

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

MASTERS THESIS

**DETERMINANT FACTORS OF PASSENGERS' CHOICE OF
AIRLINES: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN TURKEY**

DAUD AHMED MUHUMED

THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASSIST. PROF. OMAR KACHKAR

ISTANBUL, 2020

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INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
TURKEY**

by

DAUD AHMED MUHUMED

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Management**

THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASSIST. PROF. OMAR KACHKAR

ISTANBUL, 2020

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Management

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

YOLCULARIN HAVACILIK SEÇİMİNİN BELİRLİYEN FAKTÖRLERİ: TÜRKİYE'DE ULUSLARARASI LİSANSÜSTÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Küresel olarak denizaşırı ülkelerde yüksek öğrenim görmek isteyen öğrenci sayısı arttı. Öğrenci sayısı artmaya devam ettikçe, üniversitelere, ev sahibi ülkeye ve seyahat endüstrisine fayda sağladılar. Bununla birlikte, bu tüketici grubunun ilgisini ve havayolu şirketleri için farklı bir bölüm temsil edip edemeyecekleri konusunda çok az çalışma vardır.

Havayolları uluslararası öğrencilerin hareketinde hayati bir rol oynamaktadır. Türkiye gibi uluslararası saygınlığı artan bir ülke de uluslararası öğrencilerini hava taşımacılığı ile kabul etmektedir. Türkiye'de 150000'den fazla uluslararası öğrenci var ve bunların yüzde 95'i üniversite öğrencisi. Bu çalışmanın amacı, uluslararası öğrencilerin havayolu seçimini hangi faktörlerin etkilediğini, uluslararası öğrencilerin sadık müşteriler olup olmadığını ve öğrencilerin evlerine uçarken biletlerini hangi satış noktalarında satın aldıklarını araştırmaktır. Çalışmada yüksek lisans ve doktora yapan 240 uluslararası öğrenciden oluşan bir örneklem ile nicel bir anket kullanılmıştır. Havayolu seçerken öğrencilere fiyat, havayolu güvenliği, hizmet kalitesi ve menşe havaalanı gibi bazı faktörlerin ne kadar önemli veya etkili olduğunu soran çevrimiçi anket verildi. Ayrıca, ankette öğrencilere belirli havayoluna sadık olup olmadıkları soruldu. Sonuçlar tanımlayıcı istatistik ve faktör analizi ile analiz edilmiştir.

Çalışma, uluslararası hava yolu bilet ve güvenlik fiyatından etkilendiğini buldu. Zamanında varış ve ayrılış, yemek hizmetleri, uçak içi eğlence, bagaj hakkı gibi diğer faktörler de uluslararası öğrenciler için önemliydi. Çalışma aynı zamanda öğrencilerin yüzde 30'unun bir şekilde sadık ve tercih edilen bir havayoluna sahip olduğunu buldu. Araştırmanın diğer bir bulgusu, öğrencilerin çoğunun biletlerini

üçüncü taraf web sitesi veya havayolunun web sitesi gibi çevrimiçi platformlardan satın almasıydı. Çok az öğrenci seyahat acentelerinden bilet satın alıyor.

Son olarak, çalışma öğrencilerin çoğu kendi ülkelerine uçarken Sabiha Gökçen'e kıyasla İstanbul havaalanını tercih ettiklerini bulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bölümler, Fiyat, Havaalanı, Havayolları, Türkiye, Uluslararası öğrenciler,



ABSTRACT

DETERMINANT FACTORS OF PASSENGERS' CHOICE OF AIRLINES: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN TURKEY

Student Name: Muhumed, Daud Ahmed

MA in Management

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Globally the number of students seeking higher education in oversea countries has increased. As the number of students continues to grow, they benefit universities, the host country, and the travel industry. However, there are very few studies on what interest this group of consumers and whether they can represent a different segment for airlines.

Airlines play a vital role in the movement of international students. A country like Turkey that has experienced an increased number of international also receives its international students by air transport. There are over 150000 international students in Turkey, and 95 percent of them are university students (Aktas & Sahin, 2019). The aim of this study is to investigate what factors influence international students' selection of airline, whether international postgraduate students can represent a distinct segment for airlines, whether international students are loyal customers, and which point of sale do student purchase their tickets when flying to their home.

The study used a quantitative survey with a sample of 240 international students pursuing a Master's and Ph.D. in Turkey. Students were given an online survey asking how important or influential are some factors such as price, airline safety, service quality, and airport of origin when choosing an airline. Also, in the survey, students were asked whether they are loyal to a specific airline. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis.

The study found that international students are influenced by the price of tickets and the safety of the airline. Other factors such as on-time arrival and departure, meal services, in-flight entertainment, baggage allowance were also important to international students. The study also found that 30 percent of the students were somehow loyal and had a preferred airline. The other finding of the study was that most of the students purchase their tickets from online platforms such as a third-party website or airline's website. Very few students purchase tickets from travel agencies.

Finally, the study found that most of the students preferred Istanbul airport compared to Sabiha Gokcen when flying to their home countries.

Keywords: Airlines, Airport, Segments, International students, Price, Turkey,

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, my friends and classmates who supported me during my studies in Ibn haldun university. I would aslo like to dedicate my thesis to my supervisor and all the faculty staff.



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I would like to thank my supervisor for his continuous guidance, support and encouragement during my thesis writing. I would also like to thank my friends who helped me during data collection because without their help this thesis would have been difficult to finish on time.

Daud Ahmed Muhumed

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

LCC	Low-cost carrier
Cov-19	Coronavirus
CFA	Confirmatory factory analysis
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Globally number of students pursuing education outside their countries has seen rapid growth. Between 1975 to 2012 the number of students increased from 0.8 to 4.5 million and these increment was mainly experienced between 2000 and 2012 (Henderson, 2016). Turkey has experienced a growing number of international students since 2011. This growth is good for the airline industry because many of the students come from far countries, and no other transportation can satisfy their needs. As of May 2019, there were 150,000 international students in Turkey, of which only 17000 of them were under scholarship (Aktas & Sahin, 2019). Many researchers define international students differently. The most widely accepted definition of international students is that of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural (UNESCO), which defines international students as those students who leave their countries of origin to a foreign country to study (Gardiner et al., 2013). United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural further gives a distinct characteristic of international students, such as while they are enrolled in those countries, they are not permanent residents of that country. Secondly, the students are not citizens of the study country, and the student finished secondary education in a different country where he or she is pursuing higher education (Gardiner et al., 2013). A report of OECD and UNESCO in 2014 found that the number of international students in the world has increased between 2000 and 2012 from 1.5 million to 3.5 million. This surge in the number of students pursuing studies in foreign countries is due to increased globalization and interaction between countries. The host country benefits from international students in different ways, such as bringing income to the universities of the host countries, making the learning institution global, and improving trade relations between countries (Henderson, 2016). In the case of Turkey, most of the international students are from Africa and Asia, where Turkey's relations are growing. Every summer, many international students go back to their home countries, and some new international students arrive in Turkey.

Airlines facilitate the movement of international students to and from their countries. The rapid growth of international students translates to increased customers for airlines. So far, airline customers are categorized into business or vacation travelers. Although students might fall under the later, there is little known about their choice of airline. Therefore, there is a need to study the preferences of international postgraduate students when choosing airlines. Also, to understand what factors influence those students to choose an airline A and not airline B going to the same destination. The United Kingdom Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably"(Shaw, 2007). Airlines need to identify the existence of new market segments and work towards the satisfaction of that segment. Some airlines have started having close relationships with universities to get the attention of students. For example, Delta Airlines in the US began an alliance with nine colleges in the US to get students in their target customers. The president commenting on the alliance said, "By creating campus and alumni events that incorporate our people, our unmatched focus on customer service, leadership and more, we will give students and alums the opportunity to really get to know our airline. Ultimately, we believe this will position Delta as their trusted partner over a lifetime of travel" (Writer, 2015). Such is the way to attract students, and airlines operating in Turkey are expected to develop such programs with universities.

Since the start of open sky agreement between the US and the Netherland in 1990, the competition within the airline industry went up (Shaw, 2007). As the competition continued within the airline industry, a new airline business model, such as the low-cost carrier, emerged (Belobaba, 2009). Low-cost carriers are no-frill airlines that focus on cost leadership that operate short and medium-haul routes(Buaphiban, 2015).On the other hand, there is full cost carrier which charge higher prices than low-cost carrier due to presence of in-flight services such as meals and they also operate on medium and long haul routes(Shaw, 2007). Both these two models of airline business models target different customer segments, and there are reasons why passengers choose each of these. Many studies have been done about the factors that influence passenger's selection of an airline, whether it is a low-cost airline or full-cost airline. Many studies have been conducted to find what aspects of airline services

influence passengers to choose a specific airline. Previous studies on the topic will be summarized, and the main factors explained in details.

1.1 Problem Statement

Globally the number of international students seeking education overseas has increased. Countries such as the US, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Australia take the highest number of international students (Henderson, 2016). Turkey is also experiencing an increase in international students. There are many reasons a student will choose a specific country. Kondakci (2011) found that international students choose countries that have a similar culture and history with their countries. The host country benefits from an international student in different ways, such as making the institutions of learning of the host country global, improving trade relations between countries, and cultural diversity (Henderson, 2016). International students travel within the country of study. A study conducted by Weaver (2003) in Australia found that 82% of the international students visited tourist attractions in different parts of the country. 78% of the students hosted visitors from their homeland, and two-thirds of the students influenced other students to study in Australia. Glover (2011) linked international students with tourism. The study found that tourism image and travel motivation influence students' choice of study location (Glover, 2011). Besides the tourism industry, another industry that benefits from international study is the airline industry. Airlines facilitate the movement of students to and from their countries.

Few studies such as Henderson (2016) and Sokolovskyy (2012) have studied international students' choice of airlines and these studies were conducted in New Zealand and Norway. Despite the growing number of international students in Turkey, no research study has examined whether international students can be a distinct segment for airlines. Some businesses have a negative thought about this market segment and do not put much effort into reaching this group of society in their advertising. Some studies like Frost & Shanka (1999), Sokolovskyy (2012) in Norway explained why students choose between low-cost carriers and full-cost carriers and found that Norwegian students preferred low-cost carriers, and international students preferred full-cost carriers. In Sokolsky's study Norwegian students considered service

quality, flight availability, and price as their main factors that affect their choice of a carrier while on the other hand international students considered the quality of service and service reliability to be their essential factors. It is evident that the service quality of an airline matters in terms of customer attraction. A similar study in the US about aviation college students' choice of airlines found that price to be the overall factor students consider when purchasing airline tickets. Still, factors such as time schedules and the students' previous experience were also important (Mahlman, 2016). The students' segment is growing and essential for businesses such as airlines. In recent years many people consider the safety of the airline more than anything else. Some airlines are known for having fewer safety issues compared to others, and that makes people choose them.

1.3 Objectives

The objects of this study are:

- I. To investigate what factors, influence international postgraduate students to choose a specific airline
- II. To examine whether international postgraduate students can represent a different segment from business and leisure for airlines.
- III. To examine whether international postgraduate students are loyal customers and to what extent they are loyal
- IV. To explore the international postgraduate student's choice of different purchasing points.

1.4 Research Questions

The previous studies on this topic focused on all levels of university students; however, this study will focus on postgraduate students because of their independence of decision making and their ability to use what they learned in their previous levels of education. In recent years the airline industry experienced some accidents, and this led to the grounding of Boeing MAX800, and many people associate specific accidents with some airlines. Therefore, the price might not be the determining factor for choosing airlines, depending on the person's level of safety awareness.

International students in Turkey are contributing to Turkey economy, and half of this contribution is felt in the airline industry. There are no studies on how airlines can cater well for international students in Turkey or make use of the increasing number of international students. The study would answer these questions

- What are the key factors that influence international postgraduate students to choose specific airline?
- Can international postgraduate students in Turkey represent a distinct segment from the business and leisure segment for airlines?
- whether students are loyal customers, and to what extent?
- Where do international students purchase from their tickets when flying to their home countries?

