

Branding a Millennia-old Turkish City:

Case of Gaziantep

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Abstract

During the last two decades many cities, regions, and countries are investing in branding efforts to gain a competitive edge in today's global market. City branding is a popular practice used by many different cities in the context of competition for resources, markets, opportunities and attention. This article aims at discussing the branding efforts of Gaziantep (a city in South Eastern Turkey), carried out between 2003 and 2006 and tried to revive in 2016. Campaign is analyzed considering the 5-step approach suggested by Kotler including research; vision, goals and strategy development; target groups; implementation and monitoring. For the analysis of Gaziantep branding campaign relevant legal documents retrieved from Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce for the first and from Gaziantep Municipality for the second phase of the branding campaign. In addition, an in-depth interview is conducted with an official from the Public Relations Department of Gaziantep Municipality to gain deeper insight.

Keywords: Brand management, branding, city branding, city marketing, tourism marketing

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Bin Yıllık Bir Şehrin Markalaşması:

Gaziantep Örneği

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Öz

Geçtiğimiz yirmi yıl küresel pazarda rekabet üstünlüğü kazanmak isteyen kentlerin, bölgelerin ve ülkelerin markalama çabalarına yönelmesine tanıklık etti. Kent markalama kaynaklar, pazarlar, fırsatlar ve kamuoyu ilgisi için birbiriyle rekabet eden kentler arasında oldukça popüler bir pratik haline aldı. Bu makale Türkiye'nin güneydoğusunda yer alan Gaziantep kentinin 2003 ve 2006 yılları arasında hayata geçirdiği ve 2016 yılında tekrar canlandırmaya çalıştığı markalama kampanyasını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Kampanya Kotler tarafından geliştirilen ve araştırma; vizyon, amaç ve strateji geliştirme; hedef gruplar; uygulama ve denetleme aşamalarını içeren 5 aşamalı yaklaşımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Analiz için kampanyanın ilk aşamasına ilişkin dokümanlar Gaziantep Ticaret Odası'ndan, ikinci aşamasına ilişkin dokümanlar ise Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nden elde edilmiştir. Ayrıca Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nden bir halkla ilişkiler uzmanıyla derinlemesine görüşme yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka yönetimi, markalama, kent markalama, şehir pazarlaması, turizm pazarlaması

Nowadays branding has gone beyond just the branding of products and services and as Hankinson points out the branding process of people, places and even ideologies began.¹ During the last forty years, there has been a growing interest in city branding within the academia and the public authorities. City branding efforts should be seen related to globalisation and structural adjustments that have meant the relative decline of traditional manufacturing.² As Kavaratzis states “in general, city marketing is commonly employed as a response to certain new conditions evident in cities throughout the world; conditions that are thought to be generated by the forces of economic, political and cultural globalisation”.³ They are commonly associated with the increased mobility of investment capital, with the easier relocation of companies, with the decreasing influence of the nation-state, the radical development of the knowledge or information-based society and increased global connectivity. As a result of it, cities from all over the world started paying attention to branding in mid 1980s, and this attention turned into a more systematic and serious effort in 1990s.⁴

This article aims at discussing the branding efforts of a Southeastern city in Turkey, Gaziantep, which carried out between 2003 and 2006 and tried to revive in 2016. In 2006, a period when globalization made its power felt

especially on production and trade, Gaziantep as a town which produces “intermediate goods” adopted being a brand city as a resistance strategy to globalization in order to compete with the Far East and embarked on a city branding campaign that was based on an emphasis on entrepreneurship. The campaign ran by Gaziantep Chamber of Industry for three years, went on hiatus after 2006. In 2016, under the cooperation of Gaziantep Governorship, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, and Silkroad Development Agency, branding efforts have been revitalized by introducing an emphasis on tourism instead of entrepreneurship. The project is still being continued.

For the analysis of Gaziantep branding campaign city marketing and city branding literature is reviewed. Relevant legal documents retrieved from Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce for the first phase of the branding campaign and from Gaziantep Municipality for the second phase of the campaign is analyzed considering the 5 step approach suggested by Kotler. An in-depth interview is conducted with an official from the Public Relations Department of Gaziantep Municipality to gain a deeper insight about the branding campaign and through this interview also second phase branding campaign materials presented to municipality by ‘*I Mean It* Branding and Advertising Agency’ is obtained and analyzed. Finally, digital Turkish national newspaper archives are scanned to reach the news related to Gaziantep branding campaign.

