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THE LINK BETWEEN ATTRIBUTES AND CITY BRAND MEANINGS: AN ANALYSIS FOR MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS*

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This paper investigates the perceptions of different target groups such as residents, tourists, and students about a city brand by using five city brand attributes such as urbanity&cultural activities, infrastructure, nature&environment, economic conditions, and job opportunities&business networks.

Methodology- A quantitative survey was conducted in order to test hypotheses and linear multiple regression was used to assess the predictive power of city brand attributes.

Findings- Urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment affect the city brand attitude as a living place for the samples of residents, students, and tourists. Urbanity&cultural activities, infrastructure, nature&environment, and economic conditions make significant contributions to the attitudes as a studying place. City brand attitude as a visiting place has been affected from urbanity&cultural activities, nature&environment, and infrastructure. Economic conditions are the most crucial element providing that the residents and tourists consider any city as a liveable city, while job opportunities&business network is the most important factor for students.

Conclusion- Stakeholders' perceptions about a city vary according to their purpose of existing in the city. This study makes theoretical contributions to the city branding literature with covering views of residents, tourists and students for a specific brand meaning as a living place, studying place, or visiting place.

Keywords: city brand, city attributes, residents, students, tourists.

JEL Codes: M31, M30, M39

1. INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing was first put forward in the 1970s and has been a topic of great interest by researchers since then (Gallarza, Saura, and Garcia, 2002). As brand conception began to grow in importance, place branding, a broader concept, emerged accordingly. City branding is one of the subfields of place branding, and this issue has been discussed by numerous conceptual and empirical studies. As earlier studies (e.g. Embacher and Buttle, 1989; Gallarza, et al., 2002) have mostly attempted to interpret choices or preferences of tourists, the focus has remained specifically on brand image. However, residents have a prominent role in branding the city, since they are arguably the most valuable segment in a city (Insch and Florek, 2008; Braun, 2008; Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2010). Attracting and retaining residents has been a critical and challenging issue for cities (Insch, 2010); thus, research fields exploring the meaning ascribed to the city by residents has gained importance. As a result, in the last decade many studies (e.g., Braun et al., 2010; Laaksonen P., Laaksonen, M., Borisov, and Halkoaho, 2006; Merrilees, Miller, and Herington, 2009; Zenker, Petersen, and Aholt, 2013) have emphasized the role of residents in city branding.

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Nevertheless, city brand does have more stakeholders with noteworthy perceptions such as businesses, visitors, investors, students, special interest groups, but until recently the overall approach in the literature has been limited in terms of target groups (Braun et al., 2010; Dinnie, 2010, p.9; Merrilees, Miller, and Herington, 2012; Zenker, Knubben, and Beckmann, 2010). Decision makers need to consider all target groups who make a contribution to a city's economic wealth, cultural, or environmental development. The number of stakeholders affect the brand value, thus more holistic approaches which consider multiple stakeholders are necessary (Jones, 2005). In this respect, Merrilees et al., (2012) have attempted to assess the overall value of a city brand with a wider perspective by using perceptions of different stakeholders: residents and businesses. They found that residents and business owners could have very different filters when evaluating the city brand as a place to live or do business. In this regard, the authors emphasized the importance of focusing on different contexts of brand meanings in order to understand the brand better. Additionally, Zenker et al. (2010) concluded that sub-groups of residents might have different perceptions about a city.

These findings should have encouraged researchers to take into consideration various stakeholders' perceptions in different brand meanings. However, only a few studies have attempted to explain the issue empirically for various stakeholders in a city branding context, whereas stakeholder theory has been widely accepted by researchers in a marketing context (Polonsky and Scott, 2005). Even as some researchers have expanded their studies to focus on other stakeholders such as tourists (Lim and Weaver, 2014) and students (Brandt and Mortanges, 2011; Kazancoglu and Dirsehan, 2014), only single entities of stakeholders have been reviewed in each of these papers. There is still a remarkable gap in the literature explaining and comparing various target groups' perceptions for city brands in different brand meanings such as place to live, place to visit, or place to study.