1.5 Significance of The Study

This research is vital for airline marketers seeking to reach new market niches. The study examines the factors that influence international students to choose a specific airline. Generally, airline marketers put less consideration on students as a different segment or consider it as a group of people whose main factor in choosing an airline is the price. Some studies have shown that not only price is a determinant factor for students, but other factors such as safety, airline reputation, and service quality are equally important.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into four sections. The first section is about consumer behavior. The second section is about factors that influence passengers' choice of airlines, loyalty in the airline industry and distribution channels. These factors have been derived from previous studies and existing literature. The third section is about generic airline segmentation. In this section, the existing segmentation in airlines is explained. The third part is about college student marketing. This section describes how airlines can market to college students. Finally, the last is about international students. This part briefly describes the growth of international students in the world.

2.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Michael Solomon, 2006).Moutinho (2000) also defines consumer behavior as a process of acquiring and organizing information to make a purchase decision and evaluating process. Consumer behavior involves searching for information, alternative evaluation, purchasing, consuming, and disposing of products and services (James F. Engel, 2006).Understanding how consumers behave when buying products or services is vital for marketing departments of companies. Many factors influence consumer behavior and decision makings, such as income, gender, education, and geography. Two theories explain how human beings make purchasing decisions, and they are behaviorist and cognitivist.

2.2 Behaviorist Versus Cognitivist Theories

John B Watson was the founder of the behaviorist theory, who suggested that people can be conditioned, and through this, they can be made to buy certain products or

brands (Reehuckin, 2017). Behaviorists are interested in observed stimulus and response created. Two types of conditioning exist in behaviorist theory, and these are classic conditioning and operant conditioning (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). The classic conditioning is a learning process coupled with repeated stimulus given at the same time a particular behavior happens, and the purpose is to create a permanent relation between the stimulus and the response (Jansson-Boyd, 2010). Operant conditioning “is a learning process where the learner is awarded for the correct action” (Reehuckin, 2017). The application of these two types of conditioning in behaviorist theory is evident in some company’s adverts. Reehuckin (2017) gives the example of Coca-Cola and Pepsi, where they associate their drinks with images of exercise, and through that, the consumer is conditioned to buy those drinks. They also use celebrities for advertising their products, and through that, the consumer is conditioned to buy. Operant conditioning is evident in some company’s promotion such as frequent flyer programs in airlines, loyalty cards for shopping all these are in form of rewarding the consumer for being a loyal customer (Reehuckin, 2017).

Cognitivist theory- cognitive behavior occurs in consumers looking and getting environmental and social stimulus as information that helps them in decision making. Cognitive theory suggests that human behaviors are affected by moods and emotions (Rose Anderson, 2017). There are two models of cognitive theory, and these are Analytical and the Prescriptive model. The analytical model is used to explain consumer behavior, and it links the relationship between the factors influencing and the decision made by the consumer (Jstanton, 2016). The Prescriptive model shows how consumer behavior can be predicted by factors such as attitude and belief (Rose Anderson, 2017).

Analyzing these theories makes us understand the consumer behavior of international postgraduate students and what factors influence them to choose a specific airline and their underlying reasons.

2.3 Consumer Decision Making

Consumer decision-making is a process that starts with the identification of consumer wants and needs. Consumer decision making is not straight forward when the purchase

is high involvement (the product or service is expensive, or it needs much assessment)(Buaphiban, 2015). The existing literature on the consumer behavior model has put forward five stages of consumer decision-making(Oke et al., 2016). These stages are need recognition, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase decision.

In the travel industry, the need for recognition starts with choosing transport means to use and the destination to go. Ritchie et al. (2010) suggest that people travel because there are internal factors that push travelers to travel while there are pulled to a destination by external factors such as the attributes of the destination. Push factors are the specific factors that influence a person's decision to travel, while pull factors are the forces that influence a person's decision to select a destination(Guan, 2014). Push and pull theory has been widely used in the travel industry to understand the decision-making behavior of travelers (Guan, 2014). Both push and pull factors have motives identified in the literature. Push motives include escape, relaxation, regression, self-exploration, prestige, kinship-enhancement, and social interaction.

On the other hand, pull motives are novelty and education (Crompton, 1979). Based on Crompton's findings, other studies cited by Guan (2014) such as Jang & Cai (2002) and Yuan & McDonald (1990), have also researched about motivations of customers in different industries. The study was conducted in France, West Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. They found that there were five push factors such as escape, novelty, prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships, and relaxation. They also found seven pull factors such as budget, culture, and history; wilderness; ease of travel; cosmopolitan environment; facilities; and hunting. They concluded that people from different countries might travel for similar reasons. Still, the reason for selecting a specific destination and the importance given to the push and pull factors vary(Guan, 2014). The push and pull factors are the need recognition for tourists; the same might not hold for international students. Still, the desire of an international student to get an education from a foreign university where there is a diversity of culture and language is a push factor. Motivation and motives are described as another source of need recognition in the travel industry(Gnoth, 1997). Gnoth (1997) suggested that motives and motivation have a different meaning. Motives show direction and target and explain the main reason why the behavior occurs while motivation is two-sided as it

explains both why tourist travel and why they choose a specific destination (Ritchie et al., 2010).

The second stage of decision-making is search for information—the consumer searches for information about the product or service to be purchased. While searching for information, certain factors can influence consumer's decision making, and they include personality, income, social class, previous experience, and brand perception(Oke et al., 2016). The consumer can search for information from internal and external sources. Internal sources are consumer's past experiences about the use of the product or service(Oke et al., 2016). On the other hand, external sources can be commercial adverts, online reviews, and friends or family. When the consumer thinks that there is high personal or financial risk involved in the purchase, the consumer uses external sources (Erasmus et al., 2001). Khan (2007) gives the factor that can lead the consumer to search for low or high information. Factors such as high cost of information, previous experience, pressure from friends or family to purchase specific products or services, and when the consumer cannot process a lot of information will lead to low information search(Khan, 2007).On the other hand, factors such as high involvement product or service, more available time, more product differentiation, and when there is little knowledge about the product or service will lead to high information search. (Khan, 2007).Nowadays, airlines have embraced internet technology, and they have websites and social media sites where their customers can get valuable information and ask questions and get instant responses. Online booking in the US and Europe accounts for 90% and 57%, respectively (Henderson, 2016). The increased use of online bookings in airlines is because it is a service industry compatible with online distribution. Online purchase is better than the traditional way of going to the physical office on several issues such as customers can filter items on prices, color, or brand and have greater availability of information about products and services (C.-H. Park & Kim, 2003). Customers who purchase their tickets online want airline websites to have some features. A study done in Hong Kong by Chu (2001) found that passengers look for attractive, informative websites. the passengers also wanted the websites to provide information about price, scheduling, and route information and be able to choose seats and meals. Lubbe (2007) found that specific demographic has the preference to purchase tickets from airline websites. This group of travelers are mainly the youth who are tech savvy.

The third stage of decision-making is the evaluation of alternatives(Oke et al., 2016). After the consumer has identified the need and searched enough information about the product and services, the next step is to evaluate many available alternatives. Consumers evaluate products and services based on price, quality, brand perception. For example, if an airline passenger wants to buy a ticket, the passenger will evaluate many airlines based on their price, service quality, safety, and other factors. In this stage, the consumer develops criteria to select the best option. Each criterion is given a specific weigh. After that, all the alternatives are ranked based on their weighs. The decision-maker chooses the best alternative based on its importance and expected value. In the evaluation process, two essential factors will contribute to the final decision to be made; these are expected value of service and perceived value of service. This two will form the basis of evaluation when making a purchase. The expected value in the service industry is the service one believes to be offered,” while the perceived value of service is the perception created after one has used the product or service(Henderson, 2016). The expectation of service quality comes from past experience or when the consumer is searching for information.

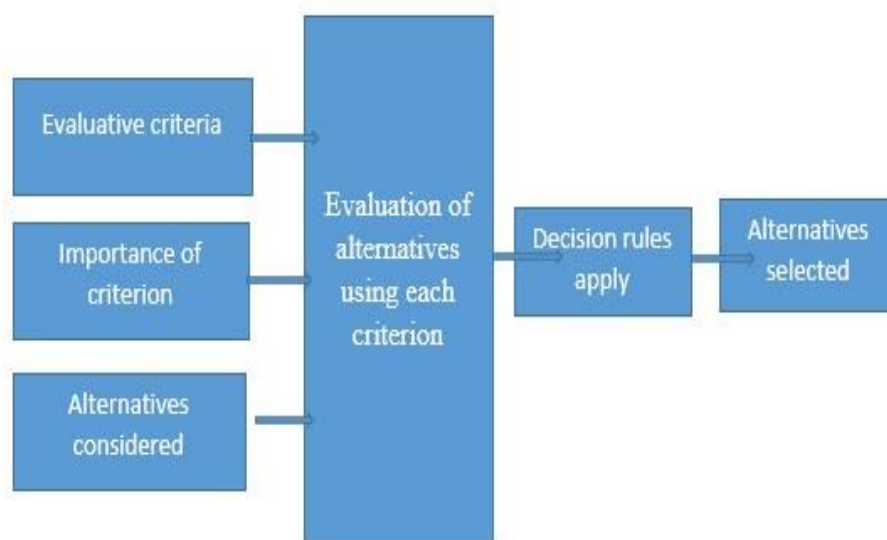


Figure 2. 1 Process Of Alternative Evaluation (Mthersbaugh & Hawkins, 2016)

The fourth stage of the decision-making process is the purchase decision. After the consumer has evaluated available alternatives, the next step is to decide what to purchase. In this stage, the buyer will decide which company or service producer to buy from(Oke et al., 2016). Some factors, such as product or service attributes, will

influence the buyer while making the purchase decision. Oke et al. (2016) posited that other factors such as the point of purchase, the employees, and the exhibition of the products can alter the decision of the buyer.

The fifth stage and the last stage of the decision-making process is post-purchase. Post-purchase consists of three phases. The first phase of post-purchase is that the consumer will consume the product or service. The second phase is where the consumer evaluates after using the product or service(Oke et al., 2016). If the product or service meets with consumer expectations, the consumer evaluates the product or service very high. The third stage is the disposal of products. Generally, companies pay attention to the evaluation of the consumer after using their products or service. This is because if the consumer's expectations were meet, they would come back to purchase from the same company the next time the need arises and vice versa. Figure 2.2 below shows the decision-making stages.



Figure 2. 2: Stages of decision (Mthersbaugh & Hawkins, 2016)

2.4 Factors Influencing Passenger' Choice Of Airline

Consumer decision-making is a long process, and several external factors influence it. The decision being studied in this study is the selection of airlines. As demonstrated

in the decision-making process, consumers evaluate certain characteristics of products and services and give them weight. Airline passengers assess the characteristics of an airline and how it meets their needs (Buaphiban, 2015). Passengers weigh some aspects of airline service and evaluate before choosing an airline. In the airline industry, there are business and leisure travelers. These two groups of airline passengers have different preferences when choosing an airline. Business travelers are more concerned about service quality, reliability of airline, and flight duration while leisure is more sensitive about price. This study is focusing on a different group of airline passengers that is international students and identifying factors that influence them when selecting airlines. The study considers both literature from low-cost carriers and full carriers. This study will examine the major factors identified in previous studies, and these factors were price, service quality, frequent flier programs, airline safety, flight availability, and airport of origin.

2.4.1 Price

Price is an important factor in the decision-making of consumers in all products or services (Sokolovsky, 2012). Price is also crucial for the service providers as it determines their profit. The airline industry price remains an important factor in differentiating services offered by airlines. Price factor in airline constitutes the ticket price, the price charged for overweight baggage, and loyal programs (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011). A study conducted by Kuosuwon (2015) on market factors that influence passengers to choose low-cost carriers found that price was the main reason why passengers choose low-cost carriers. Also, the study found factors such as channel of distribution and promotion to be other reasons passengers use low-cost carriers. Another study on the determinant factor that influences business travelers in selecting low-cost and full-cost carriers done in South Africa found that price was a factor considered in choosing both full cost and low-cost carriers. The study also noted that the travelers surveyed put much importance on online security payment this is because most of the people in South Africa believe online payment to be insecure (Fourie & Lubbe, 2006). A similar study by Castillo-Manzano & Marchena-Gómez, (2010) on factors that influence passengers to use low-cost carriers found that there was a negative correlation between traveling on weekends and choosing low-cost carriers.

This is because full cost carriers give discounts on weekends to travelers .it can be said that the main reason why travelers choose low-cost carriers on weekdays is due to its low prices.

Not all times, price is the factor of selecting an airline. Business travelers consider other factors such as flight availability and frequent flier program(Buaphiban, 2015). Business travelers are more time-sensitive than leisure travelers because they want to attend conferences, or their ticket was arranged by companies where they work(Shaw, 2007).

