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The Effect of Country Based Image in Accurance of Brand in Cultural Destinations

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Abstract: Despite its location and historical and cultural attractions, Izmir has been unable to consistently achieve its tourism goals, as evidenced by fluctuating numbers in tourism earnings and a small share of the international tourism market. This discrepancy might be attributed to Turkey's image in the minds of world travelers, as well as to a low recognition of Izmir. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to identify visitors' impressions that have been effective on their choice of Turkey as a vacation destination and (2) to determine whether there is a relationship between these impressions and their perceptions about Izmir. According to the study results there is a relationship between the variables related to participants choosing Turkey and their impressions about Izmir.

Keywords: Image; Brand; Country image; Destination branding; Destination image.

Resumen: A pesar de su situación geográfica y sus atracciones culturales e históricas, Izmir se ha visto constantemente imposibilitada para alcanzar sus objetivos turísticos, como se puede comprobar por las fluctuaciones en sus ingresos turísticos y por su pequeña cuota del mercado turístico internacional. Esta discrepancia se puede atribuir a la imagen de Turquía en la mente de los viajeros internacionales, así como al limitado reconocimiento de Izmir. El objetivo de este estudio es doble: (1) identificar las impresiones de los visitantes que han sido efectivas en su elección de Izmir como destino vacacional y (2) determinar si hay una relación entre estas impresiones y las percepciones sobre Izmir. De acuerdo con los resultados del estudio, existe una relación entre las variables relacionadas con la selección de Turquía y las impresiones sobre Izmir.

Palabras clave: Imagen; Marca; Imagen de país; Marca del destino; Imagen de destino.

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Introduction

A tourist destination is at present often no longer seen as a set of unique cultural, natural or environmental resources, but as an overall appealing product available in a certain area (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008). Today, most destinations claim to have magnificent scenery, wonderful attractions, friendly local people, and a unique culture and heritage. However, these factors are no longer differentiators, and successful destination branding lies in its potential to reduce substitutability (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009: 217).

Kotler and Gertner (2002) suggest that to be successful in the tourism industry a country must be very specific about what it wants to market and to whom. So as the competition for tourists and their spending dollars continues to increase, it follows that a definition of destination branding should include the concepts of destination image and competitiveness (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to identify images that have been effective on travelers' choice of Turkey as a vacation destination and to determine whether there is dependency between these images and their perceptions about Izmir.

In respect to its population, Izmir is the third largest city in Turkey. It is a cultural destination that is trying to acquire a significant and growing market share. It is a strategic site for all kinds of cultural activities with its universities, museums, concert halls, cultural and art associations. As such, it is home to many national and international festivals. Izmir is a five thousand year old city, situated on the west of the Anatolian peninsula. There are many historical sites throughout the city of Izmir. Despite its location and historical and cultural attractions, Izmir has been unable to consistently achieve its tourism goals. According to the recent statistics 1,056,948 foreign visitors came to Izmir in 2009.

Country Image and Destination Image

Baloglu and McCleary (1999a: 870) define destination image as "an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs),

feelings, and global impressions about an object or destination". There have been many studies which have sought to identify the key attributes that are embodied in a destination's image, particularly those associated with individual countries (Hankinson, 2004).

Coshall (2000) defines image as the individual's perceptions of the characteristics of destinations. According to Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993) images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. A country's image results from its geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features. All of these have been repeatedly and strongly associated with certain localities (Kotler & Gertner, 2002: 251).

More recent research provides evidence that the image of a place influences touristic decisions (Baloglu & McCleary 1999a; Pike & Ryan 2004; Tapachai & Waryszak 2000). Development of new theories to understand how consumers make their decisions is also important to the tourism industry (Oh, 2000). There are many factors that affect tourist flows to destinations. Tourist flows are dependent on destination characteristics such as climate, scenery, services, amenities, and cultural attributes (Coshall, 2000: 85). For destination marketers, perhaps the most significant aspect of an image is its influence on travel behavior (Leisen, 2001: 50). As Jenkins (1999) states in his article, destination images influence a tourist's travel decision-making, cognition and behavior at a destination, as well as satisfaction levels and recollection of the experience.

The traveler creates an image by processing information about a destination from various sources in the course of time. This information is organized into a mental construct that in some way is meaningful to the individual (Leisen, 2001: 50). Gunn (1972) suggests that destination images fall on a continuum, beginning with the organic image, followed by the induced (cited in Leisen, 2001: 50).

