

## THE ROLE OF BRANDING IN DESTINATION MARKETING

Ayşen Civelek

Vocational School of Social Sciences, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

E-mail: [acivelek@selcuk.edu.tr](mailto:acivelek@selcuk.edu.tr)

### ABSTRACT

Although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, tourism destination branding is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the ever more competitive tourism marketplace, destinations are increasingly adopting branding techniques in an effort to craft and differentiate an identity which emphasises the uniqueness of their product. Tourism destinations are difficult to manage because of the complex relationships of their diverse public and private stakeholders. It focuses particularly on the political processes involved in successful brand management and on the vital role of public and private sector stakeholders. This paper briefly discusses the role of branding in destination marketing and evaluates whether destinations can indeed be branded as other goods and services.

**Key Words:** Tourism, Brand, Destination, Marketing, Destination Marketing

### INTRODUCTION

In our age, changes emerging in social, economic and cultural areas, especially in industrialized western countries, have widely increased tourism demand. Parallel to developments, the efforts of countries to attract potential tourists are growing, and a cutthroat competition is observed among countries marketing similar tourism products (İlkin and Dinçer, 1991: 47).

Today competition is experienced not only among products and enterprises but also among countries and destinations. When considered from this respect, destinations expecting to take advantage in the competition need to determine their features that would help them become brands and benefit from these features (Özdemir and Karaca, 2009:114).

It is almost impossible for a country to create a consistent perception as each of the cities constituting that country has different outstanding features. This becomes clear especially in tourism. People do not go to France, Italy and Turkey for holiday. They go to Paris, Venice, Istanbul and Antalya. Here the task that countries must take on is to leave the field clear for branding of cities and to produce correct policies in order to increase the contribution of branding cities to the economy of the country.

### DESTINATION MARKETING

Today the opinion that marketing is an activity just for physical goods has been abandoned and it is accepted that the implementation area of marketing cannot be restricted with physical goods. According to this notion; people need marketing as long as they produce more than their needs. However, there are some differences between the marketing of physical goods and services. On the condition that major approaches remain the same, making decisions on issues such as selling, pricing, distribution, promotion and producing solutions for both goods and services in every field in which marketing is implemented will continue (Timur, 1994: 4). Tourism marketing is a management process which aims to be more influential in meeting demands of current and potential customers and satisfying tourists better by comparison with rival enterprises and destinations (Fyall and Garrod, 2005: 43). Tourism marketing is “a management philosophy which aims at doing researches, making predictions and choices concerning the tourism product and making decisions related to these issues by considering the characteristics of the tourism demand to enable the tourism product to get a good position in market in accordance with the objective of a touristic destination (tourism region) or a tourism establishment to gain the highest profit” (Kozak, 2010: 26).

A destination which is put into the service of nonlocal tourists and overnight tourists is an area having different natural beauties, features and attractions. A tourism destination which means a place attracting visitors can be described as a geographic area having various touristic values and features and providing all or some of the touristic products that a tourist may need during his/her travel (Atay, 2003:27).

A touristic facility, a bay, a region, a country, a group of countries, even a continent can be described as a touristic destination. This diversity of the destinations affects those marketing them.

Tourism marketing for cities is an activity causing economic, politic and social changes in a city and it brings developments into the operational environment of cities. While cities rapidly increase their attractions by means of city marketing, they are turning their mobile resources and corporate investments into elements that visitors and residents benefit from. Through this concept and methods, cities may become brands and

all products and services produced by that city become more desirable for the target audience (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2007: 16).

The objective of destination marketing is described as shaping the tourism demand oriented to a destination; however destinations are in a cutthroat struggle for branding because of international market competition which has been increasing in recent years.

In order to be noticed in the cutthroat competition environment, destinations need to come to the forefront with a remarkable and different image and perform their marketing work within the process of “branding” (Ersun and Arslan, 2009: 100- 101).

