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The role of brand image in forming airlines passengers' purchase intention: study of Iran aviation industry

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Abstract: Brand is regarded as one of the most important assets of a company and plays a key role in its success. Among various dimensions mentioned for brand, in this survey the brand image has been concentrated. Having identified the most important indicators of forming brand image, the aim of this survey is to state its role in influencing passengers' purchase intention in Iran's aviation industry. For this purpose, structural equation modelling (SEM) method has been used. The research sample includes Iran airlines' passengers. A questionnaire has been used to collect information. Findings indicate that the brand image and its indicators have an important and detrimental role in passengers' purchase intention, and estimate a considerable portion of purchase intention variance.

Keywords: brand; brand image; purchase intention; aviation industry.

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1 Introduction

Identifying factors playing a role in purchaser's behaviour has attracted the attention of many researchers. One of the most important factors is company brand image (Kim and Hyun, 2011). Brand is one of the most important elements in marketing and successfulness of an organisation, and is an image that introduces the organisation or company with all its dimensions to everybody and it is also the image of what you are and what you want to be to the mind of observers, consumers, etc. The value of a brand lies in what consumers have experienced and learned about the brand (Shahin and Pourhamidi, 2013). In today's competitive world, companies should differentiate themselves from competitors, and brand is a tool for differentiation. In addition to having powerful brands, consolidating it in customers' mind is important; so that customers attach to it. Nowadays, with regard to increase of similarity and standardisation of products, the main competition is over brand and its image, and companies are going to make their image which is the major basis of purchasing products (Sondoh et al., 2007).

In the service industry, brand name is the same of the name of company (Berry et al., 1988). Hence, in the aviation industry, brand image is assumed as the image of company's brand (Mun and Ghazali, 2011). According to Esch et al. (2006), brands reflect people's requirements and therefore, studying customer perception of a brand is necessary.

Brand image is numerous perceptions which customers have in their minds about brand induced from introducing brand to the market (Martinez et al., 2009). Nowadays, organisations are aware that customers' positive notion about brand creates strategic asset and competitive advantage (Camarero et al., 2010). Moreover, Veloutsou and Moutiho (2009) believe that consumers purchase images, not products. According to Hsieh et al. (2004) a successful brand image creates differentiation from competitors and consequently increases the possibility of purchasing brand by consumers. Although various models and theories have been offered for investigating factors impacting on purchase behaviour so far, in this survey customer's behavioural intention has been only assessed, and all factors impacting on purchaser's ultimate behaviour are not investigated.

Moreover, it is obvious for everyone that aviation services industry is regarded as one of the most important and strategic industries in the country and the world, and especially because of the nature of its service, the role of brand is very remarkable in its success. But the question is ‘could the airlines of this industry create appropriate brand for itself, and has this brand been shaped, and perceived (brand image) well in customers’ minds?’

Therefore, after reviewing studies of recent half century (from 1950 to 2013) concerning the brand image structure, the major aim of this survey is to identify indicators shaping brand image in the airlines of country, and ultimately to investigate the impact of brand image on purchaser’s intention, in order to provide approaches for managers and researchers whereby accessing to the desirable brand image is facilitated which is the prerequisite of company positioning in the market. Regarding the survey aim, the questions and hypotheses of survey are as follows:

Major question What are the main effective dimensions and indicators of brand image of national airlines?

Major hypothesis Brand image influences purchase intention in national airlines.

2 Research background

The concept of ‘image’ was first considered in marketing in Gardner and Levy’s (1955) work since the early 1950s, and then ‘brand image’ became a popular subject, quickly. Gardner and Levy (1955) argued that the nature of the products and their physical dimension has mental and social essence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, brand image was defined as “attitude about a particular brand” (Bird et al, 1970). By identifying the cognitive and psychological dimensions of brand image, Gensch (1978) acknowledging the point that brand preference is a function of perceptual space around that brand, has somehow related brand image to brand preference. Researches based on image and attitude has opened more its position besides strategic brand management topics (Zinkhan and Hirschheim, 1992) since 1980s. By the 1990s, researchers have continued to study about it, until brand image was introduced as the main component of brand equity (Keller, 1993). Reviewing the literature of brand image shows that researchers have disputed this concept in various directions

- 1 in respect of defining brand image
- 2 in respect of forming elements of brand image
- 3 in respect of tools and measures of brand image.