Tourism scholars generally agree that destination image holds at least two distinctive components -cognitive and affective (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a, 1999b; Gartner 1993;

Walmsley & Young 1998)). The cognitive, or perceptual, element refers to knowledge and beliefs about a destination, while the affective element refers to feelings about a destination (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008, Beerli & Martín, 2004). According to Echtner and Ritchie (2003), destination image is not only the perceptions of individual destination attributes but also the holistic impression made by the destination. Destination image consists of functional characteristics and psychological characteristics. Furthermore, destination images can be arranged on a continuum ranging from traits which can be commonly used to compare all destinations to those which are unique to very few destinations (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003: 44). Klenosky and Gitelson (1998) suggest that the common-unique continuum that influences images also plays a role in the recommendation process.

Destination image can even contribute to forming the destination brand. Thus, a strong brand position of a destination is dependent on the positive destination image. A brand name of a destination that is often confused with the destination image could be a significant factor in the destination selection process, as well as in the loyalty to a destination. In other words, destination image, as well as destination brand, can influence the customer's loyalty to a destination (Tasci & Kozak, 2006).

Destination Branding

Although the concept of branding has been applied extensively to products and services, tourism destination branding is a relatively recent phenomenon (Blain et al., 2005: 328). As experience and culture gain importance, cities worldwide are engaged in constructing images and representations of their locations in accordance with these new trends. Therefore the culture-led, experience-oriented policymakers are looking towards the discipline of urban branding (Jensen, 2007: 212).

It seems that there is confusion between brand and image especially in the tourist destination context. Moreover, there is a dearth of research into the measurement of destination image in general and the consideration of branding for individual organ-

izations in particular, but the concept of branding for tourist destinations has received little attention to date (Tasci & Kozak, 2006).

According to Cai (2002) a destination brand can be defined as "perceptions about a place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory" and he suggests that destination branding constitutes the core of destination image.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1998, cited in Blain et al. 2005: 329) have defined a "destination brand" as a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination. Furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination. It also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience. Such a concept serves to enhance destination marketing by providing potential tourists with pre-trip information that allows them to identify a destination, differentiate it from its competitors, and build expectations about the likely holiday experience offered by the destination (Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2007: 5).

Hall (2008) states that brands also need to be connected with some tangible dimension in order to be "believable". In the case of place brands, this is the physical manifestation of place in terms of architecture, design, and the lived experience of a location. In essence, this is the "hardware" of place brands (Hall, 2008: 236).

Brand equity is a difficult concept to understand when it comes to tourism destinations. Since a tourism destination is not a private entity and cannot be sold in the market place, brand equity cannot be fully measured (Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007). According to Aaker (1991; 1996), brand equity is a multidimensional concept. It consists of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets.

Destination branding appears to be emerging as one of the most compelling tools available to destination marketers seeking a competitive advantage (Murphy et al., 2007). The study, entitled "The City Brand Barometer" and created by London-based Saffron Consultants, ranks 72 of Europe's largest cities based on a compari-

son of their assets and attractions against the strength of their brands. To determine what people want most in a place, Saffron commissioned a YouGov poll of 2,000 people in the UK. Respondents were asked two questions with a series of multiple choice answers. The most desirable attributes, in order of weighted importance, were: sightseeing and historical attractions; cuisine and restaurants; good shopping, particularly low cost; good weather; ease of getting around on foot or by public transport (Saffron Consultants, 2008).

Study Methods

The questionnaire was developed with measures that have been used in previous research highlighted in the literature review. It consisted of four sections: questions relating to effective points in respondents' decisions to visit Turkey as a vacation destination; questions relating to respondents' perceptions about Izmir; questions relating to the variety and type of information sources used regarding selected destination; and questions designed to gather demographic information.