2.4.2 Service Quality

Service quality is defined as “high standard performance that meets or exceeds customer expectations”(Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016).Service quality in the airline industry can be categorized into ground services such as check-in, baggage handling, boarding or disembarking, in-flight services such as food and drinks, seat comfort and cabin crew behavior, and on-time schedule which includes departure and arrivals(Buaphiban, 2015). Service quality is measured in the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra, and this model consists of dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, security, assurance(Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016).

A study conducted by A. H. Chen et al. (2008) to evaluate the factors that influence students' choice of airlines between London and Taipei route found that in-flight service quality(meals, seat comfort, cabin crew attitude,) were the most critical factors. The study also found that student discounts, the safety record of the airline to be somehow crucial in choosing an airline. A thesis study conducted by Sokolovskyy (2012) in Norway to investigate the factors that influence both international students and domestic student's choice of either low-cost or full cost carrier found that Norwegian students are affected by service quality, flight availability and price while students from other countries were influenced by the quality of service and service availability. The study concluded that service quality was the most important factor considered by students. A study was done by Atalık & Özel (2007) which was investigating the factors that influence passengers to choose low-cost carriers

specifically Pegasus Airlines in Turkey, found that on-time performance and convenience of schedule were most important factors considered by the passengers. However, low-cost passengers are expected to be price sensitive. A study done in India by Bawa (2011) which was investigating the factors that influence the choice of domestic airlines in Chandigarh in India, found that onboard time as a factor of selecting an airline. Another study in china by Chiou & Chen (2010) revealed that passengers choose full-service airlines because of service perception. The study compared full service and low service airlines where low service was mainly selected because of their lower price.

It is evident from the previous studies that service quality is an essential factor in choosing an airline, whether it is students, low-cost passengers, or full cost passengers.

2.4.3 Airline Safety

Airline safety is about accidents and incidents involving aircraft. Airline safety is an important factor in choosing airlines. Air transport is the safest mode of transportation (Valkenburcht, 2013). Airlines accidents are not very common, but once they happen, they affect passenger's perception of flying (Spinks, 2019). Airlines start investing more in safety after an airline crash even though that crashed airline was not operated by them (Greve & Gaba, 2019). Those airlines that are struggling also spend more on safety to improve their image (Greve & Gaba, 2019). Aviation security became paramount after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack (Baker, 2005).

H.-T. Chen & Chao (2015) conducted a study about factors that influenced passengers' choice of airline and compared the preferences of different demographics (China and Taiwan). The study showed that passengers consider safety and reliability, punctuality, and communication with customers to solve problems. The results seem to be different from previous because no mention of price and service quality; the reason could be the location of the study and the people surveyed. Another study on safety role on passengers' choice of airline found that the importance attached to safety differs among business and leisure travelers (Ringle et al., 2011). A study in Malaysia about factors that influence passengers' choice of full cost carrier and low-cost carrier showed that passengers select full cost carriers because of their safety (Sai & Ekiz,

2011). A similar study in Thailand showed that passengers choose full-service airlines because of their safety(Thanasupsin et al., 2010).

A study by Atalık & Özel(2007) about Pegasus airline showed airline safety as an essential factor in choosing an airline.

As can be seen from previous studies, airline safety is an important factor for passengers in choosing an airline. Several studies have linked the safety of airline and profitability while others found an inverse relationship. Managers find it difficult to balance security and profitability because more investment in security can make the airline miss its financial obligation. Golbe (1986) found that there is no significant relationship between profits and safety. This study is old and was done before the safety and security of aviation became important. A recent safety study by Kalemba & Campa-Planas (2019) investigating the relationship between safety and airline profits showed that there is a non-significant effect of safety on airline profits but a significant effect of safety on airline revenues. The impact on revenues is because whenever there are accidents, passengers tend to travel less or switch to a different airline.

2.4.4 Flight Availability

The fourth important factor in selecting an airline is flight availability. J.-W. Park (2007) suggested that flight availability consists of a convenient flight schedule and availability of non-stop flight. The flight schedule is vital as some passengers will prefer a specific time of the day. Also, the availability of non-stop flight is important for some passengers. Business travelers will prefer non-stop flight as it saves time for them. Atalık & Özel (2007) found a convenient flight schedule to be an important factor in selecting low-cost carriers. Another study in Norway consisting of domestic and international students showed that flight availability as an influential factor in selecting airlines (Sokolovskyy, 2012). Another study by Ali (2007) in New Zealand studying the important determinants influencing travelers to choose a specific airline found that price and flight schedule to be important determinants in selecting an airline. The study used both primary and secondary sources. On the primary side, the respondents were divided into three groups: ordinary people in the community, people who work at travel agency and frequent travelers. Another study comparing full-

service and low service airlines in European and Asian markets found that some of the reasons why passengers choose full -service is convenient flight schedule (O'Connell & Williams, 2005). Flight schedule and non-stop flight are important factors passengers consider when choosing airlines, depending on the type of passenger. For example, leisure passengers will have no problems with connecting flights, while business traveler who is time conscious will prefer non-stop flight. Also, passengers might experience delays and congestion in the transfer airport(Shaw, 2007).

2.4.5 Frequent Flyer Programs

Frequent flyer programs are customer loyalty programs where customers get incentives such as discounts, coupons for frequently using an airline or its partners(Buaphiban, 2015). Frequent flyer programs were started by American airlines in 1980 and later adopted by other airlines and industries such as supermarkets, petrol stations (Shaw, 2007). Frequent flyer programs are very important as they make airline customers remain with specific airlines because any time they switch to another airline means losing points or benefits of the program(Buaphiban, 2015). Several studies have shown the influence of frequent flyer programs on customers on airline selection. Dolnicar et al. (2011) suggests that frequent flyer programs are one of the key drivers of loyalty. Frequent flyer programs are important for the business traveler, as demonstrated by (Fourie & Lubbe, 2006).Business travelers travel a lot hence the need to use one airline and earn a point which can be redeemed for tickets.J.-W. Park (2010) found that frequent flyer programs had direct or indirect effects on pricing, airline image, passenger satisfaction, and airline selection. Also, Seelhorst & Liu (2015) found that frequent flyer programs influence airline choice. Although the effect and important of frequent flyer programs are supported by many studies others like Caminal & Claici (2007) argue that loyalty programs such as frequent flyer program is anti-competitive. In this study frequent flyer program is included as discounts offered by airlines.

2.4.6 Airline Reputation

Airline reputation is another factor that influences a passenger's choice of an airline.

Airline corporate reputation is defined as “the perception of the consumer about the airline’s general operation, safety, and other factors”(Buaphiban, 2015). Airline reputation is affected by the service quality and safety record of the airline. Graham & Bansal (2007) suggests that factors such as safety record, corporate size, and age and financial performance play an important role in airline reputation. Graham & Bansal (2007) found that consumers were willing to pay more for corporate reputation. Atalık & Özel (2007) conducted a study on passenger's expectations and the factors that affect their choice of low-cost carriers and found airline reputation as one of the factors. Also Dolnicar et al. (2011), studying the key drivers of loyalty also found that airline reputation as an important factor in customer loyalty.

Moreover, even travelers selecting travel packages from tour operators consider airline reputation as an important (Chiam et al., 2009). Airline reputation is affected by many factors such as price, service quality, the safety record of the airline; for that reason, it is not included in the scope of this study. Also, airline reputation is complex as an airline with good service qualities such as meals, in-flight can suffer safety problems, and it becomes difficult which one to consider in such scenarios.

2.4.7 Airport Of Origin

Airports are an important place in the aviation industry. Airlines compete for slots in primary airports with the proper flight schedule. Some cities have two or more airports giving the airline passengers more options to choose which airport they want. Those airports have different services to attract more passengers(Barrett, 2004). Many factors affect the choice of airport hence the choice of airline. For example, light train access to the airport and any other transport is crucial for passengers. Low-cost carriers use secondary airports where ground transport is difficult, while full cost carriers use established airports with sound ground transport systems (Tierney & Kuby, 2008).

A study by Ariffin & Yahaya (2013) investigating the relationship between airport image and passenger delight found that airport image is positively related to passenger delight. Another study was looking into how passengers living in multi-airport regions choose a specific airport when flying found that passengers consider several important factors such as the number of airlines, flight frequency, and access time when choosing

airport (Loo, 2008). It is evident from this study that passengers consider airports when choosing airlines, and the airport can have an impact on their choice. A similar study was done in San Francisco, evaluating passengers' preferences concerning airlines and airports showed that passengers give importance to the frequency of flight and access to the airport when choosing airports and airlines together (Pels et al., 2001). Cho (2012) studied the impact of airline and customer characteristics on airlines and airports. The study found that customers choose the airport that has a LCC presence. Another study done in the US showed that airline travelers do not select the airline separately but the airport. It also showed that the way travelers choose the tradeoff between airport and airline depends on customer type, i.e., business travelers and leisure travelers.

The airport factor has been included in this study because Istanbul is a multi-airport city, and travelers can choose any airport depending on their preference. Also, to understand whether the airport of origin has an impact on the international postgraduate student's choice of airline.

In summary, the factors that influence the choice of passengers have been summarized from previous studies, and these factors were price, service quality, flight availability, airline safety, airline reputation, frequent flyer program, and airport. Table 2.1 shows the summary of the factors that influence airline choice and the scholars that support each factor.

Table 2.1: Factors And The Scholars That Support Them

Factors	Scholars
Price	(Sokolovskyy, 2012), (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011), (Shaw, 2007).
Service quality	A. H. Chen et al. (2008), Atalık & Özel (2007), Chiou & Chen (2010)
Airline safety	(Greve & Gaba, 2019), (Baker, 2005), (Ringle et al., 2011)
Flight availability	J.-W. Park (2007), (O'Connell & Williams, 2005), (Sokolovskyy, 2012)
Frequent flyer programs	(Buaphiban, 2015), Dolnicar et al. (2011), by (Fourie & Lubbe, 2006), Seelhorst & Liu (2015)
Airline reputation	Graham & Bansal (2007), Atalık & Özel (2007), Dolnicar et al. (2011),
Airport of origin	(Barrett, 2004), (Pels et al., 2001). Cho (2012), Cho (2012),

2.5 Brand Loyalty in The Airline Industry

Brand loyalty is defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 2018). There are three categories of loyalty, which are behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and a mixture of both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Artuğer, 2013). Behavioral loyalty is the behavior of customers purchasing from the same brand frequently or regularly (Artuğer, 2013). Attitudinal loyalty is when the customer repurchases the brand and recommends it to others. In contrast, the mixture of behavioral and attitudinal is when the customer frequently purchases the same brand and recommends to others and is not influenced by other company’s marketing campaigns (Artuğer, 2013). The existing literature links loyalty and satisfaction. Oliver (2018) posits that loyal customers are usually satisfied, but that does not mean that every satisfied customer is a loyal customer. Oliver investigated when satisfaction becomes loyalty and what aspects of satisfaction can lead to loyalty and found satisfaction is necessary for loyalty but becomes less important as other factors set in such as social bonding at the institution and personal level.

Several studies like Cobb-Walgren & Mohr (1998), Laroche & Brisoux, (1989), and Laroche, Kim & Zhou, (1995) on consumer brand have shown that there is a relationship between decision-making, brand perception and purchase intention (Henderson, 2016). Loyalty is included in this thesis because the study wants to investigate whether international students are loyal customers. Brand loyalty is not a coincidence, and it takes time for the consumer to develop (Kocoglu et al., 2015). Dolnicar et al. (2011) investigated the drivers of loyalty in the airline industry and found that factors such as frequent flyer membership, the airline being a national carrier, price, and word of mouth from friends to be the drivers of loyalty in airlines. Other factors affect customer loyalty towards a brand such as service quality, corporate and brand image, customer loyalty programs, perceived value, and customer satisfaction (Shrestha, 2014). Moreno et al., (2014) suggests that the company’s performance and customer satisfaction are associated with service quality.

Several studies in the airline industry, such as Atalık & Özel (2007), Sokolovskyy, (2012), Chiou & Chen (2010) have also found service to be very influential in selecting airline and brand loyalty. The other factor important for customer loyalty is the presence of loyalty programs such as frequent flyer programs. The frequent flyer program was started in 1980 by American airline, and others followed it became successful (Shaw, 2007). Today almost all the legacy carriers have frequent flyer programs where passengers are given points for every flight and access to lounges. Loyalty programs provide discounts, coupons in order to increase customer purchase. This discounts and coupons make customers became frequent buyers and recommend to their friends and families (Shrestha, 2014). Some researchers are of the opinion that loyalty rewarding programs are anti-competitive (Caminal & Claici, 2007). They claim that loyalty programs tend to strengthen a firm's power, which can negatively affect consumer's welfare.