Definitions and operationalisation of the brand image concept in the existing literature, seems to be highly variable and there is no full consensus about it (Hsieh et al., 2004).

American Marketing Association (2013) believes that brand image is a reflection of the brand personality in customers’ minds. In addition, brand image indicates what people believe about the brand, and includes their thoughts, feelings and expectations of the brand. According to Kapferer (2012), brand image is located next to its receiver (customer). This image refers to the way in which consumers decode all brand cues which are derived from product itself, its services and communication programmes. According to Martinez et al. (2009), brand notion refers to numerous perceptions that consumers have in their minds that are due to introducing brand to the market. According

to Kotler (2008), brand image is a set of beliefs in the mind about a particular brand. According to Hsieh and Lindridge (2005), brand image is a set of perceptions about brand which is reflected through brand associations existing in the minds of consumers. In another definition, brand image is a set of perceptions which consumer of one product has in his/her mind about it and is regarded as his/her basis for purchase decision (Wardelo, 1998). According to Keller (1993), brand image is the perceptions of the brand which are in customer's memory through brand associations. These associations include any aspects related to brand in customer's memory (Aaker, 1996). Park et al. (1986) also believe that brand image is the consumer's perception of brand which is derived from activities related to brand established by the company. Brand image according to Reynolds and Gutman (1984) is a set of meanings and associations which are utilised in order to differentiate products and services from competitors. Finally, according to Herzog (1963) and Newman (1957) brand image is defined as perceptions about the brand, which is reflected by brand associations in customer's mind.

The relationship between brand image and purchase intention is explained well in several investigations (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001; Esch et al., 2006). Brand image is regarded as an important factor in determining purchaser's behaviour (Burmam et al., 2008). People typically purchase products that are more familiar with it and have a good picture of it in their mind, because it increases their reliability and ease of purchase. According to Morgan (1990) brand image is related to one's preference structure. This means that marketers can make changes in choosing brand by changing brand image. Without a desirable picture of brand, the company ability to make purchase intention and behaviour in customers would be low (Hunt and Keaveney, 1994; Kotler, 2008; Reynolds and Gutman, 1984). Kuhn et al. (2008) acknowledge the strong differentiation effect that brand image can create, and emphasise on its positive impact on customer's purchase behaviour. In addition, several researches have shown that the desired brand image will lead to loyalty (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Koo, 2003), brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Biel, 1992; Faircloth et al., 2001; Keller, 1993), purchase behaviour (Hsieh et al., 2004) and brand performance (Roth, 1995).

Among the studies related to the topic of this paper is Michel and Rieunier (2012) who investigated the influence of brand image on voluntary behaviour of a welfare company. Eunjoo (2011) developed and examined a reliable scale for brand image dimensions and concluded that brand awareness is positively correlated with brand image. Fernando et al. (2012) identified the dimensions of internal service quality based on benchmarking study in low-cost carrier (LCC) industry. They found that internal service quality model creates awareness among employees about the importance of practicing excellence service at all times. Kim and Hyun (2011) studied the relationship among marketing mix, company conceptual image and market performance in software of information technology system of South Korea. Among the studies performed on the relationship among brand image and other variables, the study of Elgin and Nedunchezian (2012) can be referred to, who investigated the relationship between perceptions of service quality and image in aviation industry. Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) considered brand image as a mediator and adjusting factor in the relationship between brand identity and brand preference. On the other hand, Arslan and Altuna (2010) found that perceived quality positively influences brand image. Chen (2013) examined the quality of m-shopping systems based on the extended information system success model. The model posited that system quality, information quality, and service

quality are the major determinants of m-shopping system use and customer satisfaction, which in turn are direct antecedents of purchase intention. Shahin et al. (2012) investigated the influence of country of origin on brand equity, based on Aaker's well-known conceptual framework in the household audio visual appliances. Their results indicated that brand country of origin has a direct and significant effect on perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand association and brand awareness. Other studies related to the topic of this research include Brecic et al. (2013) who applied a qualitative approach on international brand image; Bhakar et al. (2013) who studied the relationship between country of origin, brand image and intention to purchase; and Yu et al. (2013) who investigated the relationship among country of origin, brand image, self homogeneity and intention to online purchase.

