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Sir Stelios claims victory in 'Easy' name battle with China

By **SIMON NEVILLE**

EasyJet founder **Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou** has claimed victory in a legal battle with China's national airline over the use of the word "easy" in its advertising.

Air China launched a Beijing-Frankfurt service in May 2017, described as the "Easy Way" to visit Europe for millions of Chinese tourists.

But Sir Stelios took issue with its use, claiming it was a breach of copyright for his EasyGroup of brands.

His company said: "Following a brief exchange of solicitors' letters, Air China has agreed to stop use of the wording."

Sir Stelios added: "We have a long-standing and well-publicised policy of pursuing brand thieves in courts in UK, EU courts and beyond.

"Some brand thieves are small companies that simply fold instead of fighting it out in court. So it is reassuring to see

a company with the size and standing of Air China accepting the logic and fairness of not using another travel company's brand."

Colombian airline Easyfly and Honduran airline Easy Sky have both been hit with similar legal demands last year, and earlier this year Bangladesh-based cargo carrier easyFly agreed to change its name. Previous litigation over the word "easy" by Sir Stelios has also seen Netflix come under the tycoon's radar for its TV series Easy, with it facing similar legal action.

Netflix said at the time that it thinks "viewers can tell the difference between a show they watch and a plane they fly (in)."

Sir Stelios launched easyJet in 1995, kickstarting the rise of low-cost air travel. He floated the company five years later, although remains as the largest shareholder with a 34 per cent stake. He subsequently launched several different companies all with the prefix

"easy", including easyEnergy, easyCar and easyFood.

The easyHotel chain, which is also listed, is currently in the midst of a takeover battle, with Sir Stelios clashing with the board, claiming the £138.7 million bid by Ivanhoe Cambridge and Icamap undervalues the business.

Last month Sir Stelios was defeated in his bid to fight off a takeover of easyHotel, the chain he founded in 2004 and in which he retains a minority stake. A consortium made up of property investors ICA-MAP, from Luxembourg, and Ivanhoe Cambridge, from Canada, announced that it had received enough acceptances of its 95p per share offer to tip its shareholding over the 50 per cent threshold. The offer values the company's shares at £139m. The remaining shareholders have until September 17 to accept the offer, which has been recommended by easyHotel's board as "fair and reasonable".