Corporate and brand image also affects customer loyalty. Some studies, such as Zins, (2001), Palmerk & Lindestad (1994), and Wilson, (2018) have linked corporate and brand image to customer loyalty. Palmerk & Lindestad (1994) found that higher customer satisfaction enhances the corporate image. Also Kandampully & Suhartanto (2003) suggest that corporate image affects valuation equation in which customers attached the company's service. When the value customers get from the company is undermined, their loyalty is also undermined. In the airline industry, the loyalty of different segments is seen differently. The business segment is more loyal than leisure segments, and this study would examine whether international students are loyal and to what extent they are loyal or not.

2.6 Distribution Channels

The distribution channels in the airline industry have evolved from airlines selling tickets in their offices to travel agencies and online distribution channels (Shaw, 2007). Distribution channels link the customer and the business (Camilleri, 2018). This study is investigating which channel of distribution is preferred by international students. Distribution channels are divided into direct and indirect channels (Shaw, 2007). direct distribution is where companies directly sell their service or products to the customers without intermediaries, while indirect distribution is where companies sell their

products or services to the customer using intermediaries (Shaw, 2007). Both direct and indirect distribution has advantages and disadvantages. In the airline industry, passengers can directly purchase tickets from the airline offices or the airline's website.

On the other hand, airlines use indirect channels such as travel agencies. Each channel of distribution has advantages and disadvantages. For example, airlines selling their ticket in their offices has the advantage of airlines having direct contact with their customers. Also Henderson (2016) found that international students prefer purchasing tickets from airline websites in order to get better help in case of flight delay or ticket cancellation. Airline opening offices everywhere are also expensive as they cannot reach every geographical area. Agency distribution has the disadvantage of a commission charged by agencies, which makes tickets expensive, and it also reduces airline revenue as they lower tickets so that travel agencies can add commissions to make a profit (Shaw, 2007).

In today's travel industry, passengers have access to much information, which alters their decisions when purchasing services or products (Henderson, 2016). As passengers prefer purchasing from airline websites, they expect airline websites to be informative, interactive, confidential, and attractive (Chu, 2001). In online distribution, trust is an important factor. Wasserman (2006) suggests that consumers trust information that comes from the company's website rather than that of a third-party. This is because some websites might be fake or also, they can steal user's information.

Distribution channels were included in this study because the study wants to investigate where international students purchase their tickets. However, the study does not explain the reasons for students using different channels.

2.7 Segmentation

Segmentation is defined as dividing a population into customer groups that share common characteristics, buying behavior, or needs (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016). Companies often group customers with similar traits to target them. There are many ways marketers segment markets such as demographic segmentation, psychographic segmentation, need-based segmentation, and behavioral segmentation (Wirtz &

Lovelock, 2016). In the airline industry, airlines segment passengers according to the purpose of the journey, length of the journey, and country or culture of origin of the traveler (Shaw, 2007).

Under the purpose of the journey, airlines divide passengers into business, leisure, visiting friends and relatives, and personal (Belobaba, 2009). Business travelers are people traveling for business purposes; it can be a corporate worker whose travel expense is paid by the company or an independent business traveler. Both business travelers are time-sensitive (Belobaba, 2009). Leisure travelers can be subdivided into holiday travelers and visiting friends and relatives (Shaw, 2007). The length of the journey is also used to segment passengers. The length of the journey is either short-haul or long-haul, and there are different needs of passengers in these two journeys. Passengers flying in short-haul routes might not put much importance on seat comfort and space, while long haul flights passengers value seat comfortability and space (Shaw, 2007). Airlines use smaller aircraft in short-haul routes and vice versa. The third-way airline segment customers are by country or cultural origin of the traveler. People from different countries have varying preferences when traveling. Some cultures, certain foods are not served like alcohol or pork meat in Muslim countries (Shaw, 2007). Airlines tend to exploit these differences in culture, although it is impossible to cater for everyone.

The aim of segmentation is dividing markets into smaller segments that companies can easily manage. It is challenging to satisfy and reach all customers as it needs resources and time. Hence, the best way is to segment markets and choose the most suitable market segment. The segmented market must meet certain criteria such as measurability, substantiality, accessibility, and actionability (Camilleri, 2018) & (Tynan & Drayton, 2010). Measurability is about the possibility of measuring the size of the segmented market—for example, the number of international students in Turkey. The second requirement for effective segmentation is sustainability, which looks at the degree at which the segment is profitable enough to pursue. The segment must be profitable as unprofitable segments will not be of use to companies. Airlines cannot focus on a group that does not travel. The third requirement is accessibility, which is about the ability of companies to reach segments and serve them. It becomes futile to focus on a segment that is very difficult to reach. The fourth requirement for effective

segmentation is actionability, which means the ability to design services or products to attract the specified segment.

Segmentation has some benefits, such as allowing marketers to know customers better, will enable companies to serve segments better than competitors. Through segmentation, companies can use fewer resources to compete with their competitors(Camilleri, 2018). As mentioned above, there are different ways to segment markets such as demographic, behavioral, psychographic, and need-based segmentation, but this study will adopt the behavioral segmentation because it is looking at whether international postgraduate students can represent a different segment from business and leisure travelers.

2.8 College Students Marketing

College marketing is marketing campaigns targeting college or university students. There are more than 150,000 international students in Turkey(Aktas & Sahin, 2019). Airlines are the biggest beneficiaries of these numbers as they facilitate the movement of students from their home countries to Turkey. It would be appropriate to design marketing campaigns that target this growing number of international students. Any business that wants to survive must open up to new segments and reach new customers(Mahlman, 2016). International students travel within the country during their stay and go back to their countries during summer breaks; therefore, they are both customers for domestic and international airlines (Mahlman, 2016).

According to Mahlman (2016) citing Skellage, there are five effective ways to market products or services to college students. The first way is the marketer admitting to being older than college students. Being older than college students improves the credibility of the marketer or the company selling products or services to the students. As the marketer admits being older than the college students, the marketer should not pretend to speak their language and say that he or she does not understand their wants. This will make college students listen as the marketer presents the company's products or services. The second way is to hire someone who understands college students better or someone younger to formulate the marketing plans to target college students (Mahlman, 2016). Hiring a young person will mean understanding college students'

behavior well as he or she uses the right message to reach them. The third way is to identify college students and segment them. Before segmenting, the marketer gathers information about the segment. Skellage suggests that information about the segment can be collected from social media. The fourth way indicated by the author is giving incentives or discounts to students. The author provides an example of amazon's free subscription for students and Apple discounts for students. It is not only incentives or discounts that can attract students but better services; deals will also do the same(Mahlman, 2016). Skellage says any good deal to attract students must have incentives. Airlines can also use this strategy to attract international students to their pool.

The last way is to use targeted marketing, which is about creating specific messages tailored to college students. The message will be through all available media such as social media, mobile applications, and emails. The marketer will present the value proposition directed to students. Other authors like Solis(2019), and William (2010) have also given ways to market products or services to university students. Solis (2019) has also put forward ten strategies for marketing to college students. These strategies include going online, being trendy, getting on campus, and considering students' income. According to the author, millennials and Generation Z are the biggest groups online. College students are very active on social media, and through that process, they can see much content about companies who advertise themselves on social media.

Students might not purchase the first time they see adverts, but that advert will create awareness, and the company will be recognized. Another strategy of marketing to college students mentioned by Solis (2019) is getting on campus. Visiting students at the university is an excellent way of companies reaching students because they will feel that companies are valuing them. Also, the marketer will be able to ask questions and get feedback. The third strategy is companies being trendy without overdoing it. College students like stylish things and companies should offer trendy products or services. Solis (2019) discourages companies from overdoing being trendy as that might backfire and can lead to a poor reputation. Another strategy of marketing to students is considering their income. Companies need to understand how and what college students spend their income. Many students still depend on their parents, and their income is spent on things like food, books, and housing. College students are price-sensitive, and expensive marketing things to them might not work.

Williams (2010) also gives five tips for marketing to college students. Williams (2010) suggest the first one as mobile marketing. College students are using mobile phones, laptops most of their time, and the author emphasizes companies to reach college students through mobile apps when marketing their products or services. The second tip suggested by Williams (2010) is being precise when telling some to college students because they do not want someone taking their time for studies or free time. The marketer should make sure their messages be it word of mouth or any other form to be short. The third way is not trying to be cool if the company or the business is not. The author says college students can quickly know whether the company is forcing to be cool or not, and pretending what it is not, and this will affect the credibility of the company. The fourth tip is designing and developing products or services before marketing to college students. If the product or service satisfies college students, they will talk about it and vice versa. William, (2010) encourages entrepreneurs to develop their products or services well before marketing. The last tip recommended by Williams (2010) is winning the heart of college students' parents. This is because most of the financial decisions come from the parent. Also, students look up to their parents when making any decision.

It is evident from the three authors that marketing to college students is different from marketing to other groups of society. The authors have also emphasized the importance of college students to businesses. College students are price-sensitive, and marketing expensive products or services to them is difficult, and to overcome this, companies can offer discounts to students. Also, college students are online, meaning companies willing to reach college students should use social media and other online platforms to reach them. The most effective strategy to market to students is visiting their campus, where the companies can interact with by answering their queries.

In the airline industry, delta airlines in the US partnered with 15 universities in the US. The president of delta airlines commenting on the alliance said that they want to develop a close relationship with alumni from those universities and allow students to understand their airline (Mahlman, 2016). The airline offers internships to college students, and through this, they are developing their future employees. If the same idea is replicated in Turkey by the airlines and targets both domestic and international students, that airline will benefit as the students will choose that airline they see in their university or college campus.

2.9 International Students' Market

Globally the number of students seeking overseas education has seen a sharp rise. Students go to foreign countries in order to learn about new cultures and be competitive in international job markets (Henderson, 2016). Countries such as the US, the UK, Australia, Germany, and France take more than fifty percent of all the international students in the world (Henderson, 2016). International students have benefits such as bringing income for universities, making the universities of the host country international, and improving trade relations between the host country and the country of the students (Henderson, 2016). Some of these tourist sites are not free, so just like other tourist students also pay for the museums and other sites. Weaver (2003) also found that students host tourists from their countries while they are in a different country. This tourist chooses those destinations because those students might have recommended to them.

Turkey has experienced a growing number of international students in recent years. This growth is attributed to the change of foreign policy of the government, as suggested by (Nguluma et al., 2019). The Turkish Government established a scholarship for an international student willing to study in Turkey. The international study brings many benefits to the host countries such as the internationalization of learning students, cultural exchange between the host and students' countries, and it is also a source of revenue for private universities and airlines (Henderson, 2016). Not only universities and tourist sectors benefit from the rising number of international students, but also airlines benefit from the increase of international students. The increasing number of students prompts research on what influences them when selecting airlines and whether they can be a different segment for airlines. Figure 1.3 below shows the number of international students in Turkey from 2001 to 2018.

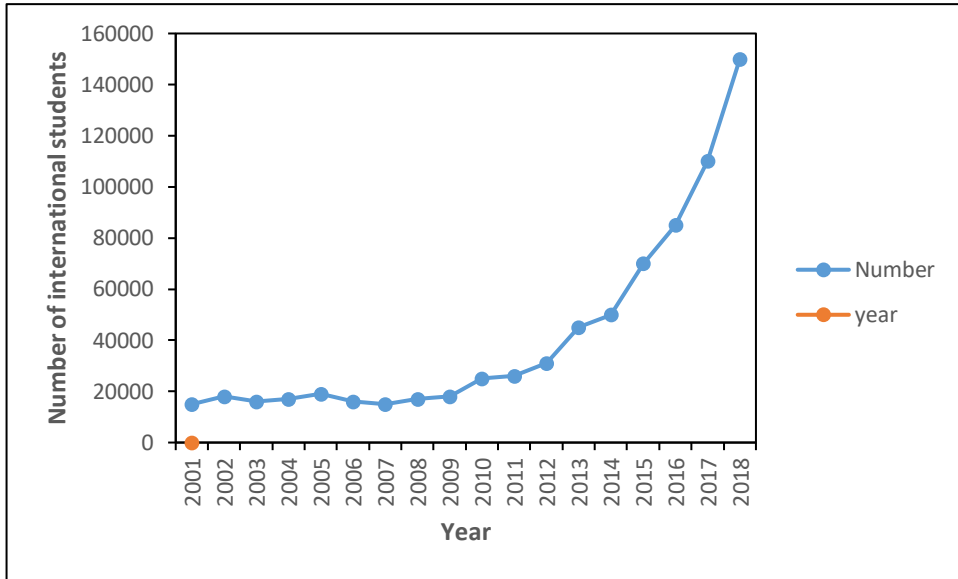


Figure 2. 3: Number Of International Students In Turkey((Statistic - Study in Turkey, 2019)

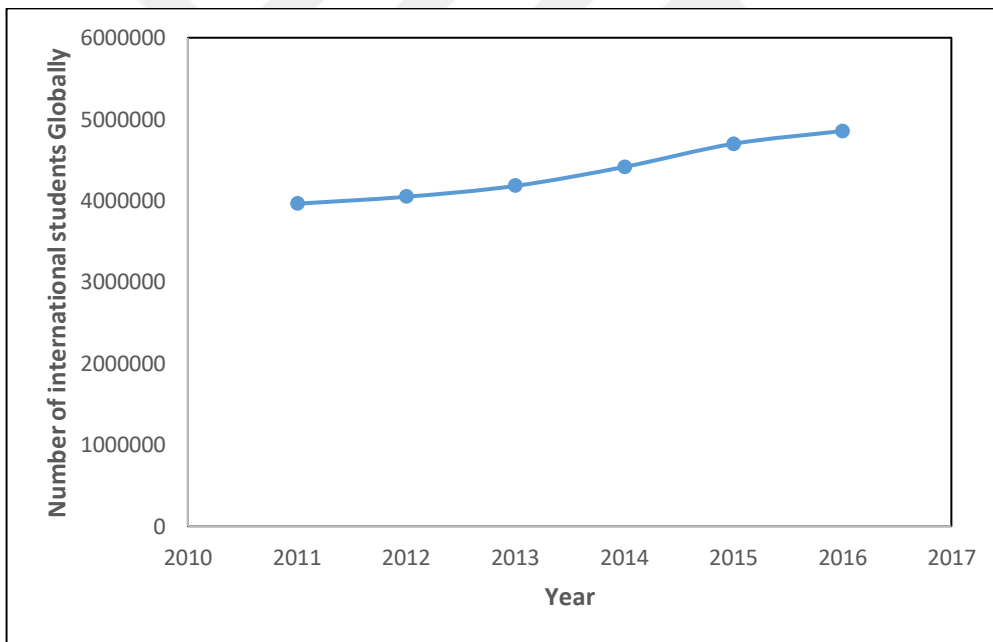


Figure 2. 4: Number Of International Students Globally (UNESCO, 2018)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used to reach the objectives of the study. The methodology of research touches on research design, method of data collection used, sample size, the population of the study, ethical concerns, and limitations of the methods used in the study. These make it easier for understanding the reasons for choosing a specific method of collecting data and its limitation and what could be improved in the subsequent studies.

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a quantitative survey was used to answer the research questions at hand. After receiving an email from the university, permitting to conduct online surveys for data collection, an online survey was conducted. The university allowed online surveys due to lockdown put in place by the government to stop the spread of COV-19. Other methods like interviews of face-face were not possible due to the health risks involved. An online survey happened to be the most appropriate way of collecting data as it does not violate the social-distancing put in place by the government. A survey was created in google forms and sent to postgraduate international students in Turkey via email. An online survey has several advantages such as minimal cost, conducting complex surveys online; respondents can answer the question at their own pace and time and easy data handling for the researcher as it stores the data in spreadsheets(Sincer, 2012). An online survey has some disadvantages, which include some might answer the survey, thinking they will receive money rather than contributing to the study. Another disadvantage of online surveys is only those who have internet access will be reached, leaving the others, and this itself might be biased. Google forms allow the surveyor to see the pie chart and graphs of each question.

3.2 Data Collection

At first, the research was focusing on international postgraduate students in Istanbul. However, it was later expanded to international postgraduate students in Turkey because the number of respondents was very few. Postgraduate students were chosen because they purchase their tickets when flying and, therefore, can decide which airline to use.

The respondents of this study were postgraduate international students in Turkey who filled an online survey. Most of the students were from Africa and Asian countries. Two hundred sixty-one responses were obtained, and 21 of them were not used in the analysis because they were not postgraduate students.

3.3 Sample Size

Whenever one wants to conduct research, the first question that comes to their mind is what sample size is enough. Israel (1992) trying to answer this question says the sample size is influenced by factors such as the purpose of the study, the risk of selecting a bad sample, and the size of the population. Israel (1992) continues to say that besides the purpose of the study and size of the population, they are three other criteria that need to be determined. These criteria are the level of confidence or risk, the degree of precision, and the degree of variability. The level of confidence is under the theory of the central limit theorem. Which states that “ the distribution of sample means approximates a normal distribution (also known as a “bell curve”), as the sample size becomes larger, assuming that all samples are identical in size, and regardless of the population distribution shape”(Ganti, 2019).The level of precision is described as the range in which the true value of the population is estimated to be, and the degree of variability is about how attributes are distributed in the population. There are other ways to determine sample size as suggested by Israel (1992), and they are using the entire population as sample size, using a sample size of similar studies and using formulas to calculate the sample size.

In this study, the sample size was 240 respondents. The respondents were international students pursuing masters and Ph.D. in Turkish Universities. This sample size was enough to conduct analysis compared to the previous studies on these topics.

3.4 Research Instrument

In order to come up with questionnaires to be used in the survey, previous studies such as Soomro et al., (2012), Mahlman, (2016), Buaphiban, (2015) and Sokolovskyy, (2012) were reviewed. Also, the famous SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra to measure customers' perception of service quality was used to get some relevant items used in the survey. There are different types of survey questions and they as follows Open-ended questions, Closed-ended questions, Nominal questions, Likert scale questions, Rating scale (or ordinal) questions, Yes', or 'no' questions(Darmanin, 2020). This study used all the survey question types except open-ended questions as respondents can get bored of writing answers.

The survey consisted of nine sections. The first was about demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age, education, country of origin. The second section was about the number of times students traveled, and the third section was about price related issues such as for overweight baggage fees, discounts offered, and baggage allowance. The full survey can be found in appendix 1. Some of the questions were measured in 5 Likert scale. The survey was prepared in English as all the international students speak English. Some of them are from English speaking countries.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was conducted in SPSS as it is widely used in social sciences such as market research and surveys (Thomes, 2018).SPSS helps the researcher to analyze complex and time-consuming data because it transforms data into graphs and tables that are easy to understand (Thomes, 2018). Descriptive statistics and factor analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics were used for both categorical and numerical variables. Both the categorical

and numerical variable questions their frequencies and percentages were calculated. These frequencies and percentages were presented in graphs, charts, and tables.

The second technique was a confirmatory factor analysis using SPSS. Factor analysis was used to see whether the items included in the survey reflect the factors they are supposed to represent. The researcher identifies items that are measuring the same construct through their factor loading. Items that have negative loading are removed and items that appear alone in a factor.

3.6 Data Preparation And Cleaning

Data preparation and cleaning was done before data analysis. Data preparation is defined as “the process of cleaning and transforming raw data prior to processing and analysis” (Pearlman, 2020). Data preparation comprises putting the data into the computer, checking for accuracy, and developing into database structure (Trochim, 2020). After data preparation is done, the data is screened to check missing responses, outlying responses, and normality (Justin, 2017).

3.6.1 Missing Data

Missing data occurs when a respondent fails to answer a question due to a lack of knowledge, sensitivity of the question, or fatigue (Justin, 2017). Missing data comprises of Missing completely at random (MCAR) and Missing at random (MAR) (Justin, 2017). In MCAR, the missing values are randomly distributed across all observations, while MAR the missing values are not randomly distributed across all observations but are distributed in one sample or sub-samples (Justin, 2017). Missing data can be corrected by Listwise exclusion, Pairwise exclusion or Predictive replacement (Kachkar, 2016).

In this study, the data was carefully checked for missing responses, but there are no missing responses; therefore, all the data in the computer was used for the data analysis.

3.6.2 Outliers

Outliers are defined as “extreme values that deviate from other observations on data, they may indicate a variability in a measurement, experimental errors, or a novelty” (Santoyo, 2017). There are two kinds of outliers: univariate and multivariate (Santoyo, 2017). A univariate outlier is a data point that has an extreme value at one variable. In contrast, a multivariate outlier is a combination of extreme values at two variables (Justin, 2017). Outliers can happen due to wrong data entry and data coming from unintended samples. Univariate outliers are identified by “looking at extreme than mean plus or minus the standard deviation multiplied by a constant” (Leys et al., 2019). On the other hand, multivariate outliers are identified by the use of Mahalanobis distance (Justin, 2017). Outliers are solved by transforming, accommodating, or deleting them (Kachkar, 2016). Outliers can be removed or kept depending on the distribution of the data (Leys et al., 2019).

3.6.3 Normality

The third way of screening data is by testing normality. Normality refers to “the shape of the data distribution for an individual metric variable and its correspondence to the normal distribution, the benchmark for statistical methods” (Kachkar, 2016). In this study, normality was conducted by looking at the values of skewness and kurtosis.

3.7 Content Validity and Pilot Study

Content validity and pilot study of the questionnaire was done. Content validity refers to “the extent to which the items on a test are fairly representative of the entire domain the test seeks to measure” (Salkind, 2010). Content validity is achieved by carefully defining the research topic, the scales, and the items used (Kachkar, 2016). Another way to check content validity is a consultation with experts and seek their opinions (Kachkar, 2016). In this study, content validity was done by consulting with the thesis supervisor about the questionnaire, and corrections were made as suggested by the supervisor. After changes were made as suggested by the supervisor pilot test of 20 respondents was done. The respondents were tasked with identifying any problem with the content and the wording. Reliability of the pilot test was conducted and was found to be 0.70 Cronbach alpha and Cronbach alpha above 0.070 is

considered reliable. Buaphiban (2015) suggests that there is no exact alpha for accepting scale, but 0.6 for exploratory research and explanatory research is generally accepted.

3.8 Ethical Concerns

According to Bell et al. (2018), there are several ethical considerations in a research study such as the participant should not be harmed, the dignity and the privacy of the participant should be preserved, and the full consent of the participant should be obtained. The study considered any harm that could affect the participant. At first, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and those who consented to fill the survey were given the survey. Another ethical concern was the collection of private and sensitive data from the respondent (Bell et al., 2018). The survey did not collect any sensitive or private information, such as emails or numbers of participants. Some demographic data, such as age and gender, were collected only for descriptive analysis. The origin of the respondents was collected, and the result was reported in aggregate to avoid individual harm.

Another ethical concern was the mentioning of any company in the survey. No individual airline was mentioned in the survey to avoid reputation damage. All the questions about airlines were general, and respondents were not asked to mention any airline.

3.9 Limitation of The Method Used

The method used was an online survey, which has several limitations. In an online survey, the respondent might answer the questions more than once, and it is difficult for the person surveying to see such mistakes. Another limitation of the method was the absence of the person conducting the study. The presence of the interviewer is vital for clarification of some points where respondents might find it difficult to understand. Another limitation of this survey is that undergraduate students might have filled the survey as a postgraduate student, which interferes with the objective of the study

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study obtained through the methodology described above. During the data collection, 261 responses were obtained, and 21 of them were deleted as they did not meet the criteria of the study. Two hundred forty responses remained after data cleaning and deletion. IBM SPSS software was used for data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach alpha, and it was satisfactory. The analysis consisted of descriptive analysis and factor analysis.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the descriptive analysis of the survey questions is done in this chapter. The tables and charts are used to present the frequencies and percentages.

4.1.1 Distribution Of Respondents By Demographics

The demographics collected in the study included gender, age, level of education, and the continent of origin. On gender 125 were male, and 115 were female, which in terms of percentage is equivalent to 52.1 % and 47.9, respectively. Figure 5 shows a bar chart of gender.