3 Brand image dimensions and its measurement

Literature review indicates that like definitions of brand image, this concept is a multi-dimensional variable (Martinez et al., 2008) and there is little consensus about the elements that shape it, how to measure it, and consequently how it is managed among the authors (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). These dimensions in different countries can be changed (Hsieh and Lindridge, 2005). According to Koubaa (2008), brand image structure which is indicative of its components, from one country to another, and from one brand to another brand may vary. This point is also specified in Hsieh (2002) study that 53 brands in 70 regions of 20 countries have been studied and the results indicated that different brands in different countries have different structures. In another study, Low and Lamb (2000) have demonstrated that there are multiple and different brand associations in brands and different product categories.

Some studies indicate that brand image is derived from consumers' functional, symbolic, and experiential needs (Park et al., 1986). Functional requirements are based on the major brand functions which satisfy customer's requirements and solve his/her problems. Symbolic requirements imply the set of tendencies towards product for satisfying internal requirements for self-enhancement, role playing, group membership, or self-recognition. Experiential requirements refer to the requirements that apply products because of variety seeking, sensual enjoyment or cognitive stimulation. All products can be positioned with functional, symbolic, empirical image or a combination of these three (Park et al., 1986). In Heidarzadeh and Torabisurvey (2011), a three dimensional scale derived from the work of Park et al. (1986) and Hsieh and Li (2008) is used. Sondoh et al. (2007) in their survey perceived five types of advantage for brand image, including functional, symbolic, experiential, social, and appearance enhances advantages. In Wang's survey (2005), the indicators of brand image is also evaluated by a three dimensional scale consisting of functional, symbolic, and experimental dimensions. Aaker and del Blanco (1995), recognising the multiple nature of the brand image derived from multiple variables that shape brand associations, suggest application of three dimensions in investigating brand image which are perceived value, personality, and organisation. Perceived value includes functional advantages of product. Personality refers to symbolic and emotional advantages derived from brand. Organisation refers to the image of organisation and indicates grade-friendly company, brand trust ratio, and feelings towards brand image and company image. In this respect, Keller (1993, 2008) also believe that brand image is related to its associations (that is features, advantages,

and attitudes), the power of these associations, and differentiation existing in these associations. Anyway, a considerable diversity is observed in the researches that evaluated brand image. Some of them (Pohlman and Mudd, 1973) have evaluated dimensions of brand image separately, and some (Dolich, 1969) have considered a general measure of it. Some have considered it dependently, and some considered it related to other brands (Boivin, 1986). Some have considered it with regard to consumers' preferences and some (Keon, 1984) have considered it with regard to one's actual self-image, one's social self-image, etc. (Sirgy, 1985). Moreover, some of the studies suggest quantitative techniques for evaluating it, and some of them propose qualitative techniques and some others propose compound techniques. Many of the surveys of recent decade have been qualitative, but among qualitative surveys, Boivin's qualitative survey, Durgee and Stuart's (1987) qualitative survey, content analysis performed by Woodside (1972), and also the study of Hofstede et al. (2007) can be referred to.

These studies clarify the necessity of performing qualitative survey about the country under investigation, about the industry under investigation, and about the product category under investigation. Thus, in this survey, in order to discover brand image dimensions, particularly Iran aviation services industry, the same investigation will be performed, and while studying the brand image literature deeply from 1950s to 2013, and investigating different measures in this respect, by performing a qualitative survey (by skills of focus group and depth interview, etc.) for identifying brand associations of aviation services, customisation of their indicators in aviation services industry is done by assistance of primary opinions of aviation experts and localisation of them appropriate with the country. In this respect, some of the used measures have been derived from the work of Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) on brand image measure; Hsieh and Li (2008) on measure; Park (2007) on aviation services and brand image measure; Yoo et al. (2000) on measure; and Batra et al. (2000), Aaker and Del Blanco (1995), Lassar et al. (1995), Dobni and Zinkhan (1990), Park et al. (1986) and Malhotra (1981).

4 Research methodology

Research methodology includes survey mixed method which is performed in two qualitative and quantitative stages. First in the survey qualitative stage, the indicators shaping brand image are identified, and are customised appropriate with industry. In the second stage, which is the quantitative stage, modelling and model test are performed. In this respect, SPSS and Amos software are used for calculations. Primary identification of factors has been done by literature review and choosing them through interview and association meetings with managers and experts of aviation industry and marketing professors which composed qualitative part of survey. However, in qualitative part, the samples are passengers who answer a questionnaire with Likert's five spectrums. In qualitative approach, by using factor analysis, dimension reduction of variables is done, and then the obtained model is examined by structural equation modelling (SEM) and modified using data obtained from questionnaire method.

With regard to the point that responding to the questions of the first stage in the interview form, association group, etc. is in professors and commercial and aviation industry experts' jurisdiction, in the first stage of this survey purpose sampling method

has been used. A targeted sampling is a kind of non-random sampling in which the researcher chooses samples based on his/her own judgment about the required features of the samples to answer the questions by them (Zikmund, 2003). Among the capabilities of this method is that it is performed by experts panel (Trochim, 2006). In the survey exploratory stage, the non-random sampling is not only not bad, but it is useful and necessary (Aaker et al., 2005).

In the second stage, in order to access passengers of the aviation company, the agencies have been used as a way to reach the goal. However, because of the necessity of sampling and forefront limitations (like limitation of access to the agencies nationwide), only two chosen provinces of the country which had features like high population, accessing to the airport, air traffic, etc. have been investigated, and according to the statistics they are regarded as an appropriate samples of nationwide. The chosen provinces include Tehran, and Isfahan. Among the features that justify these two provinces for investigation is that according to the statistics received from Iran Statistics Center, the population of these two provinces is 17,062,703 totally, composing about 22.7% of the population of country (Iran Statistics Center Website, 2012), which is a good sample of the whole country. Moreover, in respect of passengers' volume and aviation traffic, these two chosen provinces are regarded as good samples for the whole country. Moreover, according to the statistics of Civil Aviation Organization, out of total 149,118 internal annual flights, more than 40% (60,381 flights) of these flights are done in these two provinces. On the other hand, a total of 16,481,308 passengers handled in 2012, more than 42% (equivalent to 6,948,946 passengers) of them have begun their journey from these two provinces (Civil Aviation Organization, 2012). Tehran being in the centre of country on one hand, and its high population on the other hand has made it an appropriate example of the whole country. However, a large collection of passengers travelling to Tehran continue their air travelling to other destinations.

First, by providing a list of all agencies of the chosen provinces, the systematic random sampling is used, and then among the passengers of each location, time simple random sampling was performed. Since the number of agencies is limited and passengers' volume is unlimited, in order to determine the number of sample locations, the formula of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), and for determining passengers' sample size, the rule of Schumacker and Lomax (2004) are used. Considering the point that total number of agencies in the chosen provinces is 496 locations, 217 samples are chosen which are appropriately allocated to two provinces. It is essential to mention that the passengers are the target population, and agencies are only tools for accessing passengers. Thus, the sample size in this stage only specifies sample agencies, not passengers. About the appropriate sample size for the passengers, by investigating suggestions of Bentler and Chou (1987), Bagozzi and Yi (1988), Hair et al. (2010), Hinkin (1995), Schreiber et al. (2006) and Schumacker and Lomax (2004), a 720 sample size is used, which meets the opinion of many of the above researchers. It is worth mentioning that since this report is only a part of a comprehensive survey in which other measures are also in the authority of passengers, the number of respondents is determined as 720 people. The number of respondents is divided by the number of sampled locations and at each location the appropriate number of questionnaires is distributed.