On the first section of the questionnaire 17 perceptual/cognitive items, which were selected on the basis of a review of previous literature regarding destination image, were used. Respondents were asked to evaluate each statement on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). On the second section of the questionnaire brand associations of Izmir were measured by asking respondents to indicate their perception about the destination. 21 perceptual/cognitive items were selected from a combination of literature review. These were measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Affective evaluations of Izmir as a vacation destination were measured on a 7-point scale using affective image scales developed by Russel and his colleagues (Baloglu & McCleary 1999a, 1999b). On the third section of the questionnaire, the six information source categories included professional advice (tour operators, travel agents, and airlines); word of mouth (friends relatives, and social clubs); advertisements (print or broadcast media); books/movies/news; internet; Tur-

kish embassy/consulate (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002). The uniqueness dimension was assessed by the item: "please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Izmir" (Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2008). Brand loyalty was measured by two questions (Pike, 2009; Sonmez & Sirakaya, 2002). The first asked participants to indicate whether they had previously visited this destination. The second asked participants to indicate the likelihood of choosing this destination as the next international vacation destination. The appeal of Izmir as a tourist destination was operationalized as a single-item 5-point Likert type scale/question (In general, how appealing is Izmir to you as a tourist destination?) ranging from 1= very unappealing, to 5= very appealing. The dependent variables were operationalized through three questions ('I enjoy visiting this destination', 'This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation' and 'I would advise other people to visit this destination') on a scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree, to 5= strongly agree.

The foreign tourists visiting Izmir formed the research's sample. Tourists visiting Izmir, representing a more heterogeneous population, were surveyed for the pretest. A face-to-face survey was conducted with 62 tourists in Izmir. No issues were found regarding wording, clarity of the questions, or layout.

The final questionnaire was applied to tourists in the Adnan Menderes Airport, in the hotels at the centre of Izmir, in Ephesus and Mother Mary. The questionnaire study began at the beginning of June, 2009 and carried out until the first week of July, 2009. Elimination of unusable questionnaires resulted in a total of 293 completed responses.

Results

Factor analysis, using the principal component extraction method with varimax rotation, was applied to the 17 perceptual/cognitive items related to Turkey. The cleanest rotated solution was obtained by omitting one item due to simultaneous loading (There are great beaches). This solution generated three factors explaining

53.10% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .85 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p=.000$). The three factors

are highlighted in Table 1. The reliability coefficients range from 0.65 to 0.84, thus adequately meeting the standards for such research (Nunnally, 1967).

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean ^a	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Local attractions					
Archeological treasures	.813	3.791	4.106	23.551	.84
Unique architectural styles	.808	3.418			
Important museums and art galleries	.743	3.327			
Rich cultural heritage	.724	3.902			
Local festivals	.667	2.749			
Attractive cities	.609	3.554			
Natural scenic beauty	.594	4.031			
		3.539			
Factor 2: Hospitality and services					
Relaxing and restful place	.787	4.168	3.248	19.167	.79
Good quality restaurants and hotels	.757	4.186			
Friendly local people	.652	4.330			
Appealing cuisine	.571	4.000			
Pleasant weather	.557	4.412			
Safe place	.555	4.151			
High hygiene standards	.552	4.041			
		4.184			
Factor 3: shopping and prices					
Shopping facilities	.779	3.482	1.143	10.388	.65
Low prices	.708	3.853			
Grand Mean		3.671			
Total variance explained				53.106	

^a on a scale ranging from 1= not at all important to 5= very important

Table 1. Factor analysis of perceptual/cognitive images related to Turkey

Factor analysis, using the principal component extraction method with varimax rotation, was applied to the 21 items related to brand associations of Izmir. The cleanest rotated solution was obtained by omitting 3 items due to simultaneous loadings ('The accommodation facilities are good', 'this destination has a good name and reputation', 'personally, I feel safe while visiting this destination'). This solution generated five factors explaining 58.23% of variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling was .78 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p=.000$). The five factors are highlighted in table 2.

51.7% of the participants are men and 64% are under the age of 45. While 34.4% of the participants belong to the associated degree group, 30.2% of them are part of the bachelor degree one, 18.2% of them are included in the post bachelor degree group and 17.1% graduated from high school. When evaluated according to their nationality the highest percent of participants belongs to the UK group with 19.9%. Following this comes Germany (13.0%), France (8.6%), Ireland (8.2%), the USA (7.5%), Norway (7.5%), and the Netherlands (6.5%). The lowest percent of participants is from Portugal (0.3%), Venezuela (0.3%), and Bulgaria (0.3%). When examined in

relation to profession, it is seen that 17.7% of the participants are middle management, 13.0% are students, and 11.9% are self employed/ business. The lowest profession group with 1.4% is formed of the retired/still working group. When the participants are examined by means of their income group, the highest group is seen to be

those with income between 40.000\$-50.999\$ (29.9%). On the other hand, the lowest income group is formed by those who are between 80.000\$-99.999\$ (8.8%). 14.2% of the participants have expressed that they earn 100.000 and over in terms of income.

Factor	Factor Loading	Mean ^a	Eigen-value	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor1: People and facilities					
Good cafes and restaurants	.722	3.876	4.569	12.598	.651
Friendly local people	.720	4.321			
Appealing local food	.558	3.941			
Lots to see and do	.517	4.010			
Grand Mean		4.037			
Factor 2: Cultural attractions					
Historical places	.713	3.990	2.165	11.961	.703
Cultural attractions	.707	4.000			
Mythological destination	.702	3.450			
Offers natural scenic beauty	.520	4.021			
Grand Mean		3.865			
Factor 3: Outdoors					
Water sports opportunities	.610	3.697	1.449	11.873	.656
Good beaches	.609	3.934			
Economical destination	.599	3.784			
Not crowded	.552	3.484			
Pleasant climate	.504	4.355			
Grand Mean		3.851			
Factor 4: Services					
Get good service in hotels	.943	3.474	1.165	11.685	.934
Get good service in restaurants	.943	3.460			
		3.467			
Factor 5: Value for money					
Good shopping opportunities	.754	3.818	1.134	10.117	.659
Worth the money	.632	3.716			
Family destination	.546	3.767			
Grand Mean		3.767			
Total variance explained				58.234	

^a on a scale ranging from 1= not at all important to 5= very important

Table 2. Factor analysis of perceptual/cognitive images related to Izmir

When asked about the likelihood of travel to Izmir on their next international vacation, 65.4% of the respondents answered positively. When the participants asked if they would advise other people to visit this destination (Izmir), 61.4% of the respondents answered positively and only

3.4% answered negatively. Nearly 85% of the participants found Izmir appealing or very appealing, and about 4% found it very unappealing or unappealing.

When the participants' average of expressions about why they chose Turkey as a vacation destination are examined, it is

seen that the three most important expressions are 'pleasant weather' (mean: 4.412), 'friendly local people' (mean: 4.330), 'safe place' (mean: 4.151). The expression that has the lowest rate is 'local fests' (mean: 2.749). On the other hand in the expressions measuring their perception about Izmir, the highest three averages of expression are seen to be the 'pleasant climate' (mean: 4.3554), 'friendly local people' (mean: 4.321), and 'offers natural scenic beauty' (mean: 4.021). The lowest averages of expression are the 'get good service in restaurants' and 'get good service in the hotels' (both with means: 3.434).

In the expressions of participants forming their impressions about Izmir, the highest rate belongs to the expression of 'word of mouth' (mean: 3.682). Following this expression follows 'internet' with an average value of 3.629. The lowest rate has been noticed to be the 'Turkish embassy' (mean: 2.622).

When looking at the ANOVA test's (post-hoc, benforini test) results, it is seen that there are differences between the answers that the participants have given to Factor 5 (Value for Money) according to education level ($p = .003$). Respondents from the college/associate degree group are seen to have the highest average (mean=3.93) and those with post bachelor's degree have the lowest average (mean=3.59). There are differences among the answers participants have given to Factor 3 (Outdoors) according to age groups ($p = .01$). It is seen that the 45-54 ages group has the highest average (mean=4.02) and the 16-24 age group has the lowest average (mean=3.65). There are differences among the answers that participants have given to Factor 4 (Services) according to annual income ($p = .03$). It is seen that the \$100,000 or more income group has the highest average (mean=3.84) and the \$40,000-59,999 income group has the lowest average (mean=3.13).

The regression analysis was estimated with the stepwise technique to scrutinize the effect of independent variables over dependent variables ('I enjoy visiting this

destination', 'this destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation' and 'I would advise other people to visit this destination'). Nine factors were entered into the regression model, including three cognitive image factors relating to Turkey and one affective and five cognitive factors relating to Izmir. The results of the regression analysis that was made to examine the effect of 9 factors on 'I enjoy visiting this destination' dependent variable are presented in Table 3. When the regression model is examined, it is seen that four factors ('People and facilities', 'Cultural attractions', 'Services' and 'Value for money') explain the participants' visiting Izmir and enjoying their visit at about the 39.5% level. The standardized estimates (beta coefficients) of each variable indicate its relative importance in explaining the 'I enjoy visiting this destination'. In this model, the standardized estimate of 'People and facilities' suggests that this variable is positively related to the 'I enjoy visiting this destination' and is the most important factor in explaining the dependent variable ($\beta = .368$). Similarly, 'Value for money' (Factor 5) ($\beta = .242$), 'Services' (Factor 4) ($\beta = .158$) and 'Cultural attractions' (Factor 2) ($\beta = .139$) are positively related to the dependent variable.

The results of the regression analysis that was made to examine the effect of 9 factors on 'this destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation' dependent variable are presented in Table 4. The stepwise regression analysis identified three factors (value for money, outdoors and affective images) as statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable ($R^2 = .326$). The resulting regression coefficients indicate that value for money (Factor 5) has a positive relationship with the dependent variable and is the most important factor ($\beta = .370$) in explaining participants' choices for a vacation involving Izmir. Similarly, 'Outdoors' (Factor 3) ($\beta = .222$), and affective images ($\beta = .158$) are positively related to the dependent variable.

Model		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t value	Sig.	Std. Error	Collinearity Statistics	
						Tolerance	VIF
4	(Constant)		1.077	.282	.298		
	Factor1: People and facilities	.368	6.490	.000	.072	.716	1.396
	Factor 5: Value for money	.242	4.355	.000	.065	.748	1.336
	Factor 4: Services	.158	3.273	.001	.028	.991	1.009
	Factor 2: Cultural attractions	.139	2.498	.013	.061	.748	1.336

Dependent Variable: I enjoy visiting this destination. Overall model: $F = 42,797$; $R^2 = .395$,
adjusted $R^2 = .386$; $p = .000$

Table 3. Regression analysis

Model		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t Value	Sig.	Std. Error	Collinearity Statistics	
						Tolerance	VIF
3	(Constant)		-1.337	.182	.420		
	Factor 5: Value for money	.370	6.388	.000	.082	.761	1.313
	Factor 3: Outdoors	.222	3.894	.000	.086	.786	1.272
	Affective images	.158	3.025	.003	.074	.940	1.064

Dependent Variable: This destination would be my preferred choice for a vacation. Overall model: $F = 42,485$; $R^2 = .326$, adjusted $R^2 = .319$; $p = .000$

Table 4. Regression analysis

The results of the regression analysis that was made to examine the effect of the 9 factors on 'I would advise other people to visit this destination' dependent variable are presented in table 5 ($R^2 = .335$). The stepwise regression analysis identified four factors ('Value for money', 'People and facilities', 'Affective images' and 'Local attractions') as statistically significant in explaining the dependent variable.

The standardized estimate of 'value for money' (Factor 5) suggests that this variable is positively related to the 'I would advise other people to visit this destination' and is the most important factor in explaining the dependent variable ($\beta = .381$). Similarly, 'People and facilities' (Factor 1) ($\beta = .175$), 'Affective images' ($\beta = .124$) and 'Local attractions' (Factor 1: Cognitive images related to Turkey) ($\beta = .115$) are positively related to the dependent variable.

Model		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t value	Sig.	Std. Error	Collinearity Statistics	
						Tolerance	VIF
4	Constant		.736	.462	.375		
	Factor 5: Value for money	.381	6.688	.000	.073	.781	1.280
	Factor1: People and facilities	.175	3.000	.003	.080	.748	1.337
	Affective images	.124	2.315	.021	.068	.891	1.122
	Factor 1: Local attractions (related to Turkey)	.115	2.158	.032	.050	.898	1.114

Dependent Variable: I would advise other people to visit this destination. Overall model: $F= 32,957$; $R^2= .335$, adjusted $R^2= .325$; $p = .000$

Table 5. Regression analysis

Conclusion

When the reasons for the participants' coming to Turkey are examined, it is observed that climate holds the first place. This situation can be understood, as Turkey is known widely with its trinity of sea, sun and sand. On the other hand the other important equities that have value for the tourism sector, such as cultural attractions, can be said to have less contribution to the image that might affect the choices of participants. The determination of friendly local people as the second most important reason of choice is also an important point. This result is proof of the local public's economic and social participation and their social support to tourism activities.

Except the professionals giving the tourism services, the positive approach of the public living in this region is perceived to lead to such a perception. This shows that Turkey has been maintaining such a characteristic of itself over many years. Meanwhile, another significant result is related to the perceptions of safety of the place. Because of its geopolitical location, creating both a hospitable and safe country image is becoming important. It can be gathered from this result that some negative international and national developments taking place in the region currently have little effect over it.

In the participants' choosing of Turkey, the lowest significance is that of the local

fests. This result points to the fact that a lot of local fests are taking place each year in Turkey. However, these do not obtain as much attention as similar international events. To make them a factor in choosing Turkey, local fests must be restructured. This may be done by unifying some fests like successful international examples or changing some fests' identity.

When the participants' perception of Turkey is examined, their reason for choosing this country show similarities with two of the positive expressions ('Pleasant climate' and 'Friendly local people'). This situation shows that the elements of image of Turkey in the mind of participants are parallel to the elements forming Izmir's brand equity. In other words, the opinions about Turkey given by the participants were proved by their experiences in Izmir.

In the Izmir perception survey the lowest average is determined to be 'get good service in restaurant', and 'get good service in hotels'. This result shows that in Izmir, the restaurant and hotel service quality is below the expectation of participants. In the two most important fields of the tourism sector, such a low perception presents a critical point about Izmir's brand equity. Despite the existence of values belonging to the destination that may raise brand equity for participants' visiting Izmir, the deficiency in two vital fields, accommodation and eating-drinking, is thought-provoking.

When looking to the subject of the Izmir's brand equity, it is clear that measures must be taken about the so-called well being of perception. It is very crucial to form an effective model, particularly in the 4 and 5 stars hotels. Furthermore, the service standards of restaurants should be controlled by the municipality and improved.

When effective information sources used by the participants are considered in connection to their impressions about Izmir, 'word of mouth' and 'internet' are seen to be in the first place. In this respect, in the works of Izmir about brand equity, internet accessible pages, blogs and chat-rooms are within reach as alternatives that should be enhanced. The dynamic structure of the internet gives importance to the participants' sharing of thoughts in real time and to making visual and other information current.

There is a difference between the answers of the participants to Factor 3 (Outdoors) according to age groups ($p=01$). The answers of participants have shown that the lowest average is for the 16-24 age group. By looking at this result, it is seen that presenting values that will be important in terms of brand equity for this age group becomes essential. Fests, water sports, shopping possibilities, affordable packages and entertainment possibilities must be recreated and are seen as a requirement.

There is a relationship between the variables regarding participants choosing Turkey and the impressions about Izmir. This result can be interpreted as Turkey's image contributes positively to Izmir's perception and the elements of its brand equity.

As a consequence, it can be said that there is a positive relation between the country's image and any destination's brand equity in the country. Because of this relation, touristic destinations can't be thought to be independent from the country's image. Therefore, in the creation of brand equity for Izmir, the determination of positive attributes of the country and the selection of elements that must be stressed are of great importance. There is a place for the development of Izmir's brand equity subject in the Turkey's Tourism Strategies-

2023 Booklet of The Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Among the 2023 strategies the importance of city branding activities to increase tourism arrivals has been stressed. In the cities that have potential, importance is given to city branding management activities. Izmir is considered third among these cities.

The works carried out for Izmir's brand equity are diverse, while its economic power is far from affecting international lobbies, which are not providing international consulting services or giving professional brand management service to the city. That also shows a situation that is different from the successful examples' and models. In the academic field there are also not enough studies about Izmir's brand equity. Researches about the high budgeted events, such as the Universiade 2005 organization and the EXPO enterprise should be carried out to develop and manage brand equity effectively.

When topics such as the building of Izmir's brand equity effectively, developing and managing it, are examined, the effect of tourist movements on commercial gain must be used as a motivation tool. Therefore, it is a requirement to make a scientific projection regarding the expected income and the share of the investments that will be made for brand equity projects.

Despite time, budget, structure of sample and the difficulty in reaching scattered places during the field work, this study points to the fact that Izmir's brand equity is dependent on Turkey's image, and its parallel development would be beneficial. Besides this, the study points to the need to increase the quality of accommodation and eating-drinking services in order to benefit Izmir's brand equity. Meanwhile, in order to attract the 16-24 age groups, elements such as internet applications, fests, water sports, shopping and entertainment possibilities must also be developed quickly.

This study is of great importance as it will guide the works that will be made to develop Izmir's brand equity. Further research about this issue that includes the participation of all the shareholders in a broader context is of vital importance for the determination of Izmir's brand equity effectively.

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