

**PERCEPTION OF THE WINSTON BRAND CIGARETTES BY YOUNG FEMALE
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN TURKEY: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY**

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Abstract

This study aims to find out why young female Turkish university students prefer the Winston brand, and how the brand, brand marks and the package affect smoking as well as their attitudes and behaviors towards a brand preference. Study uses a qualitative research method - the phenomenology approach and the data of the research is collected through focus group interviews. The data of focus group interviews are collected from three mini focus group interviews conducted in November and December 2013 with 19 participants. During the interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire is administered and for the analysis of the data, a descriptive analysis technique is used. It was found that the Winston brand is preferred by young females mainly because of its flavor; it is seen as a high-quality product, but despite the fact that it is in middle-high price range, is considered as middle class. The fact that the elements of the package design used by the brand in its product range do not fit well with the desired positioning of the brand causes a confusion in its perception, and therefore there is no clear positioning for the brand in participants' minds.

Keywords: Perception, Brand, Focus group, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Consuming tobacco products is one of the most significant reasons behind preventable diseases and deaths in the World. Addiction to smoking causes harm in multiple organs of the human body and leads to a number of diseases that are mostly deathly (Hoek et al., 2011: 183; The Aspect Consortium, 2004: 25). Despite all these harms the cigarettes cause in human body, smoking amounts to substantial rates across the globe. According to the data published by the World Health Organization in 2013, a billion people across the globe smokes, six million people lose their lives annually because of smoking addiction and approximately 600 thousand of these six millions are passive smokers. If sufficient measures are not taken against the globally rising rate of tobacco consumption, the annual death toll could rise to eight million people by 2030 (WHO 2013 Tobacco Fact Sheet).

Despite the fact that it lowers the quality of life and causes premature deaths by shortening the average life expectation by 15 to 25 years, the rate of smoking rises each day. This rise is more pronounced in developing countries and especially among young people (Yılmaz, 2010: 1). According to the smoking statistics prepared by the World Health Organization, among young teens between the ages of 13 to 15, one in five smokes, and each day 80 thousand to 100 thousand children start smoking half of whom lives in Asian countries. Those who start smoking in their adolescent years actively smokes for about 15 to 20 years and teenagers are heavily influenced by the advertisements of tobacco products (WHO 2002 Smoking Statistics). Around the World, smoking rate is especially high among young people. In United States of America, approximately 4 thousand teenagers under 18 start smoking each day. The smoking rate of young people between 18 and 24 is around 18.9% (CDC Smoking & Tobacco Use, 2011). In England, the rate of smoking in young people steadily rises since 1986 and 28% of the young population between the ages of 20 and 24 smokes (Statistics on Smoking: England, 2013). Among European countries, France has the highest rate of young smokers. 38% of the French youth are addicted to the tobacco products (Connexion, July 2012).

According to the data gathered by the Turkish Association for Fighting Smoking, there are 23 million smokers in Turkey. 19.5 million of the smokers are 19 or older while 3.5 million is composed of teenagers and children between 11 and 19. The rate of smokers above 13 years and older is 40%. The rate of smoking among university students (18-25 years old) on the other hand is approximately 58% (Turkish Association for Fighting Smoking, "Cigarette Consumption and the Expenditure"). Another research conducted on smoking habits in Turkey is Global Adult Tobacco Survey of 2012 carried out by Turkish Statistical Institute. According to the data obtained from this survey, the rate of smokers between 15 and 24 years of age is 18.9% as of 2012 (Turkish Statistical Institute, Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2012).

The Relation of Adolescence and Youth to Smoking Habits

The researches in this field reveal that each year, approximately 750 thousand children and teenagers start smoking in Turkey. According to the research conducted on consumption of tobacco and tobacco products among especially teenagers, introduction to cigarettes during adolescence (10-19 years) usually occurs in early adolescence (10-13 years old), middle adolescence (14-16 years old) and late adolescence (17-19 years old) (Özcebe, 2008: 8; Global Adult Tobacco Survey, Report on Turkey: 52; Yılmaz, 2010: 7, 11). Adolescence phase is a period when new things are experienced and young people are more prone to smoking because of curiosity, need to feel better as well as more valuable in addition to the effect of advertisements. Furthermore, the health issues caused by smoking are not well-understood or cared in this age (Yılmaz: 11). As a transition period from childhood to adulthood, during

adolescence, young individuals experience a number of changes physically, psychologically, socially, cognitively and sexually. In this period, the pace of growing up and development is as fast as the first 10 years of their lives. Adolescents are not considered as either children or adults which in turn causes a paradox. During adolescence, a youngster is considered more mature than a child, but still needs adult support. In early adolescence (10-13 years old), it is possible to observe physical changes triggered by sexual development leading to psychosocial changes. An adolescent in this period mainly struggles to absorb the physical changes and to obtain a certain degree of freedom. The psychosocial and emotional changes start a few years earlier in females than males. In middle adolescence period (14-16 years of age), the young individual goes through more intense emotions. They try to find a larger purpose in life; their conflict with their families increase and friends gain more significance. A number of bodily changes are completed by this time and the young individual is less puzzled by these changes. S/he accepts own body, is more relaxed and spends more and more time trying to look more attractive. The late adolescence period (17-19 years of age) on the other hand is the period in which the young individual struggles for building a character and moves towards independence. (www.elektroniksigara.com). The youth is also a period where admirations and attachments are more intense. Young people start to pull away from the influence of their parents, and instead choose new role models. A teacher, an athlete, a singer or a political leader might be the person they aspire to become. The youngster in this period wishes to resemble these role models, and admires everything about them from their abilities to flaws blindly. After some time, s/he chooses a new role model and identifies with him/her (Yörükoğlu, 1987).

Independence, resisting to the authority, clashes with the parents, adults and teachers are among the basic characteristics of adolescence. The teenager declares independence against all adults, but especially the parents. S/he sees the parents and the teachers inadequate and as obstacles against their development. Acting against the suggestions of the adults is a clear example to this situation. The adolescent challenges the limits, rules and restrictions all the time. Cigarette, as a product not suggested by the adults or unwelcomed when used, functions as a tool for satisfaction of this emotion. Smoking is perceived as the representation of growing up and a means of declaring independence. During adolescence, the group of friends, belonging to a group, aligning the style of clothing and behaviors according to the group are very important for the teenager. The desire of being liked by their friends and becoming their leader is strong in this period. This is why it is a period the teenager is quite prone to peer-influence. Close friends' or group members' smoking introduces the teenager to the cigarettes and pushes towards doing the same thing. Close friends offering cigarettes, insisting and pressuring are significant factors that cause picking up a smoking habit and

increases the probability of smoking 3 to 4 times. Teenagers are likely to see smoking as a means of building a social circle and escaping from loneliness. Friends and desire to position oneself within a group is a factor that causes one to smoke. In this context, the inadequacy of family support and intra-family relations leads to higher smoking rates. In a similar fashion, teenagers also see cigarettes as a means of entertainment and a relief from boredom and stress. Teenagers tend to care a lot about appearance, clothing, attitudes and behaviors. They try to attract attention, seen attractive and be liked by their friends through these. They can consume cigarettes and hookahs to increase their popularity or might believe that consuming these will increase their popularity. Likewise, there are also teenagers who believe that smoking is a fashionable thing to do (Akdur, 2009: 5-6).