Validity can be investigated in various ways, and each one is applicable in a situation and condition, such as face validity, criterion validity, construct validity, content validity, discriminate validity, etc. (Blumberg et al., 2005; Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). In this survey, in addition to content face validity, convergent validity and discriminate validity

are used (Hair et al., 2010; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Nusair and Hua, 2010). Analyses performed show that the convergent and discriminate validity have been observed so well. In reliability analysis, in addition to calculating reliability based on the Cronbach's alpha (Cooper, 1983), construct reliability is also used that in addition to evaluating the assumption of one-dimensionality of constructs, evaluates factor construct reliability (Byrne, 2010). Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated for the brand image is equal to 0.93 and for the purchase intention is equal to 0.81, which indicates an acceptable ratio. Construct validity results indicate that CR for all constructs is above the threshold 0.6 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

In summary, the items used in this survey, derived from previous studies and modifications made by the researcher in the survey, are qualitative. In order to evaluate and selected items, with regard to the teachings of Malhotra (2010), Schmidt and Hollensen (2006), Rossiter (2002) and Malhotra (1981), the opinions of professors and commercial and airlines experts are used, and after pilot studies and experts' complementary opinions, indicators are reduced to the current number. Items that had inappropriate factor loading are excluded (Hair et al., 2010), then by Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) iterative approach, the remaining items re-entered into another confirmatory factor analysis. Dimensions and items of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Evaluating dimensions and indicators of questionnaire

<i>Major dimensions</i>	<i>Minor dimensions</i>	<i>Items (indicators)</i>
Brand image	Technical-functional image	This airplane is regarded as a good choice for air trip
		This airplane acts whatever is expected from an airplane
	Emotional-sensual image	I have positive perceptions and beliefs about the characteristics of this airplane
Advantage and superiority: differentiated and special status of airplane in comparison with competitors		
The airplane is exciting and attractive (the joy of travelling by plane)		
Interest in airplane and positive feeling towards it		
The airplane is beautiful, luxurious and smooth		
Symbolic-social image	It creates a positive image of you in the sight of others	
	Fits your personality and self-image	
	Suitable with your class and social status	
	Positive impression to other users of the company services	
Brand purchase intention		The country image: the positive attitude towards the airplane manufacturer country
		If I need to travel by airplane again, I prefer this airline to other companies
		I have enough reasons for preferring this airline to other companies
		In general, in my opinion deciding to use the services of this company is an appropriate decision

5 Case study, findings and discussion

While aviation industry is an important industry both national and internationally, brand image has important position in this service industry. This industry is among the critical and strategic industries, and as one of the non-tangible service industries (Clemes et al., 2008) it plays important role in global economy (Tiernan et al., 2008). Unfortunately the role and impact of brand image in the context of air services has been considerably ignored in previous studies concerning this industry. Thus, developing brand image concept to services domain seems to be an inevitable necessity.

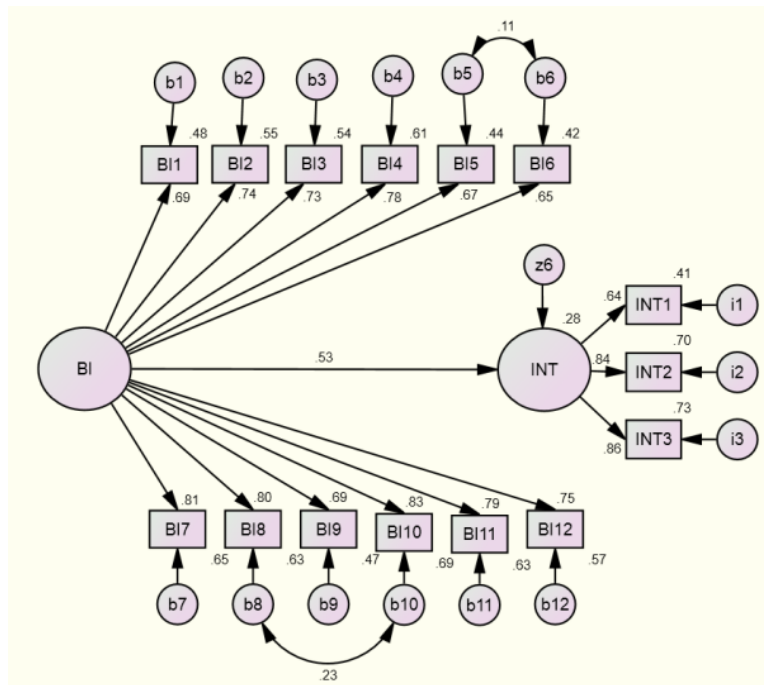
This survey has been performed in Iran aviation industry, and all those 15 aviation civil companies that have had activities since march 2013 in the field of passengers' transfer have been studied.

The companies under study include Iran air, Iran airtours, Aseman, Mahan, Taban, Zagros, Ata, Faraz Queshm, Fars air, Hesa, Saha, Naft air, Caspian, Kish air and Meraj air.

After data is collected from the samples took from these companies, it is analysed using Amos software and the developed model is examined. After fitting the data with measurement models, testing structural model is performed (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2005). Software output for survey overall structure is presented in Figure 1 and Tables 2 and 3. For abbreviation, only the improved model has been offered.

Out of the models developed by the software, only those with logical and theoretical literature background are considered and assumed as the basis of the model.

Figure 1 Survey structural model with standard coefficients (see online version for colours)



The results of factor analysis showed that brand image, unlike primary model is not a three dimensional image, but it is identified as one dimensional consisting 12 items. These 12 items were previously addressed in Table 1. The literature indicates that there is little consensus among researchers about indicators dealing with brand image conceptualisation (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). Some of the authors have used more than 10 items for evaluating brand image (Kim and Kim, 2005), while others have sufficed with three items (Clemes et al., 2008; Faullant et al., 2008). In this survey, 12 remaining items, with regard to loading factor above the cutoff point 0.50 for evaluating brand image, seems to be appropriate. About purchase intention, a measure consisting of three items from five primary items have been confirmed.

Table 2 Indicators fitting the evaluation model of improved brand image

<i>CMIN/DF</i>	<i>RMR</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>AGFI</i>	<i>PGFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
1.740	.033	.973	.963	.705	.990	.978	.031

Figure 1 and Table 2 show that the statistic fitted to model is above the amounts proposed by Bentler (1990), Bentler and Bonnet (1980), Bollen (1989), and Hair et al. (2010). This indicated that the data fit the model well.

Table 3 Regression weights and significance of relationship

			<i>Estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>
INT	<---	BI	.507	.046	10.999	***
BI7	<---	BI	1.194	.058	20.757	***
BI8	<---	BI	1.218	.060	20.438	***
BI9	<---	BI	1.009	.056	17.859	***
BI10	<---	BI	1.290	.061	21.248	***
BI11	<---	BI	1.226	.060	20.444	***
BI12	<---	BI	1.193	.061	19.611	***
BI6	<---	BI	.937	.055	17.006	***
BI5	<---	BI	.957	.055	17.429	***
BI4	<---	BI	1.182	.058	20.259	***
BI3	<---	BI	1.081	.056	19.155	***
BI2	<---	BI	1.132	.059	19.209	***
BI1	<---	BI	1.000			
INT1	<---	INT	1.000			
INT2	<---	INT	1.177	.068	17.309	***
INT3	<---	INT	1.227	.069	17.833	***

Moreover, according to Table 3, because of the lack of estimation problem and significant coefficients of estimating standard (β) and confidence intervals in all directions, the obtained estimates are considered as satisfactory (Byrne, 2010). Thus the results of this survey show that brand image can explain a significant proportion of the

purchase intention variance that this point is also evident in Figure 1. Therefore the survey hypothesis is confirmed by 95% confidence level.

Compared with previous surveys, in this survey the customised and localised indicators appropriate with Iran aviation industry have been used. Survey findings are consistent with previous surveys findings (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001; Elgin and Nedunchezian, 2012; Esch et al., 2006; Hsieh et al., 2004; Janonis et al., 2007; Kim and Hyun, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2008; Veloutsou and Moutiho, 2009) about the relationship between brand image and purchaser behavioural intention.

Regarding the survey aim, that is offering a model about brand image indicators and its impact on buyer intention in airlines industry, it is tried to offer a model that while making active managers of this section familiar with the importance of brand image and the necessity of considering it more, their awareness about the way and mechanism of its impact on customers' purchase intention increases.