Table 4. 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age, Gender, Education, and Continents

Demographic Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (Research sample (n = 240))
Age		
20-22	7	2.9
23-26	124	51.7
27-30	92	38.3
31-33	17	7.1
Gender		
Male	125	52.1
Female	115	47.9
Education		
Masters	183	76.3
PhD	57	23.8
Continents		
Africa	154	64.2
Europe	20	8.3
Asia	60	25
North America	3	1.2
South America	3	1.2
Australia	0	0
Antarctica	0	0

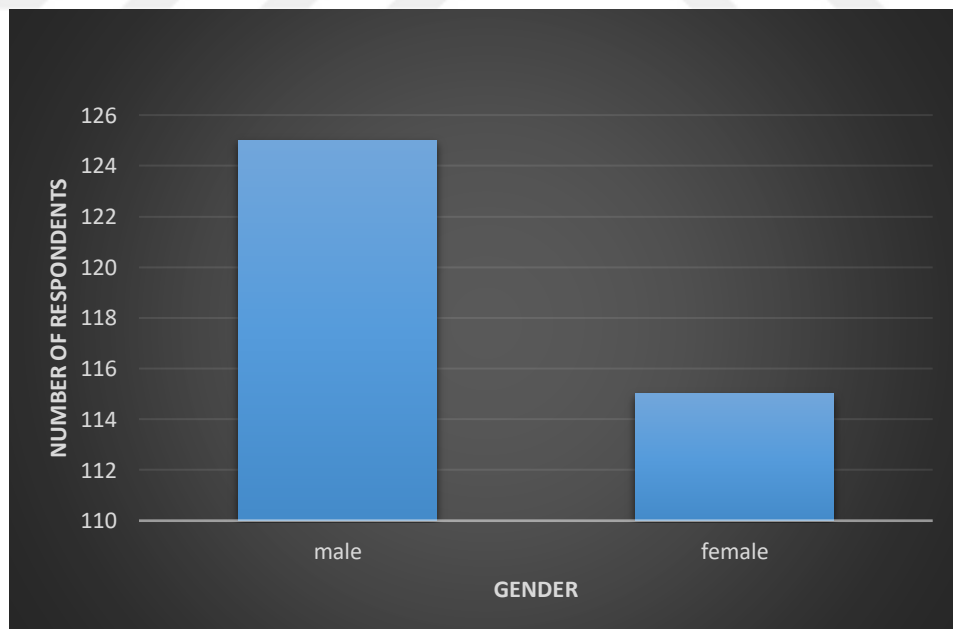


Figure 4. 1: Gender of the respondents

On the education level, 183 of the respondents were pursuing Masters, and 57 of 240 were pursuing a Ph.D. Figure 4.2 below shows a pie chart of the level of education of the respondents.

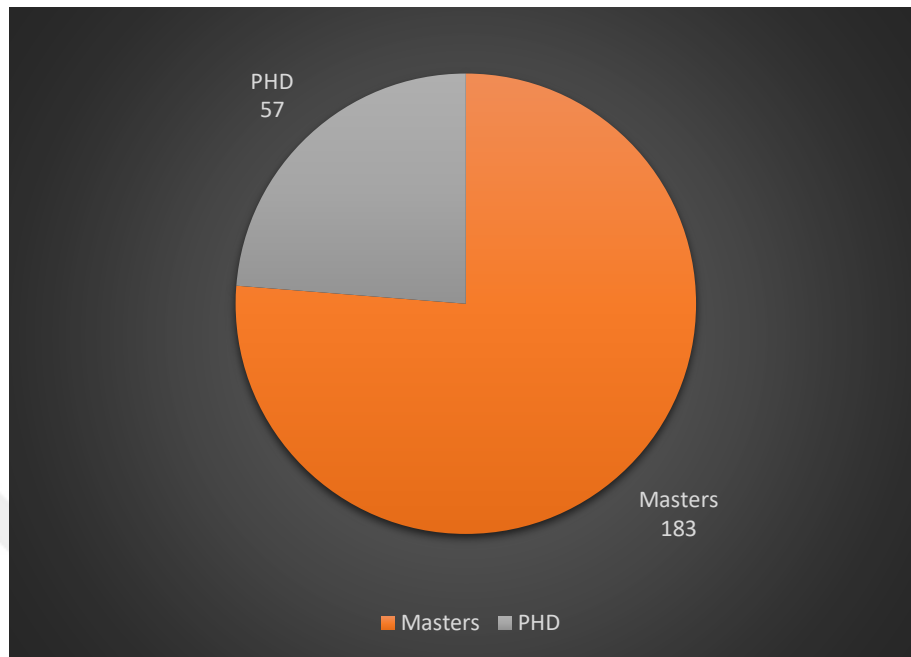


Figure 4. 2: Level of Education

A question asking the students about their continent of origin was included in the survey. 65 % of the students were from Africa, 25% from Asia, and 8% from Europe. Figure 4.3 shows a pie chart of the origin of the students.

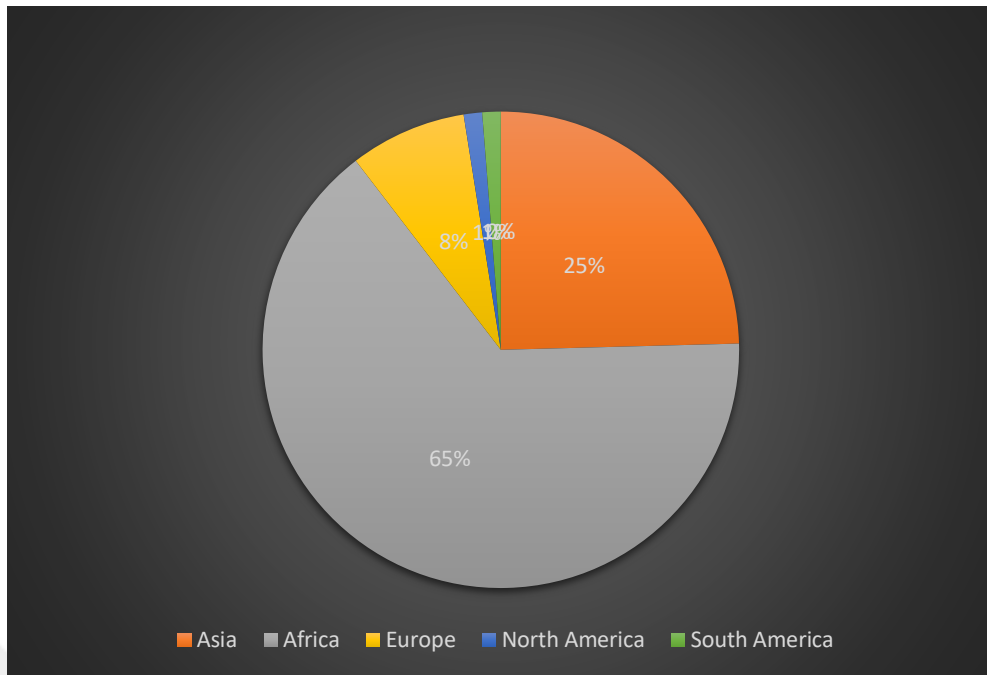


Figure 4. 3: Continent Of Origin Of The Students

To answer one of the research questions about whether students can represent a distinct segment for airlines. The students were asked how often they travel back to their country, and this helps to measure how viable the segment is before airlines target it. Thirty-nine percent of the students said they travel back to their countries once in a year, 29 percent said they travel back to their countries twice in a year, 23 percent said they travel back to their countries once in two years and only 9 percent. Figure 4.4 shows a pie chart of how many times students travel back to their countries.

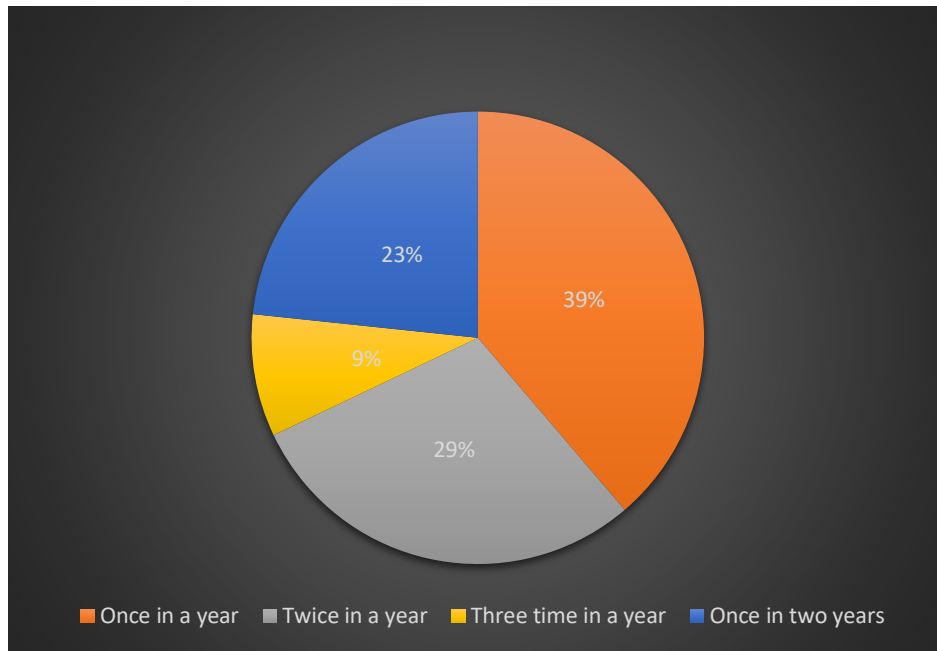


Figure 4. 4: How Many Times Students Travel Back To Their Countries

4.1.3 Distribution Of Factors That Influence The Choice Of Airline

The factors that influence passenger’s choice of airline used in the survey were price, service quality, flight availability, airline safety, and airport of origin.

4.1.3.1 Price

Price is an important factor in airline choice. The survey divided the price into the ticket price, overweigh baggage fee, and baggage allowance. The students were asked how important ticket price is when choosing airlines. Out of 240 respondents 126 respondent said price is very important,74 respondents said price is somehow important, and 30 respondents said price is important. Students were influenced by overweight fees and baggage allowance when choosing airlines. Figure 4.5 below shows how important students considered ticket price when choosing airlines. Table 2 below shows the number of students influenced by price and those who are not by price when choosing an airline.

As the results have shown ticket prices, the overweight baggage fee is considered important by the respondents. This study is in line with previous studies such as Sokolovskyy (2012),Atalık & Özel (2007) and Fourie & Lubbe (2006) which found ticket price to be an important factor in airline choice. Students are price-sensitive, as

shown by the result, where 97 percent of them said price is very important and influential in airline selection. This is because students lack income and budget to make their purchases without considering the person who is paying the ticket. Henderson (2016) found that students want to minimize the cost of flight in order to save money for their parents or guardian. Other important factors were baggage allowance and the fee of overweight, which students considered very important in choosing an airline. This is also in agreement with a previous study by Henderson (2016) which found students considered baggage allowance because they are going for a long holiday, not like leisure or business segment. The fee of overweight is also important as students might want to carry more baggage, including gifts for their families.

In a nutshell, the study, just like the previous studies on a similar topic, found that price is very important in choosing airlines.

Table 4. 2: Percentage Of Students Who Were Influenced By Ticket Price

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	234	97.5	97.5	97.5
	no	6	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

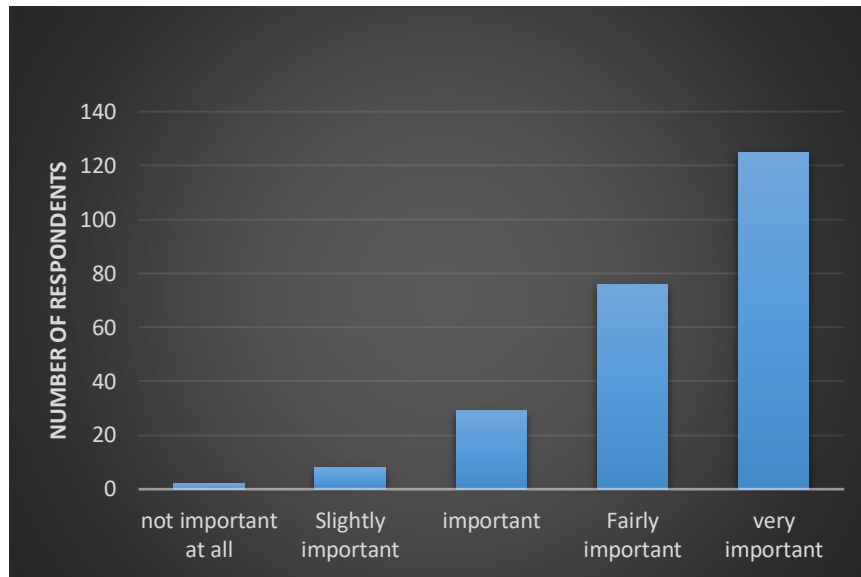


Figure 4. 5: How important is ticket price?