Sustaining the smoking behavior is influenced by habits and nicotine addiction in addition to the social, psychological, cultural and cognitive factors. Starting to smoke during adolescence and youth causes more powerful nicotine withdrawal symptoms in later periods of life. Nicotine causes addiction by activating the reward or incentive system of the brain called mesolimbic center that is the adjusting mechanism of the basic drives and motivations vitally important for the human brain. After smoking a cigarette, nicotine affects the brain and causes behavioral changes perceived as reward. As a result of this, individual repeats the behavior and smokes more cigarettes. The stimuli, circumstances and conditions accompanying the smoking behavior also function as reward suggesting drives and reinforce the behavior. For instance seeing someone smoking, lunch breaks, a pack of smokes or a lighter on the table can create a desire to do so in the individual (Yılmaz: 15; Ergül, 2005: 17).

The presence of smoking parents, peers or role models like teachers around the teenager is also perceived as a confirmation of the behavior and causes the youngster to insist smoking. Furthermore, the attitude of the parents towards smoking plays a decisive role in starting or ceasing the smoking behavior. The self-respect and the self-efficacy of the adolescent is the psychological factor behind the decision to start or cease smoking. If self-respect and the self-efficacy of the adolescent are low, then resisting the temptation to smoke is also low. Marketing activities for the cigarettes is also identified as one of the factors that causes perpetuation of the smoking behavior (Ergül: 14; Yılmaz: 16).

Cigarette Packs as Means of Creating Perception

In marketing of the tobacco products, packaging plays a critical role. Cigarette packs create a direct connection between the tobacco companies and user, and hence play a key role in presenting and positioning the brand image (Wakefield et al. 2002: i73; Hons et al. 2009: 1; Hammond et al., 2009: 631). Aware of the power of appearance on influencing the behavior, cigarette packs are one of the most effective marketing methods of tobacco companies. Used

as a tool to manipulate behavioral patterns of the target mass, cigarette packs, by directly communicating with smoking or non-smoking individuals, have a threefold function: to facilitate brand awareness, to support brand positioning and to encourage the act of purchasing.

The main function of the cigarette packs as a packaging is to contain and protect the contents against external influences. Nevertheless, the aim of the cigarette packs is not only to contain and protect, but also to create a desire to purchase and try the product in the target mass, to look new and different enough to attract the attention of the consumer (Hons et al.: 1). Cigarette packs influence especially teenagers' behaviors, appeal to their senses and make the products enchanting and desirable. The design of the cigarette packs can be considered as a significant means of influencing the senses of the target mass. The colors, patterns, forms and brand marks the tobacco companies use in their brands not only enable them to differentiate their brand from the others, but also help them communicate certain symbolic meanings targeting the individuals' emotions and hence their perceptions of the brand. Cigarette packs allow smokers to distinguish their preferred brand and what that brand offers. According to a research conducted by British American Tobacco in 1980 on brand awareness and image, all of the marks of the brand on the pack heavily affect the emotional attributes of the product perceived by the users. This sensation transfer from the pack to the product, sometimes called the package's halo effect, is a highly significant phenomenon and a critical factor in creating influence (Wakefield: i75; Ferris, 1980).

In manipulating the perception of the target mass, the presence and the form of the stimuli on the pack are highly effective. According to Detenber, basic attributes of the stimuli such as dimensions, color and action can affect senses, and emotions can be expressed as verbal, irrational sentiments and behaviors. The size of form of the message and action are two of the major factors behind any emotional change of an individual. In line with this notion, the size of the shape affects individuals in different manners. For instance while children are more attracted to larger objects, in males, being tall is usually associated with physical attractiveness, high income, professional position and productivity related to physical appearance. Action on the other hand is associated with physical world in individuals' minds, and moving objects and images draw more attention and hence remembered more (Detenber, 1996: 67-71).

Cigarette packs not only describe and identify the product, but also have high visibility since they are used until the cigarettes inside are consumed completely. The brand name, typography, colors and other characteristic elements on the cigarette packs convey the identity and the image of the brand, and therefore affect the perception and preference of the users of a particular brand (Dewhirst and Lee, 2012: 584; Wakefield et al.: i73; Hons et al.: 1). This high degree of social visibility associates the user with the brand as a badge product by "giving the

user some of the identity and personality of the brand image" (Wakefield et al.: i73). Cigarette consumers mold and express the person they are or want to become, and highlight the differences between themselves and other individuals as well as products in addition to their social identities and positions through the associations the packs provide (Scheffels and Sabo, 2013: 450; Hastings et al., 2008: 361; Hoek et al., 2012: 631). "Packaging was first used as a strategic tool for consumer goods from the 1920s although the strategic use of packaging for tobacco products can be traced back to the late 19th century" (Thibodeau and Martin, 2000; Klimchuck and Krasovec, 2006; *The Packaging of Tobacco Products*, 2012: 6). According to Möller, a pack initially attracts the consumer on the shelf by differentiating and positioning the attention, and influences the decision making process as well as purchasing decision of the target mass. This effect is *moment of truth* according to Löfgren. Aware of this initial effect the pack creates; tobacco companies eventually have developed various packaging strategies. For instance, renovating the pack of a cigarette in turn renews the perception of the product in a saturated market, enables re-focusing the attention to the new pack and creates a new market position. This reform in the pack might include renovating the graphics or a complete structural change. While a structural change might consist of changing the direction of the flip cover, limited number strategy might be a short-term campaign used to promote sales. The anniversary of the brand or special social occasions too can be used as sales improvement tools for sparking an interest to the product. Price marked cigarette packs is another strategy we see. This method, as a promotional strategy, functions as a sales booster. (*The Packaging of Tobacco Products*: 7-9).

The strategies utilized in design of the cigarette packs are not only used to distinguish and differentiate the product from the others visually. Features like colors, shape and size are also used to convey messages about the content of the pack. For instance light colors are used to express a smoother flavor; blue colored packs indicate a lower percentage of tar while red communicates a stronger and more intense cigarette taste. Green on the other hand represents the menthol content, and conditions the target mass for sensing the refreshing menthol more intensely (Philip Morris, Two Pastel Green Menthol Field Test, 1973; *The Packaging of Tobacco Products*: 7-9).

The psychology of colors causes people to attach meanings and respond emotionally to these meanings. For example, in every culture blue, green and white are associated with gentleness and calmness while black and red are linked to strong, influential and dominant characters. Color also helps users to differentiate attributes like the flavor of the product. This is why color is the most effective design element of a package design (Klimchuck and Krasovec, 2006; Meyers and Lubliner, 1998, *The Packaging of Tobacco Products*: 10)

The shape of the cigarette packs is another significant factor that influences the preferences of the target mass. According to the research, the shape is among the most important factors that affect the purchasing decision of the target mass (Silayoi and Speece, 2007: 1495). Since the product and the perceptions of the symbolic values it offers are conveyed to the target mass through the form, the choice of box or soft packaging of the cigarette packs is another tool for the tobacco companies in managing the perceptions of the target mass. While soft packs make reference to stronger cigarettes, hard packages in the shape of a box refer to weaker cigarettes (Halabi, 2011: 19). The size of the pack is another significant factor that has an impact on consumer behavior. Various researches conducted on product packaging indicate that if there is an option, consumers prefer the product in the larger package. While large packages enable consumption without being concerned about running out of the product, products in smaller packages are considered tastier (The Packaging of Tobacco Products: 10).

Tobacco companies make their designs with the knowledge that brand preference for cigarettes is established in youth and package designs play an important role in brand positioning by attracting young people. No element should be left to chance in package design since the colors, design elements and the size of a cigarette pack can lead young people to perceive the brand as out-of-date or unfashionable. Furthermore, the design of a pack implies a meaning about the teenager's character, social identity and his/her status (Philip Morris, Opportunities Packaging Innovation, 1992; Hastings et al., 2008: 361; Gendall et al., 2011: 911). In tobacco industry, packs aim to reach to young consumers by using strategies like creating an image, conveying the product value and offering something new. A major effect of cigarette packs is to reinforce the brand image by communicating with the target mass. A brand image is the sum of all associations the target mass makes with the brand. These associations or beliefs are related to all aspects of the brand, and include associations of the user about the product, the brand name, price, and distribution channels. The package design at this point plays a key role.

Since adolescence is a period in which admirations and addictions are plenty, there is a strong need for belonging and being liked or seen as leaders of the group, and there is a high emphasis on clothing and external appearance, young individuals tend to care about the appearance and image of the product they use or consume. In this period, teenagers prefer the products and brands that can contribute the image they want to create for themselves.

In design of cigarette packs, gender oriented variations are another important factor. The tobacco products designed by cigarette manufacturers specifically for women differ from products targeting men. For instance while cigarettes targeting women are considered to be slim, the packs that contain the product are also designed as tall and thin. To be able to present

a more feminine, mature and stylish appearance, pastel or matte colors are used in the overall exterior of the pack.

Teenagers also take the price of the brand into consideration. A number of researches conducted by the tobacco industry indicates that teenagers are sensitive to price, and they prefer luxurious, premium brands as long as they can afford it, but also price is not the sole consideration in their decision making process. Adolescence is a period when new things are tried. With curiosity and a tendency to feel better or more important, teenagers are quite open to trying new things they are attracted to. This is why in tobacco industry; packaging redesign of cigarette packs causes adolescents to perceive that brand as modern and fresh (The Packaging of Tobacco Products: 16).

Perception of Female University Students towards the Cigarette Brand - Winston: A Focus Group Study

Based on the findings of the study conducted by Meral and Uzel (2013) titled "Measuring the Impact of Unbranded Cigarette Packs on Smoking Habits of University Students" conducted to discover the effect of unbranded cigarette packs on young peoples' smoking habits by identifying the smoking preferences of Turkish university students, smoking young university students' second preferred cigarette brand is Winston. When the findings of the research are analyzed by gender, the top choice of female university students addicted to cigarettes is identified as Winston.

This study, based on this finding of "Winston is the brand preferred by smoking young females" by Pınar SedenMeral and EzgiUzel, aims to find out why young female Turkish university students prefer the Winston brand, and how the brand, brand marks and the package affect smoking as well as their perception and behavior towards a brand preference.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method - the phenomenology approach. Phenomenology is a method for examining and describing the existence of phenomena by asking the question: "what is truth?" Phenomenology approach is studying the individual universe; in other words, personal experiences form the basis of this approach (Baş and Akturan, 2013: 84). The main reason behind the decision to use phenomenology - as a pattern interested in participant's subjective experiences - is its suitability to learn the perceptions as well as personal experiences of young females smoking the Winston brand and to examine the meanings attached to the brand.

The data of the research is collected through focus group interviews, one of the most appropriate data collection techniques in phenomenology approach. The data of focus group

interviews is collected from three mini focus group interviews conducted in November and December 2013.

In selection of the participants of the focus group composed of 19 people, a purposeful sampling method - the homogenous sampling technique is utilized. Since the aim here is to define a homogenous sub-group, 228 female samples addicted to smoking and previously participated the research conducted by Pinar SedenMeral and EzgiUzel are evaluated; 70 young females who stated in that research that they were using Winston brand are selected as the sample group. These 70 people were initially interviewed over the phone, and three different group interviews are organized with 19 participants who accepted to participate to the focus group study.

To be able to identify why smoking female university students prefer the Winston brand, and to measure how the design elements on the packs affect the smoking behavior in addition to the choice of brand, the most suitable method available is a focus group study. Focus group study is the most appropriate method for identifying how images and social acceptances are formed or ignored in social situations; understanding how events are evaluated in a person's deep perception, and comprehending how ideas, tendencies, attitudes and behaviors of the target mass are formed in deep perception. Furthermore, focus groups help raise issues that moderator or the researcher cannot foresee and allow participants to discuss the matter in hand from their own perspectives (Scheffels and Sabo, 2013: 451; Gizer, 2011; Balch et al., 2004: 10).

During focus group interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire is used. Semi-structured questionnaires are neither rigid as fully-constructed studies nor as flexible as unstructured ones. By surveying the studies and literature on smoking addiction, cigarette brand preference - packaging relationship and smoking habits of females, the questions and the framework of the interview is created; then three main question categories are established (Hons et al. 2009; Munoz et al., 2013; Hoek et al., 2011; Slade: 1997; Bansal-Travers et al.: 2011; Wakefield and Letcher, 2002; Borland and Savvas, 2013; Wakefield et al., 2008; Hammond et al., 2009; Doxey and Hammond: 2011; Moodie et al., 2011; Dewhirst and Lee, 2012; Owen et al., 2003; The Packaging of Tobacco Products, 2012; Women and Smoking, 2011; Gender Differences and Tobacco). The validity of the three question categories are checked and confirmed with the aid of two expert market researchers. In light of the literature reviews and research in addition to the expert opinions, these three categories are identified as general smoking habits of young females; general associations of the cigarette and social aspect of smoking, and the reasons of preferring the Winston brand; then scrutinizing questions are asked under each category.