### **BRAND CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF BRANDS**

Marketing is the process of meeting human requirements profitably. The unique and most important purpose of this process is to construct a brand in the mind of customers (Ries and Ries, 2000:9).

Today branding phenomenon which is the base of economy has become a necessity for corporations and products to survive. Along with globalization, parallel to rapid progress in technology and communication network, an enterprise somewhere in the world may compete with an enterprise in another location of the world. In this case, brand concept which is identified in the focus of differentiating value gains importance. Brand has been described many times until today. According to the definition stated by American Marketing Association, which underlies this research; “branding is a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a design or a combination of all that determines and identifies a product or distinguishes it from those produced by competitors (Odabaşı and Oyman, 2002:360), (Kotler, 1997:443).

Kavas, (2004:19) identifies brand as everything offered by firms to consumers or customers and everything showing that it is different from those provided by its competitors, whereas Bozkurt, (2004:48) defines brand as the whole of relationships established with consumers. Real owners of a brand are consumers and only consumers can create brands, accordingly.

Another definition states that a brand is “the whole of tangible or intangible benefits obtained from a product; shortly it is the whole of customer experiences” (Gilmore, 2003: 20).

It looks simple to define the term brand but actually it is quite complicated as it does not consist of only a name and a symbol. A brand consists of different components. These are as follows (Zyman, 2003:64-67);

- A brand is a concept including the whole experiences of a customer related to a product and an enterprise,
- A brand is not only a product or the sense of satisfaction that can be obtained from a product for customers, but it is the sum of their experiences related to the values that the enterprise possesses,
- It is related to the importance given by an enterprise to its customers,
- A brand is the whole of functional and emotional benefits, qualities, experiences of using, icons and symbols,
- A brand is the connection between an enterprise and interests, demands and needs of customers,
- A brand is a tool that makes loyal users of an enterprise come back again,
- It is the way of an enterprise to transfer the meaning of a product.

Because a brand is the product of an enterprise, it has a considerable value in terms of both risk and profit and competitive advantage.

A brand protects an enterprise against imitation, copying, unfair competition and so on. The faults of strong brands in their market are forgiven easily because consumers give a second chance to strong brands. A brand has a more effective power on increase in demand than the name of an enterprise. Consumers become regular customers because a strong brand increases customer loyalty. Market shares of strong brands are greater than weak brands possess.

### **DESTINATION BRANDING**

Although destination branding is a new concept, academicians and researchers agree that destinations can be branded in the same way as costumer goods and services (İlban, 2008: 124). A destination can be branded like any product. A brand stimulates faith, arouses feelings and encourages individuals to move (Kotler and Gertner, 2002: 249).

Destination selection is a significant lifestyle indicator for today’s eager consumers. The places that they select to have good time and to spend the money they earn should be a famous city having an emotional attraction (Morgan et al., 2004:4). Destination branding is more complicated and difficult than other products and services because of the reasons given below (Pike, 2005: 258- 259):

- Destinations are more dimensional than consumer goods and other services. For example, a slogan may include all dimensions of a brand as it contains various and optional-type natural resources, culture,

activities, facilities and accommodations of a destination: “Kenya- the most beautiful destination of the universe, all in one country”

- The interests of active stakeholders in various groups in market are heterogeneous. It is necessary to reach the large masses by proportions in markets.

- It is important who decides on the main theme and how he/she identifies it. A producing company has a voice for a product or service in this respect, whereas it is not possible for a simple person or group to have a voice in building a destination brand and determining which aspect of a destination would be featured.

- There must be a balance between the brand theory and the consensus of a society because it is unlikely that an approach which looks down on the implementations of a destination brand would be successful.

- Brand loyalty is one of the cornerstones of consumer-based equity model. However, it is hard to determine the loyalty to a destination brand. Destination marketing organizations can evaluate brand loyalty by measuring repeat visits.

