towards the airline companies. After all, social media marketing makes it easier for customers to buy tickets and easier for the company to answer questions of the customers. It provides an appropriate platform to be aware of customer expectations in order to create brand trust easily.

As a result, it is observed that brand loyalty factors in social media are related to trust, satisfaction with the service, interactive communication and benefit from the company. In addition, findings indicated that interactive communication and meeting brand expectations in social media are significant. People follow a brand in social media to be notified about campaigns. Therefore, customers prefer to see flight opportunities in social media.

This research illustrates that how social media affect on brand loyalty in airline industry. It also gives an insight on how brand trust, brand satisfaction and meeting brand expectations affect brand loyalty generally. Based on the findings on this study, it is believed that a further study is needed to further understand the importance of the social media marketing marketing methods.

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# Sosyal Medyanın Marka Bağlılığına Etkisi: Türkiye'deki Havayolu Endüstrisi

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Günümüzde sosyal medya ve web sitesi uygulamaları insanların hayatında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Gelişen teknolojiyle birlikte, tanıtım kanalı alternatiflerinin sayısı da zamanla artmış ve havayolu piyasasında rekabet çok daha geniş bir alana yayılmıştır. Teknolojik yenilikler sayesinde sosyal medya daha önemli ve hayatımızın vazgeçilmez bir parçası haline gelmiştir (Polubotko, 2012). Bu gelişmeler göz önüne alındığında piyasada geleneksel yöntemlerle devam etmek şirketlerin yarış dışı kalmalarına neden olmaktadır. Firmalar sosyal medyanın insanlar üzerindeki etkisini ve pazardaki değişimleri, tüketici eğilimlerini, marka üzerindeki etkisini ve yeni teknolojileri nasıl etkilediğini dikkate almaktadır. Bu nedenle yeni yönelimlerde sosyal medyanın rolü günümüz pazarlama yaklaşımları açısından bir merak konusu olmuştur.

Sosyal medya, marka sadakatini artırmak için kullanılan kanallardan biridir ve pazarlama uzmanları bu alana özel önem vermektedir. Markalar, tüketici zihninde önemli, pozitif ve özel bir anlam kazandığında yeri doldurulamaz ve karşı konulamaz hale gelirler. Bu sebeple pazarlama yöneticileri ve uzmanları, klasik pazarlama karmasını, marka öğelerini ve sponsorluk, etkinlikler, birebir pazarlama, internet pazarlaması ve sosyal medya pazarlaması gibi yeni pazarlama yöntemlerini kullanarak marka sadakatini sağlamak için çeşitli yollar kullanmışlardır (Keller, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2006). Marka sadakati açısından sosyal ağ siteleri ve sosyal medya, iyi değerlendirilmesi gereken güncel pazarlama yaklaşımlarıdır. Wave 5 raporlarına göre; Bir sosyal medya ortamında bir markayla etkileşim kuran katılımcıların % 72'si marka hakkında olumlu düşünmektedir, katılımcıların % 61'i sosyal medyada etkileşime giren bir ürün veya hizmeti satın almak istemektedir, katılımcıların % 66'sı sosyal medyanın marka sadakatine katkıda bulunduğunu belirtmektedir ve % 63'ü beğendikleri markaların sosyal medya sayfalarını arkadaşlarına tavsiye etmektedirler (Lupfer, 2009).

Bu çalışmada, sosyal medyada marka sadakatini etkileyen güven, memnuniyet ve beklenti gibi faktörler değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma, ilgili markaların sosyal medya sayfalarını sıklıkla ilgili içerikle güncellemek, memnuniyet sağlamak ve marka beklentilerini sosyal medya aracılığıyla karşılamak gibi faktörlerin marka sadakati oluşturmak için önemli olduğu göstermiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, havayolu şirketlerinin marka sadakati yaratmak için dikkate alması gereken pazarlama stratejilerini sunmaktadır.

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki havayolu şirketleri üzerine yapılmış ve hipotezler test edilmiştir. Örnek küme, Türkiye'de en az bir kez herhangi bir havayolu şirketi kullananlar arasından rastgele seçilmiş ve anket uygulanmıştır. Bu anket, Google Form kullanılarak oluşturulmuş olup katılımcılarına e-posta ve Facebook vasıtasıyla gönderilmiştir. Anket dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm yaş, cinsiyet, eğitim ve gelir düzeyleri gibi demografik bilgileri içermektedir. Anketin ikinci kısmı marka sadakati ve tüketicilerin zihnindeki gelişimi hakkında sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Üçüncü kısmı, " tüketicilerin markaları neden sosyal medyada takip ettiğini " ve " neden takip etmekten vazgeçtiklerini " anlamak için tasarlanmıştır. Anketin son bölümünde ise, sosyal medyada interaktif

iletişim, marka güveni, marka tercihi ve marka beklentisinin etkilerini belirlemek için 5'li Likert ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada rastgele örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmış ve Tek Yönlü Anova testi, Ki-Kare testi ve T-testi ile uygun analiz yapılmıştır.

Araştırma bulgularına göre örneklemin %46'sı erkek ve %54'ü kadından oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların çoğunluğu %51 ile 25-34 yaş grubuna aittir, % 7'si 35-44 yaş grubu ve tüketicilerin % 7'si 45-54 yaş aralığındadır ve son olarak katılımcıların %1'i 55 yaşında veya üstüdür. En popüler ve en büyük gelir aralığı, katılımcılar arasında %30 oranla 1001-2000 TL arasında değişmekte, katılımcıların gelirlerinin %22'si 501-1000 TL, daha az gelir aralığı sadece %5 ile 2001-3000TL'dir. Katılımcıların çoğunluğu bekar olup %61 oranındadır, sadece %39'u evlidir.

Yapılan araştırma sonrası, sosyal medyada marka sadakati faktörlerinin güven, hizmetten memnuniyet ve etkileşimli iletişim ile ilişkili olduğu görülmektedir. Ayrıca bulgular, interaktif iletişimin ve sosyal medyada marka beklentilerinin karşılanmasının da önemli olduğunu göstermiştir. Tüketici davranışı, özellikle sosyal medyada sadakat üzerine olumlu bir tutumda ve duyarlılıktadır. Sağlanan popüler içerik ve memnuniyetin karşılanması kullanıcıları havayolu şirketlerine daha az fiyat duyarlı hale getirmesi beklenmektedir. Öte yandan, sosyal medya pazarlaması marka güvenin oluşturulması için ve müşteri beklentilerinin farkında olmak için uygun bir platform sağlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Medya, Marka Sadakati, Sosyal Ağlar, Havayolu Endüstrisi.