Focus group interviews took about 100 to 140 minutes. While the first two group interviews took 140 minutes, the third one lasted about 100 minutes. The first part of each interview took 30-40 minutes, the second part 20-30 minutes, and third and last part of the interview, being the most detailed part took around 60-100 minutes. During the interviews, all variations of Winston brand cigarettes are distributed to the participants and in the third part which involves perceptions on the brand, participants are asked to take the packs into their hands, open them and express their perceptions on Winston products they have not tried before.

The interviews are videotaped, and notes are taken during the sessions. After decrypting the tapes, the data obtained are classified systematically, and descriptive analysis method is used in analysis of the data. Descriptive analysis is a method in which the data obtained are summarized and interpreted based on predetermined themes, direct quotes are frequently used to be able to reflect the participants' opinions and the outcomes are interpreted by cause and effect relationships (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005).

FINDINGS

The perceptions and the reasons of preferences of female university students in favor of Winston brand cigarettes are handled under three main categories, and the views of the participants are listed under headings of general smoking habits of young females, general associations of the cigarette and social aspect of smoking, and the reasons of preferring the Winston brand. While stating the opinions of the participants, direct quotes are used. In direct quotes, only the first names and ages of the participants are disclosed, and no other information about their identities is revealed.

Smoking Habits of Female University Students

The first questions directed to the participants of the focus group interviews were related to the general smoking habits of female university students. Under this category, participants are asked questions about the age they started smoking, the reasons to start, the first brand they used, the number of cigarettes they smoke each day, the reason behind keeping up the smoking behavior and the factors that affect the purchasing decision.

Most of the participants stated that they picked up the habit around the age of 15 and the main reason behind it was smoking family members and friends in addition to stress they suffer (various family matters, breaking up with a boyfriend etc.):

"I started smoking at the age of 14, but I was not carrying a pack by then. I started to carry a cigarette pack in the second year of high school. All the members of my family smoke. I mean, it is something I keep seeing since my childhood. My father smokes, my mother smokes, my elder sister smokes, everybody smokes. This is what happens

if they smoke near a child. I had a childhood friend. Around that time someone entered my life. Then we broke up. Since everybody around me smoked, I thought it was something good. Oh, and my aunt had a fight with her husband one day. She was angry and she said to me 'I'm shaking; give me a smoke so I can collect myself'. When I remembered this after the break-up, I said to my childhood friend that I need to smoke to calm my nerves." (İzel, 20).

"Nobody around me smoked except my father. So it's not something I saw around me. It happened suddenly, in a moment I wanted to calm down. I have an aggressive character ever since my childhood. Suddenly I bought a pack, it wasn't like one here and there. I bought the pack and smoked."(Neslihan, 20).

"I started smoking when I was 19.I was attending a girls' high school and all my friends were smoking. A cigarette between the classes, a cigarette in lunch breaks, a cigarette at evenings. Everybody was smoking all the time, so I did too. Initially I was smoking one or two, this year I started to buy packs of my own."(Hazal, 20).

"I started smoking when I was a sophomore in middle school. At that time, everybody around me was smoking. I had a crush at the time. One day I learnt that he loved someone else; that day I smoked all the cigarettes at home." (Tuğçe, 19).

"I was curious about what a cigarette was like." (Ayşenur, 19).

"My circle of friends was all smokers. So I became one too."(Deniz, 25).

"I wanted to blend in."(Merve, 20).

"I imitated my friends. It was few and far between at first, but eventually I started to buy packs."(Birsen, 24).

"I usually take my mother as example. For me, whatever she does, it is the right thing to do.I want to do everything she does. Her smoking in turn led me to smoke as well." (Kübra A., 20).)

When the responses of the participants are reviewed, a smoking family environment and circle of friends seems like the major reason behind opting to smoke. Individuals raised and lived in a smoking environment normalize smoking, and see it as a natural phase of life. At the same time they witness cigarettes being used as a method for coping with stress, a support tool, and they in turn believe that smoking is a significant element in the struggle against it.

When female university students are asked in what circumstances the rate of smoking rises, it became evident that especially in social environments and in high-stress situations, the number of cigarettes consumed increases significantly:

"My family doesn't know that I smoke. This is why when there is no pressure on me, when I am relaxed, in other words when I have the control over myself, I smoke more."(Damla, 20).

"I smoke more when I'm upset."(Kübra G., 19).

"When I'm upset or angry, I smoke more." (Tuğçe, 19).

"When I'm bored, angry or when I want to look busy, I tend to smoke more cigarettes."(Meral, 20).

"When I'm at home relaxed, when there is no one meddling, definitely I smoke more."(Merve E., 20).

"Especially during midterms and finals, my rate of smoking rises."(Aslı, 21).

"I think smoking increases when we go somewhere with our friends."(Gamze, 20).

"The health warnings on the packs do not affect me at all. I want to smoke more when I see them."(Neslihan, 20).

"I live with my friends in Istanbul. I smoke more when I'm with them, but when I visit my family, smoking never occurs to me. I spend time chatting with my mom and sister. But when I come back to Istanbul, I feel lonely and want to smoke. My boyfriend doesn't. When I'm with him, I don't smoke that much, maybe 1 or 2. It doesn't occur to me. And when I drink alcohol, for instance when I go to a bar, I sometimes finish a pack there."(Gizem, 20).

When the statements of the participants are assessed, it becomes apparent that young women tend to smoke more especially when they are upset and stressed or feel lonely. Furthermore, because of unique challenges of teen years such as struggle for freedom, rebelling against authority and clashing with the parents, young female students, when they are away from their families, in an attempt to prove first to themselves, then to their social circles that they can make their own decisions increase their rate of smoking. In addition, in youth, the health problems associated with smoking are not well understood or cared, and added to the fact that there is a strong desire to rebel against authority, the warning labels on cigarette packs do not deter the teenagers, on the contrary, they cause them to smoke more.

When participants are asked whether they quit smoking before, four participants stated that they tried once, but for various reasons started again; 15 participants on the other hand said they never tried quitting before, because they loved smoking:

"I love smoking, so I'm not thinking about quitting."(Didem, 20).

"If I'm going to be with my friends all the time, then there will always be cigarettes. So there is no need for me to quit."(Merve, 20).

"I never thought of quitting. Despite my health problems, I'm not thinking about or want to quit."(Aslı, 21).

