

Fly “With us”! Impact of Consumer-Brand Relationship on Consumer Engagement: An Empirical Investigation on Turkish Airline Instagram Pages



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Abstract

Leading consumers to engage with brand posts in social media has become one of essential branding strategies for airline industry. Linguistic characteristics of a social media message can also play an important role to increase consumer engagement (CE) level. This study investigates the effects of the uses of pronouns and “we” as a consumer-brand (c-b) relationship on CE with Turkish airline Instagram posts considering Social Presence Theory. Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis using least squares model are conducted to analyze 817 Instagram data. The findings indicate that the use of first-person singular, first-person plural, third-person singular, and second-person pronouns in Instagram posts increase CE. Also, the use of “we-biz” as c-b relationship affect both liking and commenting behavior of consumers.

Keywords: Consumer engagement, social media, airline, pronouns, linguistics

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“Bizimle” uçun! Tüketici-Marka İlişkisinin Tüketici Katılımına Etkisi: Türk Havayolu Instagram Sayfaları Üzerine Ampirik Bir Araştırma

Özet

Tüketicileri sosyal medyada marka içeriklerine yönelik katılıma teşvik etmek havayolu mar-kalama stratejileri için gerekli bir hal almıştır. Tüketici katılımını artırmada önemli role sahip bir diğer husus ise sosyal medya mesajlarının dil karakteristikleridir. Bu çalışma Sosyal Su-num Teorisi temelinde zamir kullanımının yanı sıra tüketici-marke ilişkisine atıfta bulunan yapılarıdaki “biz” zamirinin Türk havayolu Instagram mesajlarına dönük tüketici katılımı üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Çalışmada en küçük kareler yöntemini kullanan Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon ile 817 Instagram verisi analiz edilmiş olup bulgular birinci tekil, birinci çoğul, üçüncü tekil ve ikinci şahıs zamirlerinin katılımı artırdığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca “we-biz” zamirinin tüketici-marke ilişkisi bağlamında beğeni ve yorum davranışını tetiklediği de ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici katılımı, sosyal medya, havayolu, zamir, dilbilim

Introduction

Social media has become one of the most diffuse communication platforms of our age with the number of users that make up about half of the World population. Considering that these users spend most of their time online during the day (wearesocial, 2020), it can be thought that this environment is an important opportunity for marketing efforts for brands. Therefore, attracting attention of consumers towards social media contents of brands and encouraging them to interact with these contents has become a marketing problem that need to be solved carefully. Consumer interaction with the content can be expressed as consumer engagement (CE) in the literature and defined as “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with

a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships” (Brodie et al., 2011). CE in social media can be measured as the numerical equivalent of the interactive responses of users, such as following brand pages, commenting, liking, or sharing the published messages. In this respect, previous studies frequently use liking, commenting, and sharing behavior of users (de Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Schultz, 2017; Demmers et al., 2020) to predict CE.

Determining the factors that lead consumers to engage with the content will shed light on marketing efforts, such as advertising, promotion, and communication (Tsai and Men, 2013). In this direct, many scholars investigated the triggers of CE in social media (e.g., de Vries et al., 2012; Brodie et al., 2013; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Schultz, 2017; Demmers et al., 2020). Content types (e.g., informational, entertaining, promotional, social, or transactional), presentation (e.g., video, text, images) or interactivity (links) of messages stand out among the factors affecting CE (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Luarn et al., 2015; Tafesse, 2015). The verbal language used by brands in their messages is one of the factors that makes marketing communication possible and effective (Kayode, 2014). The stimuli of language and words are utilized in all areas of marketing and can affect attitudes (Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy, 1988; Mick, 1986; Schmitt et al., 1994).

Pronouns, which have an important place in daily language use for marketers, can contribute to the creation of a sincere atmosphere through communication (Bano and Shakir, 2015). Accordingly, brands frequently use personal pronouns (Chen et al., 2015) to express their relationships with consumers (Chen et al., 2015) and this situation can shape CE in social media (Cruz et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020).

To understand how such relationship exists in theory, Social Presence (Short et al., 1976) and Fournier’s (1998) Consumer-Brand (C-B) relationship phenomenon can be appropriate approaches in describing the problem. Social presence is a popular approach used to explain how individuals socially interact in online environment and it can be measured through analyzing interactive responses (Rourke et al., 2001; Lowenthal, 2010). Furthermore, C-B relationship is an appropriate paradigm that can be used to understand consumer relational behaviors with specific brands

(Dwivedi, 2015). To cultivate such relationship with consumers, brands can use personal pronouns which let them to be considered as real person and such realization can foster CE (Chen et al., 2015). In the service-intensive airline industry, social media plays a crucial role (Grančay, 2014) and pulling consumers to engage with airline’s content needs new strategies (Solem and Pedersen, 2016). In social media, CE also has a major impact on the loyalty and satisfaction of passengers (Hapsari et al., 2017). Hence, determining the impacts of post characteristics on CE is one of the issues to be considered by airline brands. However, only a limited number of studies have so far looked at the CE phenomenon (Leung et al., 2013; Thao et al., 2017; Menon et al., 2019; Sigurdsson et al., 2019). Furthermore, no study has been found in the literature that investigates the effect of pronouns used by airlines on CE in social media.

To address these research interest, this study examines the impacts of pronouns used by airline companies on CE, inspired by the suggestions of Labrecque et al. (2020) for future studies. Within the scope of this work, airline companies operating in Turkey were taken as sample. In the following sections of the study, theoretical background and research questions with the hypothesis development are presented. Then, method, model and findings of the study are given. Lastly, theoretical, and practical implications for airline industry are discussed and further research are provided.

Theoretical Background

Social Presence Theory

To understand the nature of individuals’ relationship in online society, this study adopts Social Presence theory to explain how airline brands build relationship with their target consumers using personal pronouns.

Social presence theory, first developed by Short et al. (1976), emphasizes that communication tools play an important role in determining people’s interactions. This theory is also one of the popular constructs that explain how society engages in adaptation to the online environment (Lowenthal, 2010).

The use of pronouns that mean people refer to each other in communication can also be effective on the density of social presence (Rourke et

al., 2001). Hence, pronoun usage in social media can positively impact on engagement and become an important factor for social presence (Men et al., 2018; Vohra, 2020). Furthermore, brand-related information published by firms on social media depending on the social presence can also have an impact on consumers brand awareness and engagement (Osei-Frimpong and McLean, 2018). Therefore, explaining the relationship between the use of pronouns in brand posts and CE from the perspective of this theory will be useful in understanding online consumer behavior.

Role of Language and Pronoun Usage in Marketing Communication

Using some specific words to satisfy consumers feelings that guide their brand choices is one of the ways marketers often prefer. In this sense, language is considered as a strategic tool in conveying the influence of the brand to the target consumers, and it can create brand interest, awareness, association, and attitude. Thus, the grammar that consumers have acquired during their childhood education can be strategically used by marketers in brand communication in terms of text structure and content (Lerman et al., 2018). At this point, the relationship of brands with consumers comes to the fore.

The Consumer-Brand (C-B) relationship is a phenomenon that emerges from the understanding of the life experiences of the society, and this understanding can be adopted by brands in establishing deep relationships with consumers (Fournier, 1998). Indeed, language is one of the ways that helps to build strong relationships with consumers in marketing communication (Sela et al., 2012). Language used in brand-consumer communication is indispensable for advertising, personal selling, public relations, service interaction, traditional, and digital media and during the use of this language, pronouns can be frequently placed in brand messages (Cruz and Leonhardt, 2016). For example, the use of first-person plural pronoun “we” in marketing communication can develop close relationships with consumers (Sela et al., 2012). In his review, Stephen (2016) argue that linguistic style leads online consumer interaction behavior. Also, Deng et al. (2020) found that brand posts’ linguistic styles on social media influence consumer engagement.

Pronouns in Turkish language are expressed by Kocasavaş (1995) as words that personally represent the addressed entities. Pronouns in Turkish grammar are classified as first person “ben”, second person “sen”, third person “o” singular and first person “biz”, second person “siz”, third person “onlar” plural. In addition, in her study, she stated that Turkish pronouns can take genitive (“ben-im”, “sen-in”, “o-nun”, “biz-im”, “siz-in”, “onlar-ın”), accusative (“ben-i”, “sen-i”, “o-nu”, “biz-i”, “siz-i”, “onlar-ı”), and dative (“ben-a”, “sen-a”, “o-na”, “biz-e”, “siz-e”, “onlar-a”) suffixes. Behind these core features, pronouns can have locative (e.g., “ben-de”, “sen-de”, “biz-de”, “onlar-da”) and ablative (e.g., “ben-den”, “sen-den”, “biz-den”) suffixes (Tursinova, 2017).

Although there is no study investigating pronoun usage in C-B relationship, limited number of works in the literature have focused on this issue. For example, Chen et al. (2015) analyzed the use of pronouns from customer perspective and found that the first-person pronouns are frequently used in messages sent to global brands. Cruz et al. (2017) applied one-factor ANCOVA analysis and determined that the second person pronouns are used at a high level by brands on Facebook and that they provide high level of engagement as likes, shares and comments. Barcelos et al. (2018) revealed that the use of first-person singular and plural pronouns by brands on Facebook increase hedonic value of consumers. In another study, WeChat was used as data source and the uses of the first-person pronouns in warm images advertisings, and the third-person pronouns in competent image advertisings have positive impacts on liking behavior of consumers (Chang et al., 2019). Labrecque et al. (2020), who made a comprehensive study on pronoun usage in brand communication, analyzed the Facebook data of Interbrand’s Top-100 Global Brands with Multivariate Poisson Model and found that the use of pronouns has various effects on CE. Therefore, investigating the effect of pronoun usage of brands in a specific sector and language on CE can extend the literature. Hence, based on the theories and role of language in CE, the following RQs can be drawn as follows:

RQ1: What types of pronouns are used in Turkish airline companies Instagram posts?

RQ2: What are the effects of the uses of pronouns by Turkish airline companies on CE?

RQ3: What is the effect of the use of “we” as a c-b relationship by Turkish airline companies on CE?

The hypotheses developed for the study in the light of these research questions can be listed as follows:

H1: The use of first-person singular pronouns (“I-ben”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

H2: The use of first-person plural pronouns (“we-biz”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

H3: The use of second-person pronouns (“you-thou-sen-siz”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

H4: The use of third person singular pronouns (“he/she-o”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

H5: The use of third-person plural pronouns (“they-onlar”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

H6: The use of (“with us-bizimle”) addressing C-B relationship by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE (likes and comments).

Method

Data

The present study analyzes data of 817 Instagram posts (1 January-31 December 2019) of 6 Turkish airline companies official brand pages. The data was collected with Instagreader, an extension available for Google Sheets that provide different metrics, on 22 January 2020.

The metrics data include extract date, airline account names, number of likes and comments for each post. StatPlus¹ statistical program was used for the regression analysis. The detailed procedure of data extraction, collection, and analysis stages are shown in Fig. 1.

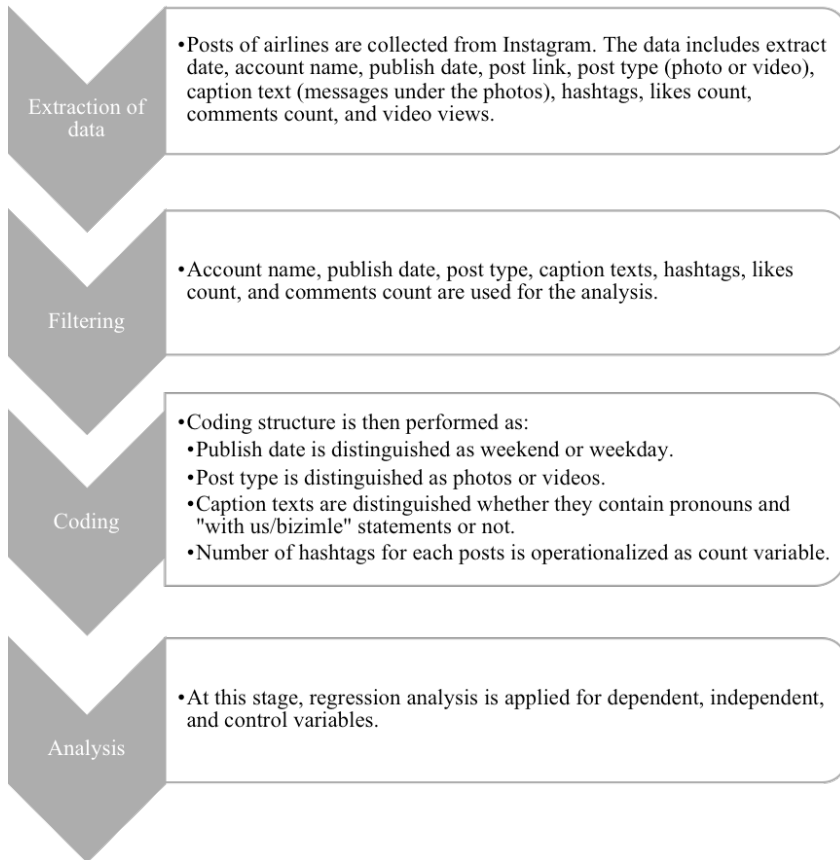


Fig. 1. The overall process of the research methodology

¹ StatPlus:mac, AnalystSoft Inc. - statistical analysis program for macOS. Version v7. See <https://www.analystsoft.com/en/>

Variables

Dependent Variables

Previous studies use number of likes and comments to determine CE (e.g., de Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Schultz, 2017; Menon et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020). Thus, this study estimates number of likes and comments as dependent variables.

Independent Variables

Prior research suggests that there is an association between the use of pronouns in brand posts and consumer engagement (Cruz et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020). Hence, the present study uses Turkish (“ben”, “sen”, “o”, “biz”, “siz”, “onlar”) and English (“I”, “you”, “he/she”, “we-us”, “they”) pronouns as independent variables. Besides, in their future directions, Labrecque et al. (2020) suggest that investigating the impact of “we” as a C-B relationship on CE extends the literature in various industries. Therefore, this study also operationalizes Turkish (“biz”) and English (“we”) pronouns addressing C-B relationship as independent variable. In table 1, English equivalents of Turkish pronouns are represented.

Table 1. Turkish and its equivalents in English language

Turkish pronouns	Ben	Sen	O	Biz	Siz	Onlar
English pronouns	I	Thou	He/She	We/us	You	They

Control Variables

Lim et al. (2015) investigated the behavior of users in social media and found that Instagram activities peak during weekends. Previous studies included weekend activities of consumers as a control variable (e.g., de Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Menon et al., 2019). Although prior work revealed that the weekend variable does not have a significant effect on CE (de Vries et al., 2012; Menon et al., 2019), Cvi-

jikj and Michahelles (2013) found that messages sent on weekends can affect liking and commenting behavior of consumers. Thus, one of the controlling variables of the research is weekend.

Hashtags help users find content like brand messages and can interactively influence liking and commenting behavior of consumers (Schultz, 2017). According to the study of Labrecque et al. (2020) hashtags may have positively effect on consumer engagement (Labrecque et al., 2020). Therefore, second controlling variable of this study is the use of hashtag by Turkish airline companies on Instagram.

Another variable affecting CE is vividness of posts that enables information to appeal to different senses with messages including images and videos and it can significantly be related to CE (e.g., de Vries et al., 2012; Schultz, 2017; Menon et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020). Brands can share images or videos attached to the posts on Instagram. Hence, this study considers images as a control variable. In addition, swipe right photos can indicate vividness that may exhibit a relation to CE and these albums included in airline brand posts are also placed among control variables.

Coding Structure

Pronouns, (“we-biz”) as a C-B relationship, hashtags, and weekend messages used by Turkish airline brands in their Instagram posts are found by searching in the texts, coded as dummy variable (presence vs absence) and assigned to the relevant classes. Next, each message is separately examined and pronouns pointing to animals and objects are omitted from coding. Since Turkish airline companies publish their posts in different languages, personal pronouns are determined by considering both Turkish and English texts. Pronouns are coded as first-person singular “I-ben”, first-person plural “we-biz”, second person “you-thou-sen-siz”, third-person singular “he/she-o”, and third-person plural “they-onlar”. When examining data set, it was observed that some airline companies used pronouns in hashtags. Thus, the position of hashtag in the text are considered and only those that are compatible with the meaning of the sentence are included in the coding scheme.

Descriptives

The Instagram posts were collected from 6 airlines' official accounts in the sample: Turkish Airlines, AnadoluJet, Pegasus Airlines, Onur Air, Corendon Airlines, and Sun Express. Table 2 represents a data overview.

Table 2. Overview of data

Brand	N. of Shares	Likes	Comments
Turkish Airlines	166	3888585	59338
Anadolu Jet	193	183590	7862
Pegasus Airlines	147	1604803	83927
Onur Air	141	113617	771
Corendon	67	26180	375
Sun Express	103	47178	950
Total	817	5863953	153223

Table 3 gives details about the use of pronouns (see RQ1), photos, and hashtags. Descriptive statistics show that airlines mostly use the second-person pronouns (you-thou-sen-siz) (N=292, 35.74%). These are followed by the first-person plural (“we-biz”) (N=244, 29.87%), first-person singular (“I-ben”) (N=43, 5.26%), third-person plural (“they-onlar”) (N=18, 2.2%), and third-person singular (he/she-o) (N=15, 1.84%) pronouns. Although prior research found that the use of first-person (Chen et al., 2015) or the second-person pronouns (Cruz et al., 2017; Labrecque et al., 2020) by brands operating in various industries, the results need to be evaluated specific to Turkish airline sector.

The amount of image usage in airline Instagram posts is high (N=610, 74.66), and some these are swipe-right photos (N=71, 8.69%). Hashtags are used extensively (N=3089). Also, a small portion of airline posts are placed on weekends (N=129, 15.79%).

Looking at the engagement scores, variance of the number of likes (M=7,177.42, Variance=633,681,683.5) and comments (M=187.54, Variance=1,019, 272.19) exceeds the means which deal with the over-dispersion (Cameron and Trivedi, 2005; Menon et al., 2019).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables

Variables		Total	
		N	Percent (%)
Independent	First person singular: “I-ben”	43	5.26
	Second person: “you-thou-sen-siz”	292	35.74
	Third person singular: “he/she-o”	15	1.84
	First person plural: “we-biz”	244	29.87
	Third person plural: “they-onlar”	18	2.20
	C-B relationship: “with us-together-birlikte-bizimle”	65	7.96
Control	Photos	610	74.66
	Weekend	129	15.79
	Swipe-right photos	71	8.69
	Hashtag	658	80.54
	Sum	SD	Variance
Likes	5,863,953	25,173.03	633,681,683.5
Comments	153,223	1,009.59	1,019,272.19

Model Development

This study analyzes the effect of pronoun usage on CE in Turkish airline industry based on the literature review, theoretical framework, and suggestions of Labrecque et al. (2020) for further research. Addressing the research questions of the study, the empirical model is analyzed with multiple regression analysis using least squares (Montgomery et al., 2021). Since the predictive variables in the model are count data that follow as Poisson distribution (Cameron and Trivedi, 2005; Menon et al., 2019), the natural logarithm of dependent variables (likes and comments) is taken for the analysis. The following model is represented in Eq. 1.

$$y_{ij} = a + \exp(\beta_i fps_j + \beta_i sp_j + \beta_i tps_j + \beta_i fpp_j + \beta_i tpp_j + \beta_i cb_j + \beta_i photo_j + \beta_i swipe_j + \beta_i week_j + \beta_i hashtag_j + \varepsilon_{ij}) \quad (1)$$

, where represents dependent variables (likes and comments i) for each brand post j , fps_j is dummy variable representing that Instagram posts include first person singular pronouns “I-ben” or not, sp_j is dummy variable of second person pronouns “you-thou-sen-siz”, tps_j is dummy variable denoting that the brand post include third person singular pronouns “he/she-o”, fpp_j is dummy variable of first person plural pronouns “we-biz”, tpj_j is dummy variable representing whether the post include third person plural pronouns “they-onlar”, cb_j is dummy variables denoting that the brand post include “with us/you, together, bizimle, birlikte” representing C-B relationship, $photo_j$ is dummy variable indicating whether the post is uploaded with a photograph, $swipe_j$ is dummy variable denoting that the brand post j include swipe-right photos, $week_j$ is dummy variable for a brand post j published on weekend, $hashtag_j$ is dummy variable for hashtag used in a brand post j , and ϵ_{ij} represents normally distributed error terms. After establishing the regression model, the first task is to investigate the multicollinearity between independent variables (Alin, 2010). In this respect, Pearson correlations of the variables are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficients of independent variables

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
I-Ben	1									
Thou-Sen-You-Siz	.144	1								
He/She-O	.131	.050	1							
We-Biz	.062	.200	.050	1						
They-Onlar	.040	.027	-.020	.175	1					
C-B relationship	.011	.083	.027	.401	-.013	1				
Photo	.024	-.076	-.172	-.136	-.066	.015	1			
Swipe-right photo	.044	-.085	-.042	.074	.072	.038	.180	1		
Weekend	-.087	-.070	-.034	-.004	.004	.071	.044	-.086	1	
Hashtags	.060	.005	-.094	-.064	-.031	.099	.055	-.276	.103	1

Looking at correlations, all Pearson coefficients seem to be less than 0.8 indicating that the results show collinearity is very less likely to exist (Shrestha, 2020).

Results and Discussion

In the analysis phase of the study, MLR is conducted to investigate the effects of different personal pronoun types used by Turkish airline companies’ Instagram posts on CE. In this respect, Table 5 shows the results of the MLR analysis using least squares. Other methods used to check the multicollinearity problem in the regression model together with the correlation analysis are to examine the (Variance Inflation Factors) VIFs and tolerance values. VIFs and tolerance values are calculated manually for this study using the following formula (Alin, 2010):

$$VIF = \frac{1}{1 - R^2} = \frac{1}{Tolerance}$$

Results suggest that VIFs are lower than 10 and Tolerances are greater than 0.1, which means that there is no multicollinearity among independent variables (Marquardt, 1980; Belsley et al., 1980; Lin, 2008). Addressing RQ2, regression models appear to be statistically significant to predict likes ($R^2=0.199$, $p<0.001$) and comments ($R^2=0.183$, $p<0.001$). The values of R^2 suggest that expression of pronouns can explain 20% and 18% of the variances in likes and comments respectively. Turkish airline companies share their messages on Instagram in different languages. For example, Turkish Airlines posts the same Instagram message in Turkish and English. On the other hand, Corendon Airlines publishes its messages in Turkish and/or English and/or German.

Table 5. Regression results

Independent variables	Model					
	Likes	VIF	TOL	Comments	VIF	TOL
First person singular “I-ben”	0.099**	1.234	0.810	0.132***	1.200	0.834
Second person “you-thou-sen-siz”	0.136***	1.222	0.818	0.103**	1.210	0.827
Third person singular “he/she-o”	-0.037	1.246	0.802	0.087**	1.213	0.824
First person plural “we-biz”	0.086**	1.240	0.807	0.034	1.223	0.818
Third person plural “they-onlar”	-0.018	1.248	0.801	-0.034	1.222	0.818
C-B relationship	0.080*	1.240	0.806	0.131***	1.203	0.831
Control Variables						
Photo	0.034	1.247	0.802	-0.164***	1.188	0.841
Swipe-right photos	-0.017	1.248	0.801	-0.004	1.224	0.817
Weekend	0.087**	1.237	0.808	0.104**	1.208	0.828
Hashtag	0.339***	1.109	0.901	0.250***	1.147	0.872
Regression statistics	Likes			Comments		
N	817			784		
F	20.017			17.309		
R ²	0.199			0.183		
Adj. R ²	0.189			0.172		

* p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001 (Nelson et al., 1986)

In this study, only Turkish and/or English Instagram posts were taken into consideration. Airline Instagram posts in Turkey that include first person singular pronouns “I-ben” have positive effects on the number of likes (B=0.099, p<0.01) and comments (B=0.132, p<0.001). When the literature is examined, it can be understood that the use of first-person pronouns by brands can lead positive (Chang et al., 2019) or negative (Labrecque et al., 2020) effects on engagement. The use of first-person pronoun can provide customer satisfaction and drive purchase intention (Packard et al., 2014). Also, this communication strategy may enable brands to become more intimate and activates the social belonging of consumers (Chang et al., 2019). Thus, airline brands using first-person pronouns may establish personal relationships with consumers which may increase CE. This inference shows that brands using singular per-

sonal pronouns focus more on beliefs than facts, but they may establish relationship easily (Callow, 1998; Pollach, 2005). The fact that the effect of first-person pronouns on CE is higher than other pronouns is an indication that consumers feel closer to the representation of this type of pronoun in Turkish airline sector.

The use of second person pronouns “you-thou-sen-siz” exerts positive effect on the number of likes ($B=0.136$, $p<0.001$) and comments ($B=0.103$, $p<0.01$) positively. These results are in line with previous studies (Cruz et al., 2017; Labrecque et al., 2020). Besides, third person singular pronouns “he/she-o” had a positive and significant effect on comments ($B=0.087$, $p<0.01$), but no effect was found on likes. In contrast, Chang et al. (2019) and Labrecque et al. (2020) found that the use of third person pronouns influences liking behavior. Thus, the findings are not compatible with these studies in terms of the number of likes. On the other hand, the use of both types of pronouns encourages consumers to comment on the message. In this respect, Chang et al. (2019) states that the use of second and third person pronouns not only increase the interactive communication between consumers and brands, but also contribute to making the brand more distinctive, competitive, and self-enhancing.

First person plural pronouns “we-biz” were only found to be significantly associated with likes ($B=0.086$, $p<0.01$). This partially corroborates the findings of Labrecque et al. (2020) who reported that the use of first-person plural pronoun (“we”) positively influences likes and comments. The results of the study found no relationship between the use of “we” and the number of comments. Notably, airline posts including third person plural pronouns “they-onlar” had no effect on the number of likes ($p>0.01$) and comments ($p>0.01$). These results stand in contrast with the findings of Labrecque et al. (2020) and Chang et al., 2019). This situation may be caused by sectoral or social media differences.

The most important finding of this study is that the use of pronoun “we” with some special words such as (“together”) and (“with”) addressing consumer-brand relationship impacts consumer engagement. In this respect, airlines that publish messages referring to the consumer-brand

relationship encourage consumers to interact through likes ($B=0.08$, $p<0.01$) and comments ($B=0.131$, $p<0.001$). However, this effect is higher on comments than likes. Also, Sela et al. (2012) suggested that this relationship can be developed by using personal pronoun (“we”) in brand messages. From this point of view, current study states that the Instagram posts of Turkish airline companies expressing togetherness find a response in the life experiences of consumers and establish a relationship in line with engagement. It is noteworthy that Instagram users respond to this relationship with comments rather than likes.