City Marketing to City Branding

Lately, cities compete on an international scale to attract visitors, investors, talented people and inhabitants.⁵ As a response to this competition and to stay competitive and relevant on the global market of cities – cities all over the world engage in marketing and branding efforts.⁶ The concept of city marketing is one of the popular concepts of the last thirty years and it is usually thought as a relatively “recent phenomenon”. However, Ashworth and Voogd suggest that the history of the marketing of cities can be traced back to much further into the past.⁷ For instance during the 19th century, American cities marketed themselves as sites of land development opportunities associated with the coming of railroads.⁸ But it is no coincidence that the concept gained popularity in the 1980s. “Economic restructuring, spurred on by the ‘long recession’ of the 1970s and 1980s, has resulted in fundamental changes not only in what is produced and how it is produced, but also, critically, where it is produced”.⁹ City marketing is seen as a key to city attractiveness and competitiveness.

In their ground breaking article Kotler and Zaltman stated that “social marketing is the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research”. According to Ashworth and Voogd from these lines of thinking two concepts emerged: The first was social marketing and the second was the concept of the marketable image.¹⁰ These two underlie the development of the idea of city marketing. While Kotler himself defines place marketing as “designing a place to satisfy the needs of its target markets. It succeeds when citizens and businesses are pleased with their community, and the expectations of visitors and investors are met”,¹¹ Braun defines city marketing as “the coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city’s customers and the city’s community at large”.¹²

Marketing of a place, destination or city involves the application of marketing instruments to geographical locations, such as nations, cities, regions and communities. The city marketing literature mentions a multiplicity of activities, instruments, and strategies under the heading of the ‘marketing mix’ that can be applied to places.¹³ City marketing generally serves to four purposes: 1) the improvement of the urban products, those being the city and everything it contains; 2) the improvement of the incentives for consumers to make use of the city’s products; 3) the improvement of infrastructure and institutions that provide or improve access to the city’s products and; 4) the communication of the city, making potential customers aware of the products the city has to offer.¹⁴ These purposes imply that city marketing is directed at the promotion of a harmonious city, able to satisfy the requirements of different users, its citizens, investors and visitors. In this sense city marketing is the tuning between the supply of urban functions and the demand for them from inhabitants, companies, tourists and other visitors.

City marketing is a complex effort and the success of the entire marketing effort, besides many other components, requires a strategy regarding the branding.¹⁵ As a result of this relationship, all over the world many cities, which want to market themselves, are branded with quite costly branding campaigns just like commercial products and services.¹⁶

According to marketing guru Kotler, a brand is “a seller’s promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits, and services consistent to the

buyers...".¹⁷ The American Marketing Association defines 'brand' as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors'. Kavaratzis and Ashworth state that places are brandable "things" if their properties can differentiate from each other.¹⁸ According to the writers "City branding should be accepted and treated as a brand that collectively generate a unique set of associations with the place in the public mind". At the same time, Ashworth and Kavaratzis¹⁹ express that institutional branding is also a proper approach to city branding. However at this point it is necessary to emphasize that the branding of cities is a far more complex process than the branding of products, services or institutions because many different factors such as geographical location, tourist attractions, natural resources, local products, and characteristics of the people living there need to be taken into account.²⁰

Kavaratzis states that a city brand makes it necessary to establish an emotional, mental and psychological connection to the city. A city brand should be built on the existing strengths of the city. These strengths are visual, economic, psychological and symbolic elements and distinguish one city from the others.²¹ Currently, city branding is becoming an increasingly challenging process day by day because of intensified global intercity competition and pervasive trends of service transformation, creative city development, and digitalization, which when combined create new premises for urban competitiveness.²²

About Gaziantep

Gaziantep is located in the Southeastern Anatolia, which is one of the most disadvantaged regions of Turkey. Located between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Sea, the city is regarded as one of the oldest cities in the world with a history of 5600 years and has been the home of many civilizations since the early ages. The city's location on the Silkroad positively affected its economic development for centuries and ensured that the city preserved its vibrancy.²³ With a population of 1,974,422 Gaziantep is the eighth largest city of Turkey and the largest metropolitan center of Southeastern Anatolia, and functions as the economic center of its region.²⁴

One of the key features of the city that distinguishes it from the other cities in the region is its relation to the concept of entrepreneurship. Domestic markets have become more open to production and competition with the

transformation of the economy in Turkey from import substitution to free competition in the 1980s. In this process, which has started in the 1980s, a group of Anatolian businessmen called “Anatolian Tigers” emerged. The Anatolian Tigers refer to the cities of Kayseri, Gaziantep, Çorum, Konya, Eskişehir, and Denizli, all of which have experienced notable economic growth beginning in the 1980s.²⁵ Gaziantep, which is one of the cities referred as “Anatolian tigers”, had 4 organized industrial zones of 24 million square meters, a free zone, about 5 industrial plants, employed 120 thousand people, exported to 134 countries and had an annual export capacity of \$ 2 billions in 2003 when the branding project has begun.²⁶

According to the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, Gaziantep has been selected as one of the 7 most competitive cities in the world by the World Bank Competitive Cities Knowledge Base (CCKB) Project, and in terms of economy, the city was characterized as a successful and interesting city. According to the current figures shared by the Chamber on its website, 1,270 exporters from the city are exporting to 172 countries. While 4.27 percent of Turkey’s exports are made from Gaziantep, the city is the leader in the production of machine-woven carpets, pistachios, plastic bags and yarns. The city is 6th among the top 10 cities that export the most in Turkey and at the same time, 67 of the first 1,000 exporters in Turkey are from Gaziantep in origin.²⁷

The city’s relationship to entrepreneurship is on the forefront and also its potential for cultural tourism is especially quite high. Gastronomy is one of the most important elements of the city’s culture. The fact that the city is on a geography where the first large-scale agriculture has taken place, many trade routes have passed and many civilizations have advanced towards the sea can be seen as a reason for its extent and diversity in culinary culture.²⁸ Besides the rich food culture, the level of development of Gaziantep’s culinary culture is preserved by the fact that professions, which feed this culture, such as coppersmithing, tinsmithing, bladesmithing, woodcraft, boat making and spice selling are still continuing today. There are bazaars in the city where these occupational groups can be found together.²⁹

Analyze of City Branding Campaign

For the branding efforts to be successful it is of great importance to follow the right strategies. Kotler et al suggest that five key steps of the strategic marketing plan should be followed for a successful “place” branding.³⁰ Place audit and SWOT analysis are carried out during the first stage. This stage is

the one in which a city defines “who we are” and it is related to all concrete and abstract assets of a city. Kotler et al. express that the economy, design, life quality and people of a place should be analyzed during this stage.³¹ Later, these characteristics are defined as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In the second stage, the vision and objectives for branding the city are developed in the light of findings obtained as a result of the audit. Formulation of strategy is the third stage of the process and it explains the ways to achieve the developed vision and objectives. In the stage of the action plan, the strategy is defined as particular actions on the operational level and in implementation and control which is the last stage, the designed actions are carried into effect and the progress is reviewed.

Similarly, Kavaratzis and Ashworth³² suggest a six-step approach: (1) market research, (2) vision development, (3) target group(s) selection, (4) organizing for marketing, (5) implementation, and (6) monitoring. This article aims at analyzing Gaziantep’s branding process based on the stages similar to the ones developed by Kotler et al. and Kavaratzis and Ashworth .

Research

Research is the first stage of city branding and it is about examining the current situation of the city, its assets, opportunities and the target groups.³³

In 2003, before the Brand City Gaziantep project has started, Gaziantep Chamber of Industry, who was the project’s owner in that period, carried out a national and international environmental analysis. This analysis revealed that companies from Gaziantep take the foreground by their production power and entrepreneurial characteristics and make production both nationally and internationally in various sectors. According to the research results, before the branding project, Gaziantep was a city growing above the Turkish average both in terms of income and production potential. In addition to this, along with globalization, trade has become more liberal than ever before and this fact increased competition. Research has shown that the city’s economy rose predominantly on the production of “intermediate goods”. This situation would have brought Gaziantep to a disadvantaged position due to the increase of low production costs in regions such as the Far East, Southeast Asia and especially China. Therefore, branding in order to be different has been seen as a way to get out of this disadvantageous position.

During the second stage of the branding efforts which started in 2016, in-depth interviews were carried out with 32 opinion leaders to primarily

determine the “problems, opportunities and dreams”. These interviews showed that the opinion leaders of the city have agreed that it was time to tell a new story about Gaziantep. The emphasis on “telling a new story” uncovered by the research is important as it is creating legitimacy for the new branding strategy. Besides this, the contracted marketing communication agency has resorted to exploring global trends and best practices during the research stage.

According to the report presented to Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, by the agency that has developed the branding project with a focus on tourism, for the analysis of global trends, at basis of the cities’ branding need lie the development of tourism, increase of investments and the development of city culture. According to UNWTO, the total number of tourists around the world will double by 2020 and it does not seem likely that the leading tourist destinations will be able to carry the overload. This leads tourists to the search for new destinations. By analyzing the current global trends, the research report presented Gaziantep with two options: to be a city that says “I am no different from the others” or to be a city that says “I am very different from the others”.

The research done by the agency before the branding process draws a special attention to the Generation Y. This generation, whose number and purchasing power are rising rapidly, is interested in urban tourism and destinations that offer authentic experiences and the research emphasized Gaziantep’s potential to offer this experience. During the research stage best potential examples for Gaziantep were examined and a number of points that can be taken as examples for Gaziantep have been chosen from each of the cities and states of Edinburgh, Montreal, California, Seattle, Barcelona, and New York. As a result of the research and analysis done on these cities, the best city Gaziantep can take as an example to promote its cultural values is Edinburgh. Because, in all of the offerings of Edinburgh art, history and theater have become intertwined, making it a holistic and amusing experience. The best city to take as an example for promoting Gaziantep’s gastronomic values is Montreal. According to the research, what makes Montreal truly successful is the richness and topicality of the contents it offers. The best location to take as an example for family and children’s tourism is the state of California. California is a child-oriented location and offers many alternatives for the needs of children of all ages and characteristics. Seattle is the best city to take as an example for the promotion of congress and fair tourism. That is because,

instead of the award-winning convention centers, what Seattle brings to the fore is a city where delegates can spend quality time. The best city to be taken as an example for the promotion of city culture is Barcelona. Barcelona has gathered all the information its fellow townsman may need and has thought of everything from historical information to instantly updated traffic maps. The best initiative to take as an example for creating brands originating from Gaziantep is the incentive Made in NY. This initiative brings together creative companies that are at their early stages of development and helps them on matters such as education, workforce and office space.

Vision, Goals and Strategy Development

The brand strategy can be defined as a long-term plan developed for the brand to reach its goals.³⁴ According to Anholt, strategy in the context of city brand is related to the city's existing situation (both in reality and according to internal and external perceptions); the point it wants to reach and the path it will follow to reach that point.³⁵

What is essentially important in city branding approach is that what kind of a brand a city wants to possess and how it will achieve to create the necessary associations to realize this.³⁶

In the strategy report which was prepared in 2003, when Gaziantep first embarked on branding, it was defined as an "expansion project". The project was structured mainly to highlight the city's investment climate and the city as an alternative investment zone. While doing this, the plan was to use the "social, cultural and historical values" of the city as driving forces. The goal of the branding project, Gaziantep Chamber of Industry carried out for Gaziantep companies, was determined as "giving added value to the products produced in Gaziantep at home and abroad by accelerating the branding process in the city". The project also aimed at inviting investors from outside Gaziantep to invest in Gaziantep. As it would make it possible to carry Gaziantep to the point of an international investment center and to create the perception that "Gaziantep products are of good quality" in national and international markets. For reaching these goals, the project's promise for companies from Gaziantep was stated as "higher added value and income" whereas the promise intended for investors from outside the city was "the opportunity for an easy and profitable investment and quality products". Designated purposes were embodied by the statement "creating 100 national brands in 10 years". Gaziantep Chamber of Industry determined the strategy for reaching the assigned goals as sustaining the companies with education

for branding, information, awareness-raising, meeting their consulting needs and providing them with support for branding.

In 2016, when Brand City Gaziantep project was being revived with an emphasis on “tourism”, three equal goals were identified: creating a travelable, liveable and creative Gaziantep. Five basic characteristics of the people of Gaziantep have been identified at the stage for strategy determination and these defined the “spirit of Gaziantep”. According to the campaign report, the essence of this spirit is the “joy of producing” which, despite all kinds of poverty, hardship, and impossibility the people of Gaziantep have never lost. “Gaziantep is not a city, it is a productive mindset!” Upon this determination, the campaign strategy was based on the main concept of productive people in Turkey: “Have you ever thought why the world’s most breathtaking mosaics were produced in Gaziantep? Or that since the antiquity, workshops producing the Near Eastern sculptures are located at the borders of Gaziantep? Or that one of the world’s most creative nine cuisines is Gaziantep cuisine... Turning poverty into abundance in every field... just like a pistachio tree. Here, it is the summary of Gaziantep’s spirit.³⁷ Branding works aim at showing the target groups that Gaziantep is a city which reflects the power of Mesopotamia, it is the first and only gastronomy city of Turkey, it is one of the oldest cities of the world, it is the city of architectural beauties, and it is a child-friendly city. The branding efforts carried out for the identified goals and main themes were essentially built on a promotion strategy and predominantly aimed at reaching a branding goal that is developed by a communications campaign.

Target Groups

As in all branding efforts, the selection of target groups has a vital importance in city branding and before branding efforts are undertaken, target groups need to be chosen based on research data.³⁸ In their book titled *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States, and Nations* Kotler, Haider and Rein suggested that the main target groups in place marketing and place branding can broadly be divided into four target market segments: (1) visitors; (2) residents and workers; (3) business and industry; and (4) export markets .

In 2003 when branding efforts have first started, the campaign’s target groups were identified as national public opinion, decision makers, and the business world. Besides the target groups, Gaziantep Chamber of Industry has also identified a number of social stakeholders. While the social stakeholders of the branding campaign were industrialists, the management

of GSO and both their employees, effective social stakeholders were identified as government agencies, vocational institutions, civil society organizations, universities, opinion leaders, media and the people of Gaziantep.

Definition of the target groups was changed as a natural result of the restructuring of the branding efforts with a tourism orientation in 2016. Brand city Gaziantep's new target groups are Turkish tourists, Middle Eastern tourists and Far Eastern tourists.

Implementation

Implementation stage is the one in which brand-related strategies are realized. Braun argues that the implementation of place branding requires striking a balance between a distinctive focus for the place brand and wider support in the place's communities.³⁹ The primary players in city marketing implementation are local governments, firms and residents.⁴⁰

The activities related to the branding process of Brand City Gaziantep Project, which was initiated in 2003, can be listed under four headings: (a) informative activities, (b) consulting activities, (c) awareness raising activities, (d) promotional activities, and (e) lobbying activities.

As one of the primary goals of the project is to inform the companies in the city about the branding process and how it will affect Gaziantep's economy, activities related to this goal were given priority. In this process, transfer of experience was seen as an important method. Branding Stories Panel, organized at the beginning of the year, is a good example for this experience transfer. Another medium used for experience transfer is the website. This medium has both provided detailed information about the city's branding process and ensured information sharing among members with its interactive sections. The website was structured as a source of information for organizations that wish to integrate into the branding process. Also, to support this, an e-mail group was created for sharing information on branding process, so that, an interactive platform where interested companies can share their knowledge and experience was established. In addition to that, for introducing the project to the city's residents, leaflets, posters, banners and stickers were printed. Brand City Pool is one of the activities to take into account within this framework. The collective advertising method aimed at highlighting branding in industry, institutionalization, Gaziantep and the companies altogether.

Because an important place was given to companies' branding in the strategy of Brand City Gaziantep Project, supporting companies' branding processes created an important area of activity. Aimed at this goal, consulting services have started to be provided to companies enthusiastic about branding, which have also been informed on branding. One of the important steps taken in this regard is the free "brand consultation line" established within the scope of Gaziantep Chamber of Industry. Similarly, Investment Orientation and Brand Patent offices within the body of Gaziantep Chamber of Industry, inform entrepreneurs that are wishing to invest, about current investments and investment opportunities, advise Gaziantep companies about brand registration and direct the companies in this process to the relevant institutions.

Management of media relations constituted an important part of the project. Before embarking on media relations, a meeting titled "Brand is Power" was organized together with Doğan Media Group, one of the biggest media groups in Turkey at the time and various journalists, advertisers and holding representatives from Turkey have participated in the meeting.

Because the target group of the campaign which started to be brought into life in 2016 was identified as tourists, branding practices that aim at attracting tourists to the city came to the forefront and activities for branding are essentially "promotional" activities. The most prominent activity in this regard is the creation of a visual identity for the city. The branding campaign implemented in 2003 used the design of a city logo. This logo was the lettering of Gaziantep with a picture of a pistachio attached at the beginning and it is the first trademarked city logo in Turkey. In parallel with the reorganization of the campaign in 2016 with a focus on "tourism" instead of "entrepreneurship", the logo of the city was changed, too. The new logo was based on a hexagonal pattern, a traditional structure that has been used by Gaziantep's coppersmiths. The brand that designed the new logo explains the creative idea behind the design as follows: "The ever expanding and connecting geometric pattern was a metaphor, representing the industriousness and unity of the people of Gaziantep. We designed the letter "G" to work as a container. The center of the letter served as a placeholder for icons, also allowing for co-branding. The elaborate color system was created by drawing inspiration from uniquely authentic local goods such as Antep pistachio, pearl, copper, and limestone". The new logo was designed in eight different forms that contain a pistachio, baklavas, a zoo, transportation, kebab, love for Gaziantep, handcrafts and

organic symbols. At the same time, a special typeface inspired from the logo was developed for the city.



Figure 1

During the implementation stage of the campaign, a mini-documentary series was shot for promoting the most important touristic places of Gaziantep. Seven short films, each with an average of two minutes, aimed to introduce the cultural values and historical treasures of the city. Jeffrey Young, an American presenter, hosted the documentaries. The themes of these films were selected as cuisine, pistachio, textile, baklava, coppersmith, zeugma and unique houses.

In an increasingly global and competitive world, international positioning through online branding has become a necessity for cities that wish to compete in the global arena. Having an official web presence is today seen as an essential city branding tool, and cities in the contemporary setting are

increasingly using social media in their branding efforts.⁴¹ As the continuation of these efforts, a destination (tourism) website was prepared for Gaziantep. Including a Facebook page, a Twitter account and an Instagram page, all social media sites of the brand was created and their activities were managed.

Again, as a part of the branding project stickers picturing products originating from Gaziantep were designed. Besides that, street signs showing historical monuments were placed in the city, billboards introducing Gaziantep's regional values were prepared, and travel guides made for the city were printed.