"I don't want to quit and start again. I suppose I'll quit smoking when I get married and get pregnant. I believe there is no reason for me to stop right now."(Ayşenur, 20).

"I tried to quit once. I had a sore throat, so I tested myself if I could quit. I didn't smoke for six to seven days. Then I got angry to my mom, so I started again."(Merve, 20).

"I quit smoking for a brief period of time because my boyfriend doesn't smoke. I was worried how I smelled to him." (Tuğçe, 19).

When the participants are asked the things they pay attention to when buying a cigarette, they expressed that the brand name and the packaging are the two basic things. Two of the participants who stated that they care about the flavor of the cigarette they smoke, said that they try to understand the flavor the cigarette will offer by checking the appearance of the package:

"I tried a number of brands. Flavor is very important to me. So I pick the cigarette I might like by looking at the exterior of the pack."(Didem, 20).

"I love the flavor I feel at the first draw. That's why I'm flavor-focused. But at the initial choice, the packaging is important."(Birsen, 24).

"For me, the brand name is important. I mean they all poison at the end, but the name matters."(Kübra G., 19).

"I do care about the packaging."(Gamze, 20).

General Associations of the Cigarette and Social Aspect of Smoking

In the second part of the focus group interviews, students are asked about the associations they make about cigarettes and smoking as well as the social aspect of smoking. Young women see smoking as a prerequisite or a complementary element of being in a social environment"

"Cigarettes remind me of relaxing after being stressed out. Something to fill the void."(Tuğçe, 19).

"Cigarettes remind me of tea."(Hazel, 20).

"It reminds me of unwinding." (Gizem, 20).

"Cigarette is chatting with my friends. A quick escape."(Didem, 20).

"Relaxation and distraction."(İrem, 19).

"Cigarettes remind me of unwinding or taking a break."(Burcu, 22).

"Cigarettes are chitchats."(Deniz, 25).

"Cigarettes are part of my life. So they remind me of my life." (Merve E., 20).

"Cigarettes are complementary things."(Aslı, 21).

"Cigarettes remind me of chatting with friends. Makes me feel like let's go outside and chitchat with the girls."(Damla, 20).

"For example, we go to a cafe, drink tea or coffee. It's as if I cannot drink tea or coffee without cigarettes. I feel like all my social life will collapse if I don't smoke."(Neslihan, 20).

"I always smoke if there is Turkish coffee."(Kübra A., 20).

When we examine the responses of the students, we see that cigarettes have an "accompanying" association. Cigarettes are positioned by young females as objects that accompany chatting, that remind talking to friends and relaxing, a means of unwinding. In addition, cigarettes are associated with drinks that have cultural roots such as Turkish coffee and these are seen as inseparable things.

It is clear that students feel smoking is a must to become part of a social circle, to maintain social relations. Cigarettes are a vital part of their lives. On the other hand, young women see this vital part as a manly act, think that it is not something appropriate for women who are naive in nature, and believe that a woman who smokes while walking in a street is not an approved sight:

"Deep down, the sight of someone smoking is repulsive, it's just my opinion. I mean, when I see a young girl or and elderly woman smoking in front of me, I keep thinking is this how I look as well. I think it's unattractive. Especially women smoking while walking look awful .It appears so manly. That's why I don't smoke on the streets."(Tuğçe, 19).

"I think the society does not approve of women smoking on the street. So I can never smoke on the streets, especially if I'm walking. A young woman smoking while walking appears suggestive."(İzel, 20).

"I think smoking makes women look manly. This is how I feel even though I smoke as well."(Birsen, 24).

Reasons Why Young Females Prefer the Winston Brand and Associations of Winston Brand

In the third part of the focus group interviews, students are asked why they smoke the Winston brand, what does Winston brand remind of them, how they can describe a typical Winston user and if they can describe the Winston brand with one word. The second half of this part contained questions on their opinions about the packaging and the colors used on the packs of Winston brand cigarettes in addition to the flavor the brand suggests:

"I smoke Winston because I like its flavor."(İzel, 20)

"The flavor is very important to me."(Didem, 20).

"Habits. When I smoke a different brand, I don't feel like I'm smoking."(Hazal, 20).

"I like its design. Definitely perfect. I can only feel like I'm smoking with Winston."(Tuğçe, 19).

"I chose Winston because of the taste. I love this flavor the most."(Merve, 20).

"When I started smoking, there were some shops selling individual cigarettes from open packs. And it was the Winston brand. That's how I got used to Winston and kept on using it.(Deniz, 25).

"It doesn't hurt my throat. I like its flavor."(Gamze, 20).

"It doesn't cause phlegm."(Merve E., 20).

"I think Winston is high quality and has a reasonable price."(Burcu, 22).

"It doesn't hurt the throat."(Kübra A., 20).

"It's not a strong cigarette. That's why I smoke it."(Didem, 20).

"Winston was the first brand I smoked. So - habits." (İrem, 19)

When the expressions of the students are reviewed, the main reason they prefer the Winston brand turns out to be the favorable flavor of the brand. The habits they developed are another significant factor that influences the choice of brand. In addition, the brand is perceived as high-quality by the young women.

When the students are asked about the associations of the Winston brand, they answered with references to the colors used on the products and it becomes clear that the brand does not have a single association:

"I don't like the one with the orange filter. It reminds me of the slums."(Neslihan, 20).

"It reminds me the color blue. Blue means nobility for me."(Gamze, 20).

"It reminds me of being of moderate means."(Gizem, 20)

"Winston is a symbol of statute for me. The white color on the pack reminds me of purity and superiority."(Tuğçe, 19).

"I love the eagle picture on the pack. It reminds me of heights, in other words-quality."(İzel, 20)

"Winston means nobility for me."(Damla, 20).

"Winston reminds me of habits."(Ayşenur, 20).

"Winston means cigarettes."(Deniz, 25)

"It reminds me of pleasure. Plus, the name Winston sounds like a scientist's name."(Birsen, 24).

"It reminds me of pleasure."(Merve, 20)

"It reminds me of getting by."(İrem, 19).

"The name Winston reminds me of an American politician."(Burcu, 22).

"Winston reminds me of quality."(Aslı, 21).

"In one word, quality."(Kübra G., 19).

"When I think about Winston the only thing that comes to my mind is the price."(Didem, 20).

When the comments of the students are reviewed, it becomes evident that the quality perception of the Winston brand is quite high. Winston is a brand that gives pleasure, reminds pleasant times. At the same time, the name of the brand is identified with America, the name sounds like a politician's or a scientist's. This aspect of the name might be considered another reference to quality perception.

The colors and the patterns used on the packaging and product design of the brand's product range are also effective in creating associations. While the students find the orange filtered product belonging to a lower class, they believe that blue indicates nobility. When the students are reminded of the fact that Winston has a number of different colored packs and asked which one they most associated with the brand, unanimous answer was "Light Blue".