Photo sharing is one of the ways used by brands to represent vividness reflecting the degree to which information addresses various senses (Schultz, 2017). The use of photos has a significant and negative effect on comments ($B=-0.164$, $p<0.001$) but no effect on likes ($B=0.034$, $p>0.1$). Schultz (2017) also found a negative effect of low vividness (i.e., photos) on comments. On the other hand, Menon et al. (2019) found no effect on comments for airline brands. In terms of like, the finding does not support some previous studies (e.g., Schultz, 2017, Sigurdsson et al., 2020; Menon et al., 2019), but is consistent with the study of Labrecque et al. (2020). Conversely, the use of swipe-right photos has no effect on both likes ($B=-0.017$, $p>0.1$) and comments ($B=-0.004$, $p>0.1$). In fact, there is a view in the literature that photos easily attract people’s attention as they need less effort to understand (Luarn et al., 2015). However, based on the results of the study, photos did not receive a significant level of engagement. The reason for this may be related to the content that meets consumer expectations (Schultz, 2017). Thus, airline brands operating in Turkey may need to reconsider their posting strategies about related products and/or increase the resolution and quality of the images in a creative way.

Publishing messages during weekends is significantly related to the number of likes ($B=0.087$, $p<0.001$) and comments ($B=0.104$, $p<0.01$). These findings support the findings of the study of Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) results, despite some previous studies (de Vries et al., 2012; Menon et al., 2019) revealing that brand posts placed on weekends have

no effect on CE. The use of hashtag is very significant in terms of likes ($B=0.339$, $p<0.001$) and comments ($B=0.250$). These results are in line with the studies of Schultz (2017) and Labrecque et al. (2020). Consequently, Table 6 represent the hypotheses results. Thus, H1, H2 and H6 are supported, H3 and H4 are partially supported, and no evidence is found to prove H5.

Table 6. Hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Likes	Comments
H1: The use of first-person singular pronouns (“I-ben”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Supported	Supported
H2: The use of first-person plural pronouns (“we-biz”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Supported	Not supported
H3: The use of second-person pronouns (“you-thou-sen-siz”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Supported	Supported
H4: The use of third person singular pronouns (“he/she-o”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Not supported	Supported
H5: The use of third-person plural pronouns (“they-onlar”) by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Not supported	Not supported
H6: The use of (“with us-bizimle”) addressing C-B relationship by Turkish airline companies on Instagram has a relationship with the level of CE.	Supported	Supported

Theoretical and Practical Implications

A known way to create loyalty for airline brands is to increase engagement among passengers (Hapsari et al., 2017). Airline message content strategies in social media can also shape engagement level (likes, shares, comment etc.) of consumers. (Leung et al., 2013; Menon et al., 2019; Sigurdsson et al., 2019). In this respect, determining motivations behind consumer engagement behavior may provide clues for airline brands to

encourage passengers. In the literature, most of studies focused on examining airline brand post content strategies. However, no study has yet addressed the linguistic effect of airline messages on CE. Thus, being inspired from suggestions of Labrecque et al. (2020) for further research, this study has investigated the use of pronouns by Turkish airline brands on Instagram. The findings provide several theoretical and practical insights into linguistic practices in growing literature of the airline industry.

The first theoretical contribution of this study is to investigate the use of pronoun types in Turkish airline sector. One of the factors affecting online social interaction of people is the use of pronouns in communication (Rourke et al. 2001) which is specifically explained by Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976). The findings suggest that the second person pronouns are mostly used by airline brands on Instagram. These are followed by first-person plural (“we-biz”) and first-person singular (“I-ben”) pronouns. This indicates that Turkish airline companies put consumers at the center of communication and is useful for consumer-firm interaction (Packard et al., 2014). There are also studies that revealing that brands place themselves at the center. For example, Chen et al. (2015) found that first-person pronouns are frequently used by brands.

The second theoretical novelty of the current study is to investigate the impacts of different types of pronouns on CE for airline brands operating in Turkey. As mentioned before, message content on social media platforms can provide an essential motivation for consumers (Dolan et al., 2016). Also, role of language appears as a factor in the interaction of individuals (Kacewicz et al., 2014) and the use of pronouns in language may positively affect this interaction from the perspective of CE (Men et al., 2018; Vohra, 2020). Hence, the findings of this study indicates that the use of first person singular (“I-ben”) and second person (“you-thou-sen-siz”) pronouns on Instagram positively lead higher engagement (likes and comments). On the other hand, the uses of third person singular pronouns (“he/she-o”) triggers higher comments and first-person plural pronouns (“we-biz”) increase the number of likes. In contrast, no relationship was found between the use of third person plural pronouns

(“they-onlar”) and CE. The literature also suggests that the uses of various pronouns by brands has different impacts on CE (Cruz et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020). Practically, this study provides some insights that will guide Turkish airline sector in structuring the message language. The model also gives tips to airline brands on how to reach the desired consumer engagement on Instagram.

Third, this study reveals the effect of the use of pronoun “we-biz” with words such as (“with”) and (“together”) which predominantly addresses the consumer-brand relationship on CE behavior. In this way, airline brand posts’ linguistics utilizing C-B relationship enhance more comments than likes which indicates that consumers respond with writing activity that needs higher engagement effort. Similarly, Fournier (1998) suggests that the understanding of life experiences by brands leads deeper C-B relationship, and the language is one of the ways to build close relationships with consumers (Sela et al., 2012).