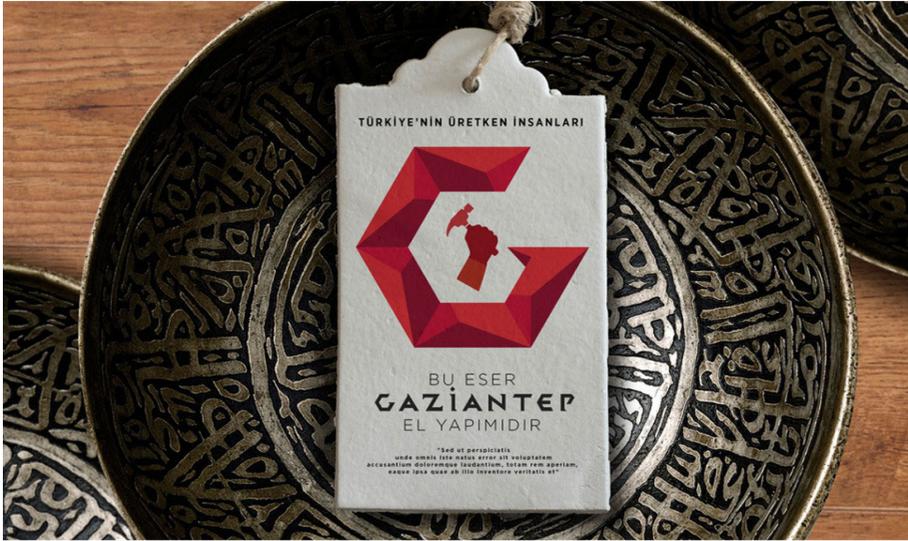


Figure 2

Approved geographical indications is also a vital component of implication phase. A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.⁴² Gaziantep's baklava was registered as a geographical indication in the European Union in 2013. After the campaign was initiated, registration applications made for Antep's beyran, Antep's yuvalama, Antep lahmacun, Antep pistachio butter and Antep turnaklı pide which are among the most popular dishes of Antep cuisine, were approved and qualified to receive the geographical indication certificates. As part of the branding process, Gaziantep was able to join the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) "Creative Cities Network".

Creative Cities Network, established in 2004 with the participation of 116 cities from around the world, is active in the fields of “handcrafts and folk art”, “design”, “cinema”, “gastronomy”, “literature”, “music” and “visual arts”. Only eight cities from around the world were accepted to the UNESCO gastronomy list. With its rich culinary culture, Gaziantep has been added to this list as the 9th city.⁴³ In this direction, “Sustainable Professional Gastronomy Trainings” organized primarily for the personnel serving in the sector were initiated with the work of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, which made a bilateral protocol with Gaziantep Gastronomy and Tourism Association (GASTURDER).⁴⁴

Monitoring

Unfortunately, an evaluation research carried out by the Chamber of Industry on the first stage of the project which was actively carried out between 2003 and 2006, does not exist. However, it is possible to come across newspaper reports stating that there has been an increase in the number of brand and patent sales after the project. According to these newspaper reports, the number of brands and patents, which was 3200 before the project, reached 9000 in 2006. Besides that, in 2015, Işık and Erdem have started a Turkey-wide academic research in order to measure the “success” of Brand City Project.⁴⁵ According to the results of this study, most of the participants from Gaziantep have positive impressions in their minds. When Gaziantep is mentioned, more than ninety percent of people think of baklava and this is followed by pistachio which found itself a place in the project’s logo. According to the research results, three out of every four people who participated in the research sees Gaziantep as a developed industrial city. As mentioned above, the main purpose of the Brand City Project is to position Gaziantep as an entrepreneur friendly city. The research reveals that more than half of the participants think Gaziantep as a city suitable for enterprises and the people of Gaziantep are an entrepreneurial people. Nevertheless, as there is no research done before the current one it is unfortunately impossible to link these results to the project. Since the second stage of the project has just yet begun, a monitoring study to measure its success have not yet been done.

Conclusion

This article written on the branding process of Gaziantep primarily shows the importance of a long-term vision and the integration of different actors to the branding process of a city. The branding campaign started in 2003 under the leadership of Gaziantep Chamber of Industry as “entrepreneurship” has

started to slowly lost its activity as of 2006 and tried to be revived in 2016 with the cooperation of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Governorship of Gaziantep and Silkroad Development Agency, this time with a different vision, strategy and aim. However, the development of the vision and strategy of branding with a forward looking vision by local governments, firms and residents, who need to be the initial main actors of the process, would have probably helped to prevent the first stage of the campaign from being mired down by ensuring that the campaign is adopted by different actors.

The concept of city branding can be considered a problematic concept for Turkey. Bulut's research carried out in 2015 on the cities which try to become brands in Turkey, revealed that Turkish cities' main motivation in terms of branding is to become tourism brands for the purpose of attracting more tourists. In this regard, the branding campaign started by Gaziantep Chamber of Tourism in 2003, is quite a different example from the other cities in Turkey. While other Turkish cities were trying to attract tourists, Gaziantep wanted to attract investors. However, when the municipality started to carry out the project, Gaziantep joined the other cities that wanted to be tourism brands in Turkey.

Because the current branding campaign for Gaziantep is structured as a promotional campaign aimed at attracting tourists, importance was given to the use of marketing communication elements. A new logo, a new typeface and a new motto are, of course, important instruments related to the practice of branding. However, it is important to remember that they can not replace the brand strategy. Gaziantep becoming a brand city in the long term can only become possible if these promotional efforts are supported by other branding elements.

Notes

- 1 Graham Hankinson, "The Brand Images of Tourism Destinations: A Study of the Saliency of Organic Images", *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 13(1) (2004): 6-14.
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