In this section, participants are also asked to describe a typical Winston user. They portrayed a typical user with the following sentences:

"In my opinion, a typical Winston user is average. He is middle class."(İzel, 20).

"Someone young, determined and consistent .Someone approachable."(Hazal, 20).

"Balanced and outgoing."(Damla, 20).

"Outgoing."(Gizem, 20).

"Someone fun, friendly, sharing."(Tuğçe, 19).

"A creature of habit."(Gamze, 20).

"A down to earth person; someone unpretentious."(Deniz, 25).

"A student."(Ayşenur, 20).

"Someone who is modest."(Birsen, 24).

"Understanding, friendly and warm."(Merve, 20).

"A typical Winston user is a student."(Kübra A., 20).

"A Winston user is definitely a student. Someone with a limited budget."(Merve E., 20).

"A student."(Meral, 20).

"For me, middle class young people."(Burcu, 22).

"When I think about a typical Winston user, a young person comes to my mind who listens to electronic music and looks fit."(İrem, 19).

"A worker comes to my mind."(Kübra G., 19).

"I think of someone who is or feels young." (Didem, 20)

When the responses of the participants are evaluated, even though expressed differently, their opinions about a Winston user can be organized under six headings. The attributes of a typical user can be described as follows (*Table 1*):

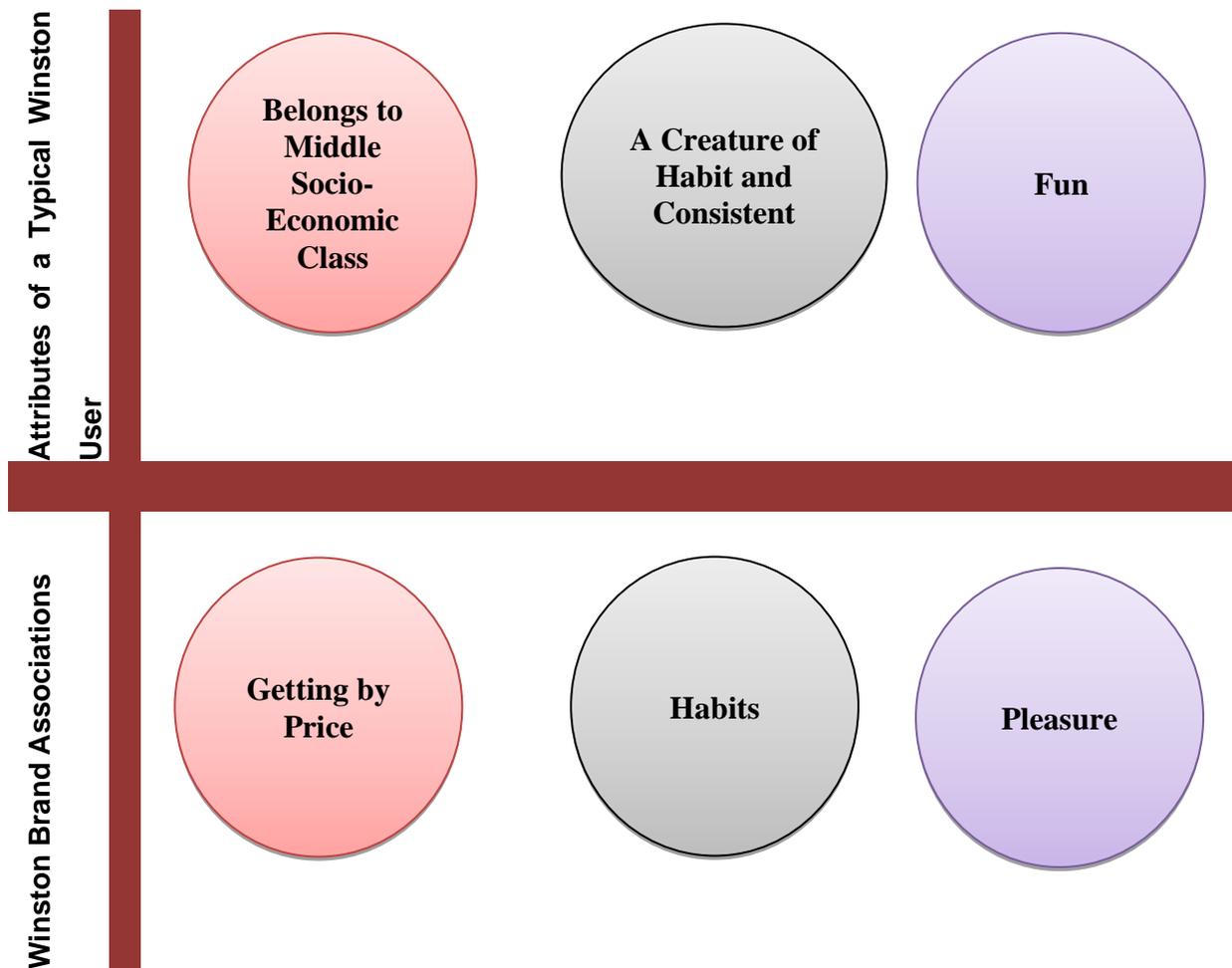
Table 1: Attributes of a Typical Winston User

Belongs to Middle Socio-Economic Class	Friendly and Sharing	Have Habits and Consistent	Fun	Modest and Accessible	Age Group
Student	Friendly	Determined	Fun	Down to earth	Young
Worker	Warm	Balanced	Likes listening to music	Unpretentious	Feels young
Has limited budget	Outgoing	Creature of habit		Modest	
Middle class youngsters	Sharing			Accessible	
Understanding					

According to the views of the participants, a typical Winston user belongs to middle social and economic class, who is someone friendly, sharing, consistent, fun, modest and accessible, is young or feels young. These opinions of the participants describing a typical user overlap with the associations of the Winston brand made by the participants. As regards to brand associations of Winston users', when they think about Winston, "*getting by and price*" comes to their minds while they feel that a typical user belongs to the middle socio-economic class. In addition while "*habits*" is one of the first associations users make, the participants described users of Winston brand as a creature of habits and consistent. The word "*pleasure*" is another association the participants make when they think about Winston. In line with this notion, students described a typical Winston user as someone "*fun*".

The intersection points of Winston's brand associations and a typical user can be seen in the Figure 1.