Fourth, existing studies used Facebook (Cruz et al., 2017; Barcelos et al., 2018; Labrecque et al., 2020) and WeChat (Chang et al., 2019) as data source to investigate the effect of pronouns on online consumer behavior. Thus, the present study extends the ongoing research focusing on Instagram platform and uncovers the linguistic motivations of consumers to engage the posts beyond various content strategies in airline sector (Leung et al., 2013; Menon et al., 2019; Sigurdsson et al., 2019).

Finally, airline marketers who publish posts in different languages on social media should consider not only content characteristics but also linguistic. This research guides managers on how to increase social media consumer engagement concentrating on pronoun choices and inculcates desired c-b relationship establishment.

Limitations and Further Research

Although the current study contributes to the existing literature on pronoun choices of brands in social media by examining the effect of pronouns and (“we”) as a c-b relationship on CE, it should be presented with future research building on some limitations. First, this study

focused on the Turkish airline industry which use Instagram as one of social media platforms. Zelenka and Hruška (2018) suggest that airlines establish marketing activities with various social media applications and previous studies considered Facebook (e.g., Cruz et al., 2017; Barcelos et al., 2018; Labrecque et al., 2020) and WeChat (Chang et al., 2019). Hence, further research needs to focus on other social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube. Second, Turkish pronouns were coded manually in this research. Previous studies used some software for this task (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010; Labrecque et al., 2020). Thus, future studies can develop or use linguistic tools to classify Turkish posts in terms of pronoun usage. Third, airline companies in Turkey may publish a message in different languages in a single post. For example, Corendon Airlines publish its messages in Turkish, English and/or German language but the message has unique meaning. This may be since airlines have followers from different cultures and want to address all of them with a single message. That is why the current study considered Turkish and English Instagram messages. Future research can be conducted by coding different languages in Turkish airline industry. Next, this study focused on airline brands in Turkey. Further research should take different sectors to get more knowledge about CE to airline companies' message strategies. Finally, there is a limitation related to the of message date. Airlines' posts between the period of January to December 2019 were collected in this study. Hence, further studies should concentrate brands' social media messages published in different time periods.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study was carried out in accordance with principles of research and publication ethics.

Contribution of the Author

The manuscript was prepared by the author.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest for this study.

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Geniřletilmiř Özet

“Bizimle” uęun! Tüketici-Marka İliřkisinin Tüketici Katılımına Etkisi: Türk Havayolu Instagram Sayfaları Üzerine Ampirik Bir Arařtırma

Günümüzde milyarlarca kullanıcıya ulařan sosyal medya (wearesocial, 2020), markaların pazarlama amaęlarını geręekleřtirmek amacıyla kullandığı devasa bir platforma dönüşmüřtür. Dolayısıyla tüketicileri markanın yayınlamıř olduđu ięeriklerle etkileřime girmeye teřvik etmek cevaplanması gereken önemli bir pazarlama problemi olarak karřımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada literatürde popülerlik kazanan ve tüketicilerin sosyal medya ięerikleriyle etkileřimlerini (beęeni, paylařım, yorum vb.) (de Vries vd., 2012; Cvijikj ve Michahelles, 2013; Schultz, 2017; Demmers vd., 2020) ifade eden tüketici katılımını (TK) artıracak mesaj stratejilerinin geliřtirilmesi hemen her sektörde olduđu gibi havayolu endüstrisinde de (Granęay, 2014) reklam, tutundurma ve dięer iletiřim çabalarına katkıda bulunarak (Tsai ve Men, 2013) yolcu sadakati ve tatmini üzerinde etkili olacaktır (Hapsari vd., 2017). Tüketici katılımını etkileyen faktörlerin neler olduęunun bilinmesi öncelikli bir konu olarak karřımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada literatür, ięerik tiplerinin (bilgilendirici, eğlendirici, promosyonel, sosyal ya da işlemsel), sunumun (video, metin, resim vb.) ya da kullanılan interaktif ięeriklerin (baęlantılar) ((Cvijikj ve Michahelles, 2013; Luarn vd., 2015; Tafesse, 2015) yanı sıra pazarlama iletiřiminde kullanılan dilin de katılım üzerinde etkili olabileceęini öne sürmektedir (Kayode, 2014). İletiřimde kullanılan dil hususu dikkate alındığında zamirlerin tüketici-marka sürecindeki sosyal iliřkileri řekillendirebilecek yapılar olduđu ileri sürülmektedir (Bano ve Shakir, 2015; Chen vd., 2015).

Çeřitli sektörlerde yer alan markaların yine çeřitli sosyal medya araęlarını kullanarak yaptıđı pazarlama iletiřimi çalıřmalarını dikkate alan arařtırmacılar, zamir kullanımının tüketicide tatmin deęeri sağladığı (Barcelos, 2018), olumlu duygular oluřturduęunu (Chang vd., 2019) ve tüketici katılımını çeřitli boyutlarda etkilediđini ortaya çıkarmıřlardır (Labrecque vd., 2020). Dolayısıyla markaların zamir kullanımının tüketici katılımı üzerindeki olası etkilerinin belirlenmesi literatürü geniřletecek olup arařtırmacılara da yeni ufuklar açacaktır.