Brand perceptions or brand meanings given by target audiences are crucial and reveal many outputs like place attachment and word-of-mouth (Zenker, 2011). Yet information about attributes that need to be considered on a preferential basis for various stakeholders is scarce. One of the main purposes of city management is to create a strong brand in order to attract new inhabitants as well as retain the current residents. Therefore, identifying the target groups' perceptions of the city brand in different meanings might provide a deeper understanding about the context of attributes.

On this basis, the main objective of this study is to investigate the different perceptions of target groups (residents, tourists, and students) about a city brand by using city brand attributes. In this way, the contribution of each city brand attribute in predicting various brand attitudes will be identified, and decision makers will have an opportunity to remedy problematic issues or to develop new strategies for reinforcing some other attributes. On the other hand, people currently living in a city are considered as belonging to two different sub-groups as residents and students. This discrimination allows us to analyze the difference between two types of people living in a city during the same time period but presumably having different expectations.

In this context, the paper is organized into three sections: In the first section, theoretical framework is outlined. The next section reviews the research methodology and findings. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion, limitations of the study, and implications for the proposed theory and future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

City attributes have a crucial effect on brand attitudes. This section presents a brief summary of the literature about city attributes. Prominent stakeholders are then identified, and finally, the link between multiple stakeholders and brand attitude is discussed.

2.1 City Brand Attributes

Previous research has mostly focused on the city attributes based on the literature of related disciplines. City attributes have importance in various disciplines such as public administration (e.g. Van Ryzin, Muzzio, Gulick, and Martinez, 2004; Swindell and Kelly, 2005), tourism management (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2002; Hankinson, 2004; Huang, Oh, Zhang, and Choi, 2013; Leisen, 2001), urban studies (e.g. Carrillo, 2004; Santos, Martins, and Brito, 2007), marketing/brand management (e.g. Insch, 2010; Merrilees et al., 2009; Zenker et al., 2010), and others (Gustavson and Elander, 2012).

Studies examining city attributes in the discipline of public administration mostly focus on service standards and satisfaction level of citizens. DeHoog, Lowery, and Lyons (1990) emphasized the influence of individual (including demographics and political attitudes) variables, jurisdictional-level phenomena, and the neighborhood-specific factors to the satisfaction of citizens. For attributes they looked at police services, trash, street lighting, parks, roads, public transportation, public health, sanitation, planning, storm sewers, and social services. Van Ryzin et al. (2004) examined the satisfaction level of citizens with local government services. In order to assess quality perception the authors used fire, library, parks, police, buses, cleanliness, subways, schools, and roads in their model.

City branding context is also relevant within the fields of urban development, retail marketing, and tourism marketing (Hankinson, 2001). The field of tourism deals intensively with destination marketing, thus studies in this field emphasize the perceptions of leisure tourists, business tourists, potential visitors, or decision-makers of destination marketing (Hankinson, 2004). Various place attributes have been held in these studies, since each location has unique features. Leisen (2001) summarized the key attributes in four categories: natural amenities, socio-cultural amenities, recreational facilities, and climate amenities. Huang et al. (2013) identified key attributes such as food, shopping opportunities, culture, sports, and nature-based attractions. Embacher and Buttle (1989) pointed out physical environment, climate, culture, food, suitability for children, accessibility, and touristic facilities associated with the country brand of Austria. Hankinson (2004), in one of the most extensive studies in destination marketing, used the following 11 attributes for 25 destinations in the UK: activities and facilities, culture, ambience, business facilities, economic activity, external profile, transportation, population characteristics, reputation, economic development, and industrial environment. Gallarza et al. (2002) proposed a conceptual framework, which reviews the studies in tourism destination image. According to the authors, the most common attributes studied in this area are residents' receptiveness, landscape, cultural attractions, and price/value'.

Urban planning and management studies discussed the city character in detail. These studies (Carrillo, 2004; Santos et al., 2007; Sim, Ong, Agarwal, Parsa, and Keivani, 2003) mostly aimed to explain the development, management, quality of life, and knowledge of the cities. Carrillo (2004) considered the city as a human settlement that is formed with a capitalist system. The author summarized the capital system of a city under three main categories: metacapitals, human capitals, and instrumental capitals. In a broader scope: entities and events, economic sustainability, social cohesion, physical and personal development, cultural factors, natural and artificial infrastructures, and public and private institutions are included in these capital systems. Santos et al. (2007) dealt with a high variety of thematic areas for the assessment of quality of life: environment, urbanism, mobility, culture, leisure, education, health, social work services, trade, housing, safety, poverty, and social and civil behavior. Sim et al. (2003) measured city competitiveness with particular regard to business-related concepts such as overall planning, infrastructure, info-structure, property, innovation, and investment. Even in this business-oriented study, quality of life was also taken into consideration. Depending on these papers, in terms of city characteristics, the scope of urban studies seems to be covering the studies of public affairs and tourism management. Moreover, urban studies has some social and institutional attributes. However, to our knowledge, there is no study in this domain mentioning brand meaning.