Figure 1: Attributes of a Typical Winston User and Winston Brand Associations



In this section of the focus group interviews, participants are asked to describe the flavor of the Winston brand cigarettes and what they think about its smoking taste. Without exception, the participants stated that they distinctly taste the tobacco while smoking Winston and it has a mild, but slightly burning taste. Participants also expressed that the flavor of Winston cigarettes is fulfilling and tasteful and it has a mild and intense taste. When the participants are asked what they meant by the fulfilling taste, again all of the participants said that Winston has adequate smoke and it is important for a smoker that the smoke of a cigarette does not disperse in mouth immediately, instead come out of mouth and nose with the same intensity, and that is how one can understand the real flavor of a cigarette.

Participants are asked two questions about the packaging of Winston. The first question was about whether a Winston pack meets their expectations. Half of the participants (10 participants) stated that the packaging of Winston cigarettes meets their expectations to the maximum, and they are appropriate in terms of both aesthetics and functionality. The other half

of the participants (9 participants) on the other hand claimed that the pack deforms in their purses more than the other brands, and they found this sloppy when compared to its counterparts. These participants also conveyed that they might like some additional features such as a lighter pocket in Winston packs, and the cover of the pack can be changed to open from the side like some of the other brands.

The second question about the packaging was related to the colors used on cigarette packs of Winston brand. All of the participants stated that the red pack has a tough and macho appearance, and even though they have not tried the red pack, they think of it as a heavy and strong flavored product. In a similar fashion to the red pack, all of the participants expressed their dislike about the dark blue pack (Winston Code), and claimed that the dark blue color looks smothering and boring.

"I find the dark blue Winston pack very repelling. It looks like a trucker's cigarette."(İrem, 20).

"In my opinion, the dark blue Winston looks like a poor quality item, as if it is a sub-industry product."(Didem, 20).

"The dark blue pack looks as if it doesn't belong to Winston range. It looks cheap and crude."(Deniz, 25).

All of the participants stated that they smoke light blue colored Winston Blue. They explained that they liked the design of Winston Blue, and especially found the white color used as complementary to the light blue very stylish and liked it.

"I really liked the packaging of Winston Blue. The white color looks quite classy, it has a chic appearance."(Hazal, 20).

"I feel like Winston Blue is healthier because it has white color on it." (Aslı, 21).

Participants are also asked about their opinions on black colored and silver colored Winston Xsence that are shorter and slim. The participants admitted that they have never tried these two products. When asked the reasons of never trying, the main reason they voiced was Xsence products' short length and slim design, and the belief that as people who love smoking, a cigarette that is both short and slim would not fulfill their smoking needs.

"I did not try these products before. I like its pack design, but I feel like it will not be fulfilling, like it's going to finish immediately."(İzel, 20).

"I don't like slim cigarettes anyway. Those are for someone who doesn't know how to smoke or is trying to cut back."(Neslihan, 20).

"Now I'm curious about the black pack. I never tried it. But because it's short, it doesn't look appealing."(Merve, 20).

Another reason the participants expressed why they had never bought the black and silver packed short and slim Xsence products even though they seen them before, was the belief that the pack did not look appropriate for their age group, instead it looked like a cigarette for working men and women over 35 or 40, and because of the black color, it gives the impression of a higher tar rate.

"Not everybody can smoke this, even though it is slim, it looks strong."(Gizem, 20).

"I think the black slim pack is for men. It looks strong."(İzel, 20).

"Black must be strong. For women over 35 or 40."(Tuğçe, 19).

"I find it uninviting."(Hazel, 20).

The silver colored Xsence pack on the other hand looked to the participants like a cigarette that businessmen and businesswomen could smoke, and although milder than the black pack, perceived as classy and high-class. The participants also thought that the silver pack has lower tar content.

"It looks like a cigarette for the business world, but it's cute and feminine."(Aslı, 21).

"The grey pack might be for a young girl. Light. Feminine." (Damla, 20).

"It looks very elegant. Classy and high class. Feminine and appealing."(Gamze, 20).

"The silver pack looks like it has lower tar content."(Burcu, 22).

Finally, in the third part of the interview, participants are asked to describe the Winston brand with one word. The responses of the participants are the first notions that come to their minds about the brand.

"Happiness."(İzel, 20).

"The color blue. The positive energy blue gives."(Tuğçe, 19).

"Chatting with friends."(Kübra G., 19).

"Habit."(Neslihan, 20; Deniz, 25).

"Relaxation and tension release."(Didem, 20).

"Savior."(Birsen, 24).

"Lightness."(İrem, 20).

"Economic."(Burcu, 22).

"Addiction."(Kübra A., 20).

"Quality."(Meral, 20).

"Friend."(Gizem, 20)

It is not possible to claim that there is a complete consensus in describing the Winston brand with one word; however, the choice of words the participants chose to portray the brand coincides with the statements they made during the interview in explaining their perceptions of the brand and the associations they had in their minds about the concept of cigarette. Winston is a brand that is liked, embraced and consciously chosen by the participants; because

participants also expressed that they will continue to prefer Winston brand even if unbranded pack/black pack policy is implemented. Nevertheless, it is evident that the brand has no specific positioning in participants' minds.

CONCLUSION

Adolescence, as one of the most important phases in life, shapes the individual's future. This is a period when there is a strong desire for trying out new things, high degree of curiosity, an aspiration to be accepted and feel important in the social circle. There is also a strong desire to become independent in the path to become individuals, and see oneself as someone who is listened instead of an extension of the family. This is why in this period there is a high degree of resistance and clashing tendency against authority - which could be either parents or teachers. The young person sees authority as a mechanism preventing personal development, and tends to conflict, act against advises in an attempt to prove oneself. The teenager on the one hand wishes to become an individual by gaining independence, and on the other hand conforms to the behaviors of social groups s/he chooses or is accepted into. Young adults in this phase go through a number of physiological, psychological, social, cognitive and sexual changes. All these changes intensify the emotions of the youngster, and when they do not know how to cope with these intense feelings, they tend to use substances or objects they believe provide relief. In this period, potential health problems are less felt or cared. That is why the use of pleasure inducing or relaxing substances can easily strengthen and turn into addictions. Youth is a period when limits and restrictions are pushed; and there is a strong desire to rebel. In a phase when rules are disobeyed and restrictions are challenged, when resisting authority is perceived as a sign of growing up and independence, smoking becomes a means of proving oneself. The need for a role model causes young adults to become vulnerable to peer-pressures. If smoking is perceived as a prerequisite for belonging to a certain social group, then starting to smoke becomes an inevitable thing for the adolescent.