- Fund is a significant problem for destination marketing organizations. The largest marketing budget may fall behind the budget of a big company.

A destination brand is an experimental concept which sticks in minds as an image that occurs as a result of a comprehensive brand strategy and includes all experiences of destination visitors concerning the destination and emerges in consequence of the reflection of demands and requirements of the target audience and experiences that they have there. A destination brand is a symbolic structure consisting of recollective memories specific to the destination, features making a destination attractive and a connotation of qualified aspects (Ünal, 2001:27).

Destination branding whose focus is on developing a brand identity is the process of bringing additional attractions to the related destination. Today, the competition among destinations has come to a state having global quality. Regardless of where they are, all destinations must develop new initiatives in order to survive in this competition. Many destinations want to develop new images about themselves, especially in order to change negative images that they have (Rainisto, 2003:12).

Destinations prefer branding with various purposes. Visitors whose purpose is tourism, business-world-oriented investors select branding for purposes such as qualified labor force, being a destination preferred for education and they use different branding strategies in the direction of chosen purpose (Kavaratsiz, 2005:330).

Like branding of a product, branding of destinations is a name, a logo, a slogan, a symbol or a combination of all that describes the product and differentiates it from other products (Ersun and Arslan, 2009: 101).

Certain principles must be available in order to construct a strong destination brand. These include a slogan, a symbol, a jingle, infrastructure and superstructure works, quality, management units, organizational culture, trust, transportation, alternative tourism, a brand identity, protection of natural environment and attitudes and behaviors of local people. For many destinations, slogan is important in the positioning strategy of a destination. Cities are increasingly getting substitutable aspects and therefore it is getting harder to distinguish. A slogan, on the other hand, establishes a connection between the brand identity and the real brand image in market. In other words, a slogan distinguishes time and destinations meaningfully. A destination can be made different through physical qualities that it has such as superstructure investments, architecture. However, they cannot motivate a customer every time and in a sufficient way because these qualifications can be imitated easily. Destination branding is considered to be the best marketing weapon of contemporary marketers taking a stand in the global competition (Yavuz, 2007: 46).

## RESULT

Cities in our age which plan to get high benefits from tourism have begun to pay more attention to issue of branding. When positive effects of tourism sector on many areas are taken into consideration, it is seen that this situation also causes an increasing competition environment. Thus, destination marketers treat with greater care while marketing a country, a region or a territory where they exist and in addition to customer satisfaction, they try to build a brand and a brand value in order to be permanent. The use of creating a brand as an important competition tool is increasing its importance in the changing tourism marketing structure in the sector of tourism. Particularly, the idea of marketing a country as a single destination and as a single product has been abandoned, regional and urban touristic promotion and marketing is becoming widespread increasingly by bringing touristic product identities of various regions of countries and certain territories of regions into the forefront.

The activities(festivals, sports events, etc.) organized in cities and symbols specific to cities (The Eiffel Tower, The Statue of Liberty, Big Ben, etc.) have great effects on the process of becoming a brand city of important brand cities such as Paris, Rome, New York, Amsterdam, Barcelona, London which are prominent

cities in the world tourism market. Thus, becoming a brand, building a brand value and developing an identity mean being one step ahead in the competition for each touristic product. As a touristic product, becoming a brand and creating a brand value in order to make consumers accept the identity and the appearance of a destination is very important for destinations to acquire competitiveness. For this reason, brand value of a destination is the most crucial point for marketing success of a destination.

World market has fallen under the great influence of globalization in our age. Accordingly, destination branding is becoming necessary as a result of technological developments of the 21st century and the increase in the mobility of human resources. The benefit of brand composition for destinations is drawing attention of people by making difference and strengthening its position in competition environment.

To be effective on purchasing decisions of customers, it is necessary to access market with differentiated products meeting demands of the target audience, that is, with brands. Becoming a brand in the sector of tourism means increase in incomes, profits and it is important for both individuals and corporations and states. More tourists visit a country, a region, a city and an enterprise which has managed to be a brand.