By using the results of this survey, airlines and in general every organisation thinking about upgrading their brand image and competitive position in industry can provide the required background for it.

In summary, the results of this survey help the managers of aviation companies in effective management to investigate the most important indicators identified in this survey in a way that shape the measures of brand identity building, and ultimately the mentality and the brand image in customers' minds of target market becomes appropriate and desirable. With regard to high costs spent in marketing section, especially branding, the results of this survey can help organisations by identifying priorities and factors which should be considered most, to lead their budget planned and more directionally towards these factors. The significant relationship between brand image and purchase intention confirms this point that the real value of one company is hidden in its potential purchasers' minds, not in their tangible assets, real estates, and factories. Considering the central role of brand image and its indicators in upgrading company position in the minds of target market, and consequently impacting on their purchase intention, it is recommended that any company in this industry, do a comprehensive planning about brand image management. It is suggested that, by identifying passengers' requirements for planning services, providing targeted training for employees, and using market segmentation and other marketing techniques, justify branding strategies.

6 Conclusions

According to Keller's (2008) brand model is the major basis for creating powerful name and sign. Accurate understanding of company from mentalities formed of them in the target market is among key factors in compiling marketing strategies. Especially in the current competitive conditions, those companies are more successful which identify and manage these mental images and in line with improving them, compile more appropriate strategies. However, brand positioning in customers' minds is considered unavoidable necessity. The great importance that brand has in the minds of the target market, especially in the service sector, is obvious for anybody. This problem is also obvious in the case of aviation services.

About the contribution of this survey it can be acknowledged that most of the surveys have been performed in the domain of tangible products, and few studies can be found

that have dealt with evaluating image in services domain (Suhartanto, 2011). Thus, developing the brand image concept to the domain of services seems to be an inevitable necessity. Elgin and Nedunchezian (2012) believe that in particular and in air trip services industry the role and impact of company image in the context of aviation services have been to a great extent ignored in the previous studies of this industry. So far, little research has been done in the area of brand image and positioning of airlines (Wen and Yeh, 2010), and this issue adds to the importance of this survey and surveys similar to it.

In this survey, while identifying the most important indicators forming brand image in Iran aviation industry, it is tried to determine the relationship between brand image and purchaser's intention. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship in this regard. Present survey plays role in several ways in marketing and brand services. The first one is in offering a new conceptualisation of brand image in aviation services context. This survey deals with compiling and testing a model of brand image dimensions in aviation services industry, and also the way it impacts on purchaser's intention, that no similar case was found in not only internal surveys, but also in foreign literature. Thus, the innovational aspect of this survey is in investigation of brand image in aviation industry and shortage of studies in this field. Thus, the way that in this survey customised, localised, credited measure for brand image of aviation services of country is compiled, which similar sample for it is very rare.

One of the most important limitations of this survey was the chosen provinces for investigation. Although this point has been previously clarified that the chosen provinces are regarded as appropriate samples of the whole country, lack of access to other provinces because of time and place limitation can be counted as one of the major limitations of this survey. Moreover, various viewpoints of authors in brand image domain, definitions, variables, models, dimensions, its measurement methods, and shortage of consensus in this regard have made surveyor's work confronting with subtleties and necessity of performing quantitative survey special for industry. Performing a customised work shows this point.

Findings of this research assist managers in determining appropriate strategies by understanding the importance of brand image and customers' perception of brand. This is imperative in the aviation industry, where the services of companies are relatively similar and they should have a vision and long term plan for differentiation and competitiveness, which in turn lead to enhancing company image in perception of customers.

Finally, it is suggested to the surveyors who are interested in this domain that by investigating the opinions of all stakeholders involved in aviation services industry including pilot, cabin crew, airport staff, administrative staff and sales agents, gain a more comprehensive sight about company brand image, so that all people involved in aviation services domain are analysed. Moreover, the results of this survey show that people's positive mental image should be started inside organisation. The question arises is that which solutions the organisations should follow to upgrade this positive image inside company? In this respect, investigating solutions for creating brand oriented thought in the organisation might seem appropriate as a survey subject in continuation of this study.

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