The marketing activities of the tobacco industry is another contributing factor for picking up the habit. Smoking in this period is considered as a means of constructing an identity or reinforcing an existing one because of the struggle to build a character or to express this character to the outside world. The largest share in this perception belongs to the cigarette packs that describe or identify the product. The name of the brand, typography, colors and other characteristic elements displayed on the packs until the pack is finished reflect the identity and the image of the brand, and affect the perception and choices of individuals by enabling the individual identify with that brand. Young people shape and express the person they are, they are not or want to become, and emphasize the differences between themselves and others as

well as the social identities and positions with the help of associations the packs provide without even realizing it. The stimuli such as the colors, size and action used in the pack design for steering the perception of the teenagers have also critical importance in guiding the senses. The teenagers, by looking at these basic elements make decisions on whether the brand fits them and express them adequately.

Based on the finding "Winston is the preferred brand of smoking young females", and taking the unique attributes of adolescence into account, the findings of this study targeting to discover the reasons why young female university students prefer Winston brand, their attitudes and behaviors towards the brand, and how the design elements of the brand affect their purchasing decisions in addition to their perceptions can be summarized as follows:

- Young females usually start smoking around the age of 15 and 16.
- The main reason behind young women starting to smoke is a smoking family environment and hence seeing smoking as a natural and normal consequence of growing up. A smoking circle of friends is also effective in starting to smoke. Even if there is no one smoking in their group of friends, a smoking family member taken as a role model such as a mother's attitude towards cigarettes and her smoking habits triggers the young person to start smoking as well. Seeing their mother lighting up a cigarette when stressed causes the teenagers to perceive smoking as a stress-relief tool, as an object that relaxes people emotionally. The aspiration to be just like the mother leads the teenagers to smoke even at the slightest problem.
- Failure to realize potential health problems during adolescence is one of the major factors for young females to keep smoking.
- Young women tend to think that women in general bear more responsibilities and lead more stressful lives. In turn, because of seeing smoking as a stress-relief tool in addition to the addictive effect of nicotine by activating the reward or incentive system of the brain called mesolimbic center, youngsters keep smoking more cigarettes believing that it will give relaxation after a stressful situation. Cigarette is a tool for unwinding.
- Cigarettes are also a significant companion. Chatting with friends, drinking tea or coffee or consuming alcohol are activities that might become dull without smoking. This is why smoking is seen as a highly critical element for enjoying life.
- Even though the participants love smoking, they do not see it as an appropriate act for women. For these young students, smoking is a manly act. On the other hand, they have no desire to be or look like a man. Cigarette is not a tool that proves their power over or equality to the opposite gender; it is just a "companion" that accompanies chatting with friends or a "habit".

- Young women participated in the study expressed the importance of flavor in their brand choice. In this sense, the flavor of Winston brand is another major reason behind their choice.
- Students think that Winston brand cigarettes are light, leave a non-burning taste and fulfilling. They believe that the problems they experience in the morning such as nasal congestion or phlegm if they smoke other brands do not occur with Winston. In addition, they relate the intense smoke of Winston brand with the high-quality of the product. So they continue to use this brand.
- While deciding on the brand of cigarette, young women make their initial choice based on its price and quality. They do not purchase a brand because it is cheap; on the contrary, they believe that inexpensive products are more harmful.
- Even though Winston brand falls into a high-middle price category, they see the brand as middle class. Despite the fact that they pay a higher price for Winston than equivalent products, they see it as the cigarette of people with limited budget, i.e. students. At the same time they tend to keep smoking Winston even if they could afford to pay more.
- Young women identify the Winston brand with quality.
- Another significant association the young women make with Winston is pleasure. When they think about the brand, they think about the pleasant times they spent or will spend as well as the pleasure they will get by smoking it.
- In the view of young women, a typical Winston user is someone who belongs to the middle class, down to earth, a creature of habit, unpretentious, empathetic, friendly, fun, sharing, consistent and outgoing. These attributes illustrate the brand identity of Winston as well.
- The participants are responsive to the colors used on the packaging of Winston cigarettes. The products contained in red and dark blue packs of the brand are perceived as non-Winston cigarettes and does not conform to the common brand associations. The tones and the design of colors used on dark blue and red packs transfer sensations from the appearance of the pack to the product by creating a Halo effect and cause a negative perception about the contents. Both products are regarded by the participants as low class, cheap, crude, of lower quality and belonging to the slums.
- The Winston Blue used by the participants on the other hand is favored both because of its contents and the reflection of this content on the pack, and form the real perception of the brand. The white color used on the pack design of Winston Blue heightens the quality perception of the product, and leads to a sense of nobility and high-class. The eagle emblem of the brand is regarded as a feature more striking than the Winston Blue itself, and considered as an emphasis of the nobility and high-class positioning of the brand.

- As a lighter cigarette than Winston Blue, Winston Silver is considered as excessively light and hence not a preferred product. In a similar manner to dark blue and red packs, this product does not have a positive association either. The silver color surrounding the emblem and logo of the brand is also disliked by the participants and considered as characterless.
- The participants also expressed that they had never tried the slim range of Winston. Since slim cigarettes are not considered as "real" by the participants, these products are considered as suitable for businessmen and businesswomen who just started smoking, who does not inhale or trying to cut back/quit smoking. All of the participants enjoy smoking. Even though slim products are seen as feminine, participants do not prefer these thinking that they would not be fulfilling enough.
- Slim and Xsence, a range composed of short cigarettes, are not among the products preferred by the young women either. Xsence range is offered to Turkish market in short and slim packs either in silver and metallic lined over black or completely silver colored. The colors and style used on the pack design of this product coincides with the general perception on Winston brand. Participants think that Xsence range is high-quality, sleek, high-class, stylish and tasteful as well as elegant. Participants also expressed that while the black pack looks manly, silver colored pack appears more feminine.
- The size of the package of a product is a highly significant factor in making the purchasing decision. According to research, consumers prefer larger packages when offered a choice. In line with these researches, the participants believed that the products in short and slim packs (of Winston Slim and Xsence products) will not last long enough, and if someone already purchased the product they might try one out of curiosity, but they will not buy one just to try it out.
- There was no consensus among the participants when describing the Winston brand with one word. The brand reminds concepts like chatting, relaxation, economic, happiness, friend, addiction and quality. These concepts also describe the effect smoking creates in participants, and are indications of an incomplete picture of the brand positioning in young women's minds. An indication of this incomplete positioning is participants' statements regarding both the high quality of the product and its perception as middle class. Even though they purchase this brand not because of its affordable price (the price range of the brand is middle-high and participants think that the price is not low), but because it is Winston and promise a particular quality, when they think about the brand they think of the price.
- Because the price gets ahead of the quality of the brand, it is not perceived as a manifestation of prestige.

The Winston brand is preferred by young females mainly because of its flavor; it is seen as a high-quality product, but despite the fact that it is in middle-high price range, is considered as middle class. The fact that the elements of the package design used by the brand in its product range do not fit well with the desired positioning of the brand causes a confusion in its perception, and therefore there is no clear positioning for the brand in participants' minds.

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