## REFERENCES

ATAY, L. (2003), Turistik Destinasyon Pazarlaması ve Bir Alan Uygulaması, *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*, İzmir, p. 27.

BOZKURT, İ. (2004). *İletişim Odaklı Pazarlama*, İstanbul, MediaCat.

ERSUN, N. & ARSLAN, K. (2009), "Kongre Turizminin Geliştirilmesinde Kongre ve Ziyaretçi Bürolarının Rolü ve Önemi", *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 8(15), pp. 89–114.

FYALL, A. & GARROD, B. (2005), *Tourism Marketing: A Collaborative Approach*, U.K:Channel View Publication.

GILMORE, F. (2003), *Marka Savaşçıları*. (Fevzi Yalım, Çev.), İstanbul, MediaCat Yayınları,2. Baskı.

İLBAN, M.O. (2008), "Seyahat Acenta Yöneticilerinin Destinasyon Marka İmajı Algıları". *Ege Akademik Bakış*, Vol:8, No: 1, pp. 121-152.

İLKİN, A. & DİNÇER, M. Z. (1991), *Turizm Kesiminin Türk Ekonomisindeki Yeri ve Önemi*, TOBB Yayın No:217, AYDB:106, Ankara.

KAVARATZIS, M. (2005), "Place Branding: A Review of Trends and Conceptual Models", *The Marketing Review*, (5), p.330.

KAVARATZIS, M. & ASHWORTH, G. J. (2007), "Partners In Coffeeshops, Canals And Commerce: Marketing The City Of Amsterdam", *Cities*, Vol:24, No:1, pp:16-25

KAVAS, A. (2004), Marka Değeri Yaratma, *Pazarlama ve İletişim Kültürü Dergisi*, Vol:3, No: 8.

KOTLER, P. (1997), *Marketing Management*, 9 Th Edition, Prentice- Hall, Inc. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey

KOTLER, P. & GERTNER. D. (2002), "Country as brand, product, and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective", *Brand Management*, Vol. 9, No. 4-5, p. 249-265

KOZAK, N. (2010), *Turizm Pazarlaması*, Ankara, Detay Yayıncılık.

MORGAN, N. PRITCHARD, A. & PRIDE, R. (2004), *Destination Branding*, Second Edition, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.

ODABAŞI, Y. & OYMAN, M. (2002), *Pazarlama İletişimi Yönetimi*, Mediacat Yayınları, Eskişehir

ÖZDEMİR, Ş. & KARACA, Y. (2009), "Kent Markası ve Marka İmajının Ölçümü: Afyonkarahisar Kenti İmajı Üzerine Bir Araştırma", *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi İ.İ.B.F. Dergisi*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 113-134.

PİKE, S.(2002), “Destinaton İmage Analysis A Review Of 142 PApers From 1973 To 2000”, *Tourism Management*, vol:23, pp: 541-549

RAINİSTO, S.K. (2003), “Success Factors of Place Marketing: A Study of Place Marketing Practices in Northern Europe and the United States”, *Helsinki University of Technology, Institute Of Strategy and International Business*, p.12

RİES, A.& RİES, L. ( 2000), *Marka Yaratmanın 22 Kuralı*, (Atakan Özdemir, Çev.), Ankara, MediaCat Kitapları.

ÜNAL, N.(2001), “Rekabet Düzeyi En Yüksek Sektör Turizm”, *Standard Ekonomik ve Teknik Dergi*, Yıl:40, (470), p.27.

YAVUZ, M. C. (2007), “Uluslararası Destinasyon Markası Oluşturulmasında Kimlik Geliştirme Süreci: Adana Örneği”, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Adana, Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

ZYMAN, S. (2003), *Bildiğimiz Reklamcılığın Sonu*, (F.Cihan Dansuk, Çev.), İstanbul: MediaCat Yayınları.