Bu doğrultuda çalışmanın amacı, Labrecque ve arkadaşlarının (2020) gelecek çalışmalar için önerilerinden yola çıkarak Türkiye’de faaliyet gösteren havayolu işletmelerinin Instagram hesaplarında paylaşmış oldukları gönderilerde yer alan zamir kullanımlarının yanı sıra tüketici-marka ilişkisi kavramına atıfta bulunan “bizimle” ifadelerinin tüketici katılımı üzerindeki etkilerini Sosyal Sunum Teorisi (SST) ve Tüketici-Marka (T-M) İlişkisi bağlamında incelemektir.

Short ve arkadaşları tarafından 1976 yılında geliştirilen Sosyal Sunum iletişim araçlarının toplum etkileşimini belirlemede önemli role sahip olduğunu açıklayan bir teoridir. Sosyal toplulukların çevrimiçi ortamlara katılırken (Lowenthal, 2010) iletişim şekline etkilenmelerini açıklamak için SST kullanılabilir (Men vd., 2018; Vohra, 2020). Bireylerin birbirlerini işaret etmek için iletişimde sıklıkla kullanılan zamirler, sosyal sunumun yoğunluğu üzerinde etkili olabilmektedir (Rourke vd., 2001). Dolayısıyla, sosyal medyadaki zamir kullanımının katılım üzerinde etkili olarak sosyal sunum için önemli bir faktör haline geldiğini söylemek mümkün olabilmektedir (Men vd., 2018; Vohra, 2020). Dahası, firma tarafından sosyal medyada yayınlanan marka ile ilişkili bilginin sosyal sunuma bağlı olarak tüketici farkındalığı ve katılımını etkileyebileceğini ifade etmek gerekir (Osei-Frimpong ve McLean, 2018). Bu doğrultuda marka gönderilerindeki zamir kullanımı ile tüketici katılımı arasındaki ilişkinin bahsi geçen teori dikkate alınarak açıklanması çevrimiçi tüketici davranışının anlaşılmasında fayda sağlayabilmektedir.

Fournier (1998) tarafından geliştirilen T-M ilişkisi ise toplulukların yaşam tecrübelerinin anlaşılması ve bu anlayışın tüketicilerle kurulan ilişkilere uygulaması üzerine inşa edilmiş bir yapıdır. Şurası kesindir ki dil, pazarlama iletişiminde tüketicilerle güçlü ilişkiler kurulmasında önemli bir role sahip olmakla birlikte “biz” zamiri bu ilişkileri daha yakın hale getirme yetisine sahiptir (Sela, 2012). Ayrıca bu ve benzeri dil yapılarının çevrimiçi tüketici etkileşimine de liderlik ettiği fikri dikkate çekmektedir (Stephen, 2016).

Bahsi geçen literatür ve teorik temel dikkate alındığında çalışmanın hipotezleri şu şekilde oluşturulmuştur: H1: Türk havayolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan birinci tekil şahıs zamiri (“ben”) TK ile ilişkilidir. H2: Türk havayolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan birinci çoğul şahıs zamiri (“biz”) TK ile ilişkilidir. H3: Türk hava-

yolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan ikinci şahıs zamirleri (“sen-siz”) TK ile ilişkilidir. H4: Türk havayolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan üçüncü tekil şahıs zamiri (“o”) TK ile ilişkilidir. H5: Türk havayolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan üçüncü çoğul şahıs zamiri (“onlar”) TK ile ilişkilidir. H6: Türk havayolu işletmeleri tarafından Instagram’da kullanılan ve T-M ilişkisine atıfta bulunan (“bizimle”) ifadesi TK ile ilişkilidir.

Hipotezleri test etmek için 6 havayolu markasının (Türk Hava Yolları, AnadoluJet, Pegasus Havayolları, Corendon Havayolları ve Sun Express) Instagram üzerinden 1 Ocak-31 Aralık 2019 tarihlerin arasında yayınlamış oldukları 817 mesaj Instagreader uygulaması ile çekilmiş olup StatPlus programı kullanılarak Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Uygulanan Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon Analizi sonucunda H1, H3 ve H6 desteklenmiş, H2 ve H4 kısmen desteklenmiştir. H5 ise desteklenmemiştir. Sonuç olarak havayolu sektöründe markaların ne tür mesaj içerik stratejilerini tercih etmesi gerektiğinin anlaşılması TK’yi artırmada ipuçları sunabilecektir. Bu amaçla çalışmanın elde ettiği bulgular ve literatüre katkıları aşağıdaki gibidir:

1. Markaların sosyal ilişkiler kurarken “sen-siz” zamirlerini sıklıkla kullanmaları T-M ilişkisinde tüketici merkezli davrandıklarının göstergesidir.

2. “Ben”, “Sen-Siz” ve “Biz” zamirlerinin beğeni ve yorum davranışını tetiklemesi ve katılımı artırması havayolu işletmelerine ileride kullanacakları cümle kalıpları hakkında fikir verecektir.

3. Markaların kullandığı ve birliktelik ifade eden “bizimle” ifadesi tüketicileri gönderilere yorum yapmaya teşvik etmiştir. Bu durum T-M ilişkisi modelini doğrulamaktadır.

4. Elde edilen bulgular her ne kadar Instagram kullanımının ardındaki dil yapısı tercihlerini yansıtsa da farklı sosyal medya uygulamalarındaki durumun anlaşılması gelecek çalışmalara yardımcı olacaktır.

5. Bulgular Türk havayolu markalarının mesaj stratejilerini nasıl geliştirmeleri konusunda fikir üretmektedir. Ancak çalışmanın farklı sektörlerde uygulanması da gelecek çalışmalar için faydalı olacaktır.