4.1.3.2 Service Quality

Another important factor was service quality which comprised of seat space, in-flight entertainment, meals, and staff behavior. All four categories were considered as important when choosing an airline and the breakdown of the responses of the student's meal services and in-flight entertainment. In the case of meal services in the flight, 140 students said it is very important, 61, important, 30 important, 6 slightly important, and 3 not important at all. Table 1.3 and Table 1. 4 the breakdown of meal services and in-flight entertainment, respectively.

As the results in table 4.3 show, meal services on the flight were very important in choosing an airline. Aksoy et al. (2003) and Henderson (2016) studies are also consistent with this study. Henderson (2016) found that students consider meal services important in long haul flights. As most of the students were far countries where they take more hours to reach it is understandable why meal services in flights were important to them.

The second factor under service quality was seat space and legroom. In some studies such as Henderson (2016) seat space and legroom were named as comfort in flight while others treated seat pace and legroom independently. However, this study treated seat space and legroom as one variable. According to the result of the study on 27 % of the respondents considered seat space and legroom as important, and this could be

that different segments value comfort in different ways, as suggested by (Fourie & Lubbe, 2006). For example, business class and economic class do not value comfort in the same, and students fall under the later.

The third factor under service quality was in-flight entertainment. As shown in table 4.4, flight entertainment was after meal services in terms of influence and importance. Considering that the students flights are long haul flights, that is the reason why a significant number of them consider flight entertain as important. Airlines that operate on long haul routes have tablets where passengers can watch movies. A recent trend in airlines is onboard WIFI, where passengers can access the internet while in the air with a certain, although some airlines do not charge any fee.

As indicated by the results of the three service qualities, meal service in flight was very important followed by in-flight entertainment and seat space, and legroom was the last in terms of importance and influence when choosing an airline.

Table 4.3: Percentage Of How Important Meal Services Are To The Respondents

		Meal services			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important at all	3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	slightly important	6	2.5	2.5	3.8
	important	30	12.5	12.5	16.3
	fairly important	61	25.4	25.4	41.7
	very important	140	58.3	58.3	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. 4: Percentage Of How Important In-Flight Entertainment

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important at all	6	2.5	2.5	2.5
	slightly important	16	6.7	6.7	9.2
	important	41	17.1	17.1	26.3
	fairly important	77	32.1	32.1	58.3
	very important	100	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked how important is staff behavior when choosing an airline. This was asked considering every one of the students traveled before and had contact with the people of the airline.30.8% said it is very important,30.8% somewhat important, 19.2 percent important,13.8 percent slightly important, and not important at all. Table 4.5 shows the percentage and frequencies of how the respondent considered staff behavior.

Table 4. 5: How Important Staff Behavior Is To The Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important at all	13	5.4	5.4	5.4
	slightly important	33	13.8	13.8	19.2
	important	46	19.2	19.2	38.3
	fairly important	74	30.8	30.8	69.2
	very important	74	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

4.1.3.3 Flight Availability

Flight availability was another factor that was asked, and it comprised of non-stop flight, convenient flight schedule, and on-time departure and arrival. Convenient flight schedule and on-time departure and arrival were considered very important by the students while non-stop flight was not that very important or influential. Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 shows the breakdown of convenient flight and on-time departure and arrival, respectively.

The convenient flight schedule was the first variable under the flight availability category. The convenient flight was the most important or influential factor in this category. As shown in table 4.6 and 4.7 convenient flight schedule had 147 respondents who said it very important and has the highest mean in this category. Flight schedule comprises the date, time of the flight. The time of flight influence passenger's choice of the airline as morning or evening. Just like previous studies Sokolovskyy (2012) and Henderson (2016) convenient flight schedule was found to important as an influential factor.

On-time departure and arrival were the second most important factor in flight availability category. Any flight that goes beyond fifteen minutes after its scheduled arrival or departure is considered as delayed flight(Deshpande & Arıkan, 2012). On-time arrival and departure are important as any delay can make passengers who have connecting flights to miss their next flight. More 60% of the participant of the study said on-time arrival and departure is very important in airline selection. The study is consistent with previous studies such as Sokolovskyy (2012), Deshpande & Arıkan (2012) and Ringle et al. (2011), which found on-time departure and arrival to be an important factor in airline selection.

Non-stop flights were also important according to the results. 30% of the respondents said non-stop flights are very important or influential in terms of choosing airlines. Considering the price, non-stop flights are expensive and the availability of only one airline that can offer direct flight according to the freedom of the air. The other percentage of were either neutral or did not consider non-stop flight as very important, and this could be the fact that Turkey is in the middle of Asian and African countries where most of the respondents came.

Table 4.6: How Important Convenient Flight Schedule Is For The Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important at all	2	.8	.8	.8
	slightly important	5	2.1	2.1	2.9
	important	15	6.3	6.3	9.2
	fairly important	71	29.6	29.6	38.8
	very important	147	61.3	61.3	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. 7: On-Time Departure And Arrival

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	not important at all	3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	slightly important	7	2.9	2.9	4.2
	important	26	10.8	10.8	15.0
	fairly important	51	21.3	21.3	36.3
	very important	153	63.7	63.7	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

4.1.3.4 Airline Safety

Questions 14 and 15 were about the safety of the airline. Question 14 asked students whether airline safety was important when selecting an airline, and 90% of the students said yes, and 10% no. Question 15 asked the students to what extent airline safety is important. The results were as follows 52% said very important, 17% somehow import,20% important, 7% slightly important, and 2% not important. Figure 10 below shows how important airline safety is to the respondents.

As the results show in figure 10 this study is in support of previous studies such Greve & Gaba (2019),Golbe (1986),Valkenburcht (2013) and Ringle et al.(2011) that found airline safety to be an important factor. Henderson found that parents play a role in selecting safe airline and students before selecting an airline; they check the safety

record of safety of the airline such as hijacking, accidents. The result of this study might be influenced by recent plane crashes such as 737 Max 800 operated by Ethiopian airlines that crashed a few minutes after take-off. However, the result of the accident blamed the manufacture of the aircraft. In support of the airline accident statement is also Henderson (2016) found that the Malaysian airline that crashed in 2017 influenced the choice of international students in New Zealand. Safety became very paramount after the 2001 terrorist attack in the USA. Both airlines and airports heavily invest in safety because it is an important element to improve the reputation of the airline. Although it is not clear from the study whether students will consider safety more important than price. Henderson, (2016) found that international students in New Zealand said that they will avoid Asian airlines thinking that those airlines do not prioritize airline safety.

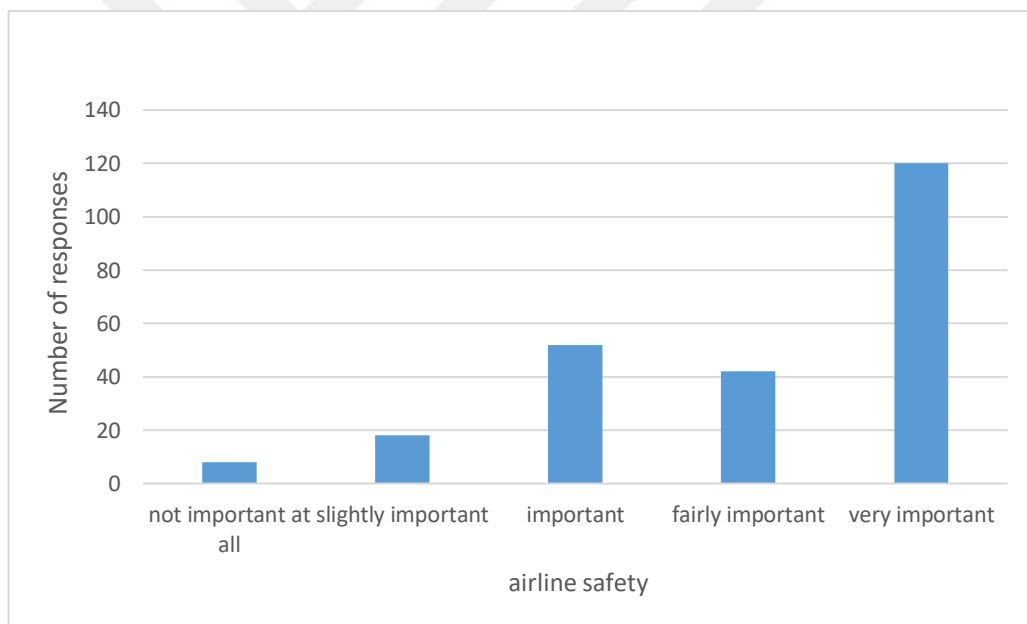


Figure 4. 6: How important is airline safety?

4.1.3.5 Airport of Origin

The airport of origin was considered a factor that influences passengers to choose specific airlines, especially cities, with more international airports. Students were asked whether the airport of origin influences their choice of airline and which airport in Istanbul do they prefer to use when flying. Out of 240 respondents, 172 students

said the airport of origin influences their choice of the airline, while 68 students said it does not influence their choice. On the question of which airport in Istanbul they prefer to use when flying 197 out of 240 said they prefer Istanbul airport and 43 students said they prefer Sabiha Gokcen airport.

This study included the impact of the airport of origin on airline selection. As shown in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, the students were influenced by the airport of origin when selecting airlines. Several factors influence the choice of a specific airport, such as the city transport, the frequency of flights in each airport, and times of the flights and time taken from the airport to the city(Loo, 2008). Most of the students preferred Istanbul Airport than Sabiha Gokcen airport, and this is because most of the international airlines operate in Istanbul airport, and the transport to the airport is more accessible compared to Sabiha Gokcen Airport.

Table 4.8: Airport Of Origin

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	68	28.3	28.3	28.3
	yes	172	71.7	71.7	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.9: The Preferred Airport In Istanbul By The Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Istanbul Airport	197	82.1	82.1	82.1
	Sabiha Gokcen	43	17.9	17.9	100.0
	Total	240	100.0	100.0	

4.1.3.6 Point Of Purchase Of Airline Ticket

Question 18 of the survey was asking students where do they purchase from the airline ticket. The options available were the airline's website, travel agency, online travel agencies like Skyscanner, and at the airport. 106 out of the 240 respondents said they purchase an airline ticket from the airline's website, 87 of 240 respondents said they purchase from online travel agencies, 46 of 240 purchase from the travel agency, and no students purchase at the airport. Figure 4.7 below shows where students purchase their tickets.

The channel of distribution is an important element in the marketing mix (Shaw, 2007). The distribution channels of airlines have evolved from airline offices to travel agencies to airline websites. In today's airline industry, there are many ways passenger can purchase their tickets such as airline websites, travel agencies, third-party websites such as sky scanner and TripAdvisor, and they can also purchase from airline offices in the airport. Henderson (2016) suggest that students use third-party websites in order to compare the prices of different airlines. Some of these students later purchase from the airline website because they do not want to be affiliated with third parties. Students who purchased tickets from the airline's website cited the trouble of cancelation and how it is easier to call the airline rather than those third parties. Henderson found that students do not like travel agencies because they charge commission making the ticket price expensive.

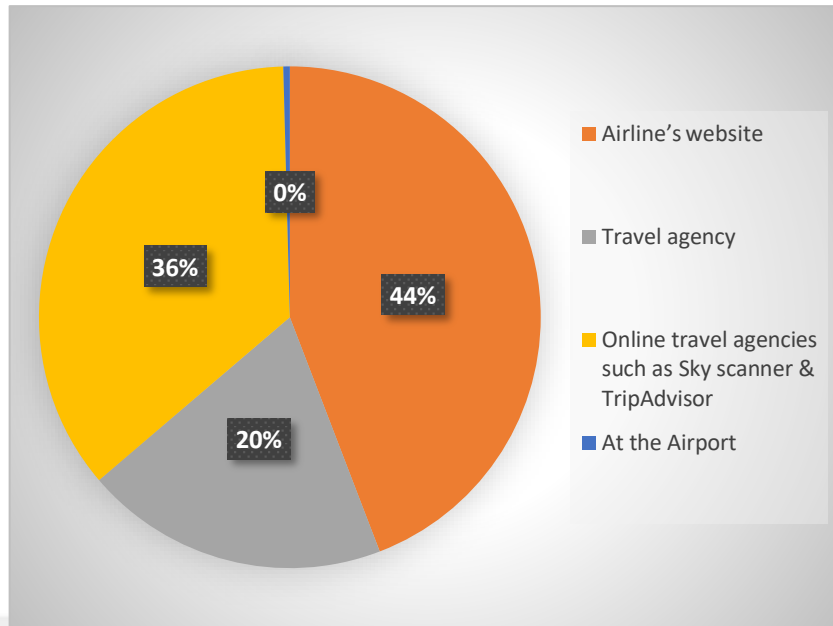


Figure 4. 7: The Place Of Purchase Of Airline Tickets

4.1.3.7 Loyalty

In the section of loyalty, students were asked two questions which were whether they loyal and to what extent are loyal to their preferred airline. 125 out of 240 respondents were loyal, and 115 out of 240 responds were not loyal to any airline. Also, the question about the extent of their loyalty, 64 out of 240 were neutral, 59 out 240 were loyal, 56 out 240 were not loyal at all, 35 out of 240 were not very loyal, and 26 out of 240 were very loyal. Figure 4.8 shows the breakdown of the demographics of loyal responses. Loyalty in the airline industry

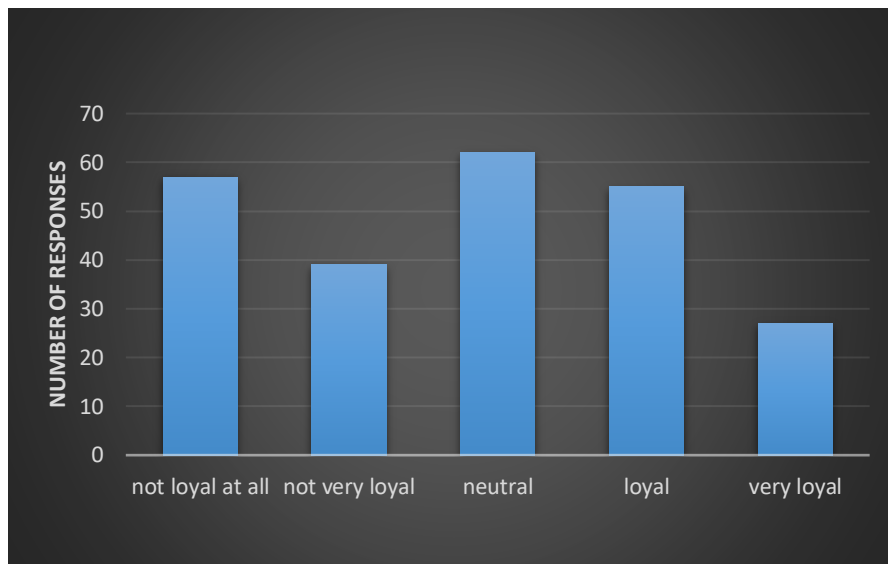


Figure 4.8: How loyal are you?

4.2 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is multivariate statistical procedures widely used in researches across different disciplines such as psychology, education, consumer behavior, public health (Brown, 2015). The main aim of factor analysis is to check whether the number of latent variables or factors that account for variation and covariation among indicators (Brown, 2015). Factor analysis comprises explanatory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Although both EFA and CFA's aim is to show the relationship among a group of indicators, they differ in some aspects, such as prior specification and restriction on the model (Brown, 2015). In CFA, the researcher specifies the number of factors and factor loading patterns. Before conducting factor analysis, KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity was conducted to test sample adequacy and correlation within variables. As a rule of thumb, KMO should be greater than 0.5 for factor analysis to be computed. As shown in Table 5 below, the result of KMO is greater than 0.5, meaning factor analysis can be conducted. In this study, CFA was used as the item was based on existing items. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, followed by varimax rotation. Items with loading factor less than 0.4 were suppressed.

Table 4. 10 KMO and Barlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.709
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	775.117
	df	78
	Sig.	.000

Table 4.11: Factor Analysis Results

	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
ticket price			.705	
overweight fee			.740	
discount offered	.603			
baggage allowance	.635			
seat space and legroom		.757		
in-flight entertainment	.581		-.477	
meal services in flight	.679			
staff behavior		.816		
non-stop		.771		
convenient schedule	.793			
on time departure and arrival	.735			
Extent of loyalty				.880
Airline safety			.594	.568

As shown in Table 4.11 above, some variables occurred in more than one factor. In such cases, the variable is considered in the factor where it has a high loading factor. Loyalty also appeared in one factor alone. As a result, loyalty was removed, and factor analysis was repeated, as shown in Table 4.12 below. At first, it was four factors, and now it has been reduced to three factors, with 12 items accounting for 58% of the variance. Table 4.12 below shows the reduced factor analysis after the deletion of loyalty.

Table 4.12: Factor Analysis (Second Time)

	Factors		
	1	2	3
Ticket price			.624
Overweight fee			.687
discount	.613		
baggage allowance	.644		
seat space and legroom		.761	
in-flight entertainment	.568		-.526
meal services	.673		
staff behavior		.800	
non-stop		.776	
convenient schedule	.793		
on time departure and arrival	.731		
safety			.733
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.			

As shown in Table 4.12, the first factor comprised of discount, baggage allowance, in-flight entertainment, meal services convenient schedule, and on-time departure and arrival. The first factor was named as service quality and time, and it had Cronbach alpha of 0. 753. The second factor comprised of non-stop flight, seat space and legroom, and staff behavior. This factor was named in-flight services, and it had a Cronbach alpha of 0. 718. The third factor comprised of ticket prices, overweight fees, and safety. This factor was named as price and safety, and it had Cronbach alpha of 0.452.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

As the number of international students continues to increase, it benefits the host country, the universities, and the travel industry. This study focuses on airlines and the international student market. The airline industry needs to understand this market in order to better cater to international students. This study addresses several issues related to international postgraduate students in Turkey more specifically to understand what factors influence international postgraduate students to choose a specific airline, to explore if they represent any different segment from leisure and business segments, to examine if students are loyal customers and finally to highlight which point of purchase students use to purchase their tickets. Data analysis has been conducted to test the research questions. From the analysis, several factors came out to be influential, although the degree of influence varied among those factors.

The results indicate that many airline characteristics influence international postgraduate students. These characteristics have a different degree of influence on the students' choice of airline. Price, safety, and the airport of origin were the most influential factors. Other factors such as meal services and in-flight entertainment were also important, while factors such as staff behavior and non-stop flight had less influence on the choice of the students.

The study found that international postgraduate students had similar preferences like that of business or leisure segments. Looking at the results of the study, it is difficult to say that international postgraduate students can represent a different segment for airlines. However, airlines can develop programs to attract students, such as offering discounts which can make students to travel more than once in a year to their countries.

The study also found that international postgraduate students are not very loyal. Thirty percent of the respondents said they are loyal customers to a specific airline. This study is consistent with previous studies on this subject that found students are not loyal

customers. Students are price sensitive and choose the cheapest flight to their destination.

Answering the fourth research question, the question was about where students purchase from their airline tickets when flying. There were many places students could purchase from their tickets. From the analysis, more than 40 percent of the students purchased their airline tickets from the airline's website, 36 percent from online travel agency websites, 20 percent from travel agencies and no one purchased a ticket at the airport. These findings are important for airlines as it minimizes their cost of distribution channels. It encourages airlines to shift from traditional travel agencies and put more effort into the airline's website and other online platforms.

In a nutshell, international postgraduate students are influenced by price, safety, meal services and inflight entertainment, the airport of origin, and on-time departure and arrival when choosing an airline. Also, the international postgraduate students in Turkey cannot represent a specific segment for airlines as they do not have different preferences from the leisure segment. Most of the International postgraduate students in Turkey purchase their tickets from an online platform such as the airline's website.

5.1 Recommendation

The study found that the students were influenced by price, safety, and airport of origin, although other factors such as meals, in-flight were also important; these are available in all long-haul flights. From these findings, airlines should do price differentiation where students are offered a less cheap flight than leisure customers. Through this strategy, students are likely to remain loyal to the airline. Another important point is the distribution of airline tickets. Most of the students purchased tickets from airline websites or other online distributors such as sky scanner. It is recommended that airlines invest more in online distribution and shift from old travel agencies. Encouraging passengers to buy from the airline's website is cost-efficient for airlines.

5.2 Limitations

The first limitation is the use of an online survey used. Generally, people are not responsive to online surveys. Some people will not answer online surveys, so the presence of the researcher would have made more responses to be collected.

The second limitation is the demographic of the students, as most of them were mainly from two continents. Students were told to share with friends, and it seems that produced respondents predominantly from Africa and Asia.

5.3 Recommendations for Future studies

This study provides several recommendations for future studies. The first recommendation is choosing a larger sample size that is fit for generalization. Smaller sample sizes are not fit for generalization as they do not capture the true population. The second recommendation is to design a survey with more items such as brand image, time of the flight. The third recommendation is to use a mixed model of collecting data such as interviews and surveys, as this will produce better results than surveys alone. The fourth recommendation is including other groups that are not students and compare their results.

5.4 Implications

This part discusses the implication of the findings for airlines operating between Turkey and the country of origin of international students. The first finding of the study was that international students are price sensitive and airlines can approach this by giving discounts or incentives to students as suggested by Mahlman, (2016) citing Skellage. When customers are price sensitive, they are not loyal and they switch companies depending on how much they charge. Airlines can also create partnership with universities as done by Delta airlines in the US(Writer, 2015).The second major finding of the study was safety of airlines. This finding call airline to improve their safety standards and be free from accidents. Henderson (2016) found that international

students in New Zealand did not choose Malaysian airlines after the accident and students considered safety before purchasing airline ticket.

The third major finding was the airport of origin in Istanbul when flying back to home country. The airport of origin has an impact on the choice of passengers. Cities with more than one international airport, passengers will choose airports based on the accessibility to the airport. Majority of the students choose Istanbul airport over Sabika gökçen due to availability of international airlines and accessibility. In this case, airline should strive to get a slot in Istanbul airport as it has more advantage than the other airport.

The study also found that international students can not represent a different segment for airlines and they should not be treated different from leisure customers. Airline marketers should assume students have same preferences with leisure customer and cater according to that category.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC

1. What is your gender?
 - FEMALE
 - MALE
2. Are you international postgraduate student?
 - YES
 - NO
3. what is your current level of education?
 - Masters
 - PHD
4. which continent are you from?
 - Africa
 - Asia
 - Europe
 - North America
 - South America
 - Australia
 - Antarctica
5. what age bracket do you fall into?
 - 20-22
 - 23-26
 - 27-30
 - 31-33
6. Have you personally purchased an airline ticket within the last 15 months?
 - Yes
 - No
7. how often do you travel back to your country?
 - Once in a year
 - Twice in a year
 - Three time in a year
 - Once in two years

8. Does the price of an airline ticket influence your choice of an airline?

- Yes
- No

9. How important is the ticket price when choosing an airline?

- Very important
- somewhat important
- important
- slightly important
- not important at all

11. Does service quality influence your choice of an airline?

- Yes
- No

12. how important are the following attributes when choosing an airline

	very important	fairly important	important	slightly important	Not important at all
Seat space and legroom					
in-flight entertainment					
meal services					
staff behavior					

13. how important are the following attributes in selecting airlines

	very important	fairly important	important	slightly important	Not important at all
non-stop flight					
convenient flight schedule					
On time departure and arrival					

14. Does the safety of airlines influence your choice of an airline?

- Yes
- No

15. To what extent is airline safety important when choosing an airline?

- very important
- fairly important
- important
- slightly important
- Not important at all

16. Does the airport of origin influence your choice of an airline?

- Yes
- No

17. which airport in Istanbul do you prefer to use when flying to your country?

- İstanbul Airport
- Sabika Gokcen

18. where do you usually purchase airline tickets?

- Airline's website
- Travel agency
- Online travel agencies such as Sky scanner & TripAdvisor
- At the airport

19. Are you a loyal customer of a specific airline?

- Yes
- No

20. If you are a loyal customer of a specific airline how loyal are you?

- Very loyal
- Loyal
- Neutral
- Not very loyal
- Not loyal at all

CURRICULUM VITAE

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From 2018 to present: pursuing Masters of Business Administration at Ibn Haldun university.

Between September 2013 to June 2017 studied Aviation management at University Turkish Aeronautical Association (THKU).

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