Place marketing and brand management literature have also used city attributes for various purposes such as assessment of the levels of citizens' satisfaction (Insch, 2010; Zenker et al., 2013), explanation of the brand attitude (Merrilees et al., 2009), understanding the university town selection (Brandt and Mortanges, 2011), and identification of the brand perception of place by multiple stakeholders (Merrilees et al., 2012; Zenker et al., 2010). There is no consensus across these studies in terms of a standard list of city attributes, even some of which are held for similar purposes. However, some attributes have frequently overlapped—for example: nature and recreation, culture, business/job opportunities, and transportation are attributes used in several studies (e.g. Insch, 2010; Merrilees et al., 2009; Merrilees et al., 2012; Zenker et al., 2013). In addition to these common items, cost efficiency in terms of housing and general price level (Zenker et al., 2013) were considered. From a different perspective, Insch (2010) collected aspects of living in the city under ten items and four main dimensions: physical, social, environmental, and personal aspects. Brandt and Mortanges (2011) investigated students' criteria while choosing a town for education. In this research, accommodation opportunities for a young population, history, and nightlife are found as the three most important factors. According to our literature review, studies in the fields of city marketing or branding lack information about infrastructure systems.

Decision makers need to have information about the attributes of a city, since attaining positive perceptions of multiple stakeholders might depend on these particular attributes. Attributes of a city highlight the unique character of the city. In order to identify and select the set of city brand attributes, target groups' engagement must be sought rather than top-down coercion (Dinnie, 2010, p.5). Brand image is one of the crucial concepts on which brand equity is based. In order to set up a successful brand image; attitude of the target groups, brand attributes, and benefits of the product must be understood clearly. Every possible attribute must be taken into consideration to increase the possibility of success in brand image development. In this way, perception of target audiences might contribute significantly into this development process (Hankinson, 2001; Hankinson, 2004; Keller, 1993). Thus in addition to the literature review above, reviews with experts are carried out to decide the city brand attributes in our survey (discussed later).

2.2 Multiple Stakeholders of a City

Place brands have remarkable similarities with traditional commercial brands although there are some differences which generate distinguished brand management systems. Citizens should proactively participate in the designing process of place branding (Vela, Fernandez-Cavia, Nogue, and Jimenez-Morales, 2013). This contribution can make the perception of stakeholders more valuable. A city brand is mainly based on the perceptions of target groups' physical assets and communication strategies of that city (Sevin, 2014). In fact, one of the most challenging issues in city branding is the need

for engagement of different stakeholders in the branding process (Dinnie, 2010, p.11; Ruzzier and Petek, 2012). Interests and needs of a target group frequently arise in a distinctive form; however, in some cases, they overlap with that of other groups. Moreover, an improvement implemented to satisfy one target group may not be demanded by or benefit another group (Hankinson, 2001).

In the city branding context, there is a consensus that multiple stakeholders have important roles and this makes decision-making processes more complicated than those of other products or services (e.g. Merrilees et al., 2012; Ruzzier and Petek, 2012; Sevin, 2014). Furthermore, there are an unlimited number of stakeholders who have an interest or stake in the city (Dinnie, 2010, p.9). Nevertheless, most city branding studies address only one stakeholder (Merrilees et al., 2012). These studies generally do not include all aspects of the context in discussion. For instance, residents are seen as the most important stakeholder for a city brand (Kazançoğlu and Dirsehan, 2014; Zenker et al., 2013), but only a few studies (e.g. Braun et al., 2010; Zenker and Beckmann, 2013; Zenker and Rütter, 2014) that examine this significant target group in terms of perception of city branding have been published in the last decade. Though residents are the primary audience of marketing actions, they function as the representatives of city brands, and their characteristics influence the reputation of the city (Braun et al., 2010).

On the other hand, in the tourism research field destination branding in particular has focused on the target group of leisure and business tourists (Hankinson, 2004; Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008). In these studies (see Lim and Weaver, 2014; Leisen, 2001) visitors' perceptions about the image of a place have been investigated. While their perceptions about a brand as a visiting place is examined, their perceptions about a living place are neglected.

Students are another stakeholder group for cities who are rarely regarded as residents (e.g. Brandt and Mortanges, 2011; Kazancoglu and Dirsehan, 2014) or ignored as potential long-term customers. Brandt and Mortanges (2011) analyzed the effects of image attributes on the decision-making process for choice of place to study; yet attitudes are measured in terms of temporary residences and are not compared with any other stakeholders' attitudes. Kazancoglu and Dirsehan (2014) used a particular sample of students to explore the brand experience dimensions, but in the second phase of the study they exclude these students to analyze the influence of these dimensions on brand loyalty.

Other fields such as urban development or tourism are more likely to incorporate multiple stakeholders into urban studies. However, while studies in the field of tourism are mostly theoretical instead of being empirical (Merrilees et al., 2012), urban studies (e.g. Evans, 2002) has not been involved in branding context as aforementioned.

There are also few recent studies focusing on multiple stakeholders in city branding context. Zenker et al. (2010) introduced a broader list and classified stakeholders under four different classes: visitors, residents and workers, business and industry, and export market. The authors also defined internal and external sub-groups according to the level of audiences' knowledge, and focus on students and creative groups. They found some similarities and differences in brand associations of these groups, and stressed the requirement of different marketing communication actions to meet multiple audiences' need. Ruzzier and Petek (2012) discussed that internal and external stakeholders should be involved in the stages of brand development, implementation, and maintenance which constitute the branding process. In general, multiple target groups have different needs and interests and each group perceives a city brand from their own perspectives. This differentiation reveals the necessity of increased focus on the perceptions of different groups (Zenker et al., 2010). Merrilees et al. (2012) developed a 'filter concept', which is used to explain the interpretation of a city brand by different stakeholders. Authors tested this concept for residents and business owners in Gold Coast, an Australian city.

However, according to our literature review, there is still a research gap in understanding the perception of different stakeholders for a city brand, although the studies mentioned above (Merrilees et al., 2012; Zenker et al., 2010) have paid regard to this respect. The current paper takes the "filter approach" postulated by Merrilees et al. (2012) as a reference point and tests it for residents, students, and leisure tourists.

2.3 The Link of Multiple Stakeholders and Brand Attitude

The relationship between city attributes and the brand attitude has been discussed in the literature, but it has been rarely tested and compared among various stakeholders empirically (Merrilees et al. 2012). In place marketing literature, three target groups are considered: residents, visitors, and companies willing to do business. These three groups were addressed as a place has the typical functions such as to live, visit, and work (Braun et al., 2010). Thus, marketing actions have been used by decision makers to create a value in order to attract customers in line with these functions (Brandt and Mortanges, 2011; Gustavson and Elander, 2012; Hall, 2008). On the other hand, different roles of stakeholders have been suggested recently. Braun et al. (2010) and Zenker et al. (2013) stressed that residents should have been seen as an active part of a place brand, rather than only as a passive customer group. From this point of view, residents contribute to the formation and image of the brand, and their perceptions about a place is relatively noteworthy. Merrilees et al. (2012) focused on residents and businesses, and measured the perceptions of brand meanings as to live and to do business for both stakeholders. Results showed that residents' and business' perceptions of city brand attitudes as a place to live are mostly

similar. However, these two stakeholders have been differentiated in terms of brand attribute as a place to do business. The authors highlighted the importance of investigating various stakeholders' views and recommended future studies to handle tourists as an additional stakeholder group.

Zenker and Rütter (2014) investigated the relationship between satisfaction and brand attitude. They found that satisfaction is a key factor to brand attitude for residents. However, the authors did not focus on the city attributes affecting brand attitude. Residents are looking for a place to live where they can work, feel a sense of belonging, and have their needs met (Braun et al., 2010). Increased understanding of the perceptions of residents of the 'city brand attributes - brand attitude link' and comparing these with that of other stakeholders might benefit the city branding process. Therefore, residents' evaluations in regards to a place to live are examined in the current study.

On the other hand, tourists could be considered in two different roles depending on brand meaning measured. Tourists are current customers for a place brand (as a destination), but potential customers as residents for the city product itself. Needs of potential and current residents must be considered in the branding process by authorities (Dinnie, 2010, p. 10). More specifically, Kazancoglu and Dirsehan (2014) noted that decision makers should take into account the experiences of residents and also tourists while building the marketing program to reach a successful city branding plan. Thus, we consider tourists as current customers of the city, and measure their evaluations of city brand attitude as a visiting place as well as prospective residents. As a result, we measure their brand association connected to the city brand as a living place.

There are few studies examining students' perceptions of city brands. Brandt and Mortanges (2011) have identified some city attributes used in selecting a university town. Both expectations and performance evaluations of students were measured in this study. The city attributes have been used to interpret the brand image, and the study only focused on the perceptions about being a student in the city of Liege, Belgium. In other words, a student perspective was measured to evaluate the city attributes. However, after graduation students could move from the town or settle down. If they settle down in the city where they had studied, their perspective about the city brand could be changed since they are no longer a student. Thus a new perspective as a resident can occur. Furthermore, even if they move after graduation, students could positively affect the city brand by word of mouth. Zenker and Rütter, (2014) have showed that brand attitude has a significant influence on positive word of mouth. Therefore, students' views for a living place in addition to a studying place could provide useful information to city management or other interested parties and seems to be worthwhile input to research.

Morsing and Kristensen (2001) argue that considering the multiple stakeholders of a brand provides advantages rather than problems. Thus, the current study aims to explore the evaluations of different stakeholders about a city brand. On the basis of our theoretical framework, research questions are formed in the following aspect: What brand meanings are perceived by multiple stakeholders as a living place, visiting place, and studying place? Residents, students, and leisure tourists are examined as significant target audiences in this respect.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The current paper is empirical and conducted in the city of Gaziantep, the sixth largest city in Turkey located in the southeastern part of the country. The city's population and economy has been growing quickly for the last few decades, and is also one of the fastest developing touristic destinations in recent years. As of 2014, the city was home to four universities, three of which were founded in the last decade. Local authorities and organizations have been generating various plans to create a city brand of Gaziantep, therefore such research might help decision makers to better understand the framework of the brand meaning of the city. In this quantitative field survey, interpretation of the city brand for different stakeholders was measured by using structured questionnaires which were conducted via a face-to-face interview method. Prior to this, significant city attributes identified from the literature were discussed with experts including a city manager, brand manager, tourism specialist, and academician. Each discipline has its own view for a city (Zenker et al., 2013), hence, experts were selected from these four different disciplines. We have used these experts' comments to decide which attributes are more appropriate for the specific city and subsequently determined the final list.

The structured questionnaire formed for the quantitative survey was distributed to three groups. The first group of participants were residents of the city of Gaziantep. The second group consisted of university students residing in Gaziantep (the students whose families are living in Gaziantep were excluded and participants were presumed as temporary residents), and the third group consisted of leisure tourists. We measured the perceptions of tourists who visited the city of Gaziantep at least once but not as a transit passenger, since we believe that 'to measure perception of the people who have spent a particular time in a city' would be more realistic. A preliminary survey was administered on a sample of 34 residents; this process helped to determine the final version of the questionnaire by adding some additional instructions.

In total, 547 participants completed the survey. Of these 214 (47,2% female) were residents, 148 (52% female) tourists and 185 (55,1% female) students. The mean age of each participant group was 29 (residents), 32 (tourists), and 21 (students).

3.2 Measures

The city perception measurement methods can be listed in three main classes: The first method uses focus group interviews with target audiences (qualitative method), the second method applies place attributes with standardized questionnaires, and the third method combines these two methods such as multidimensional scaling, network analysis, or brand concept map method (Zenker et al., 2013; Zenker et al., 2010). We have preferred to use a quantitative approach with city brand attributes as we have specific questions and need generalizable answers in order to understand the perceptions of multiple stakeholders. Yet this method has an important disadvantage as the findings can be affected through the city attributes (Zenker et al., 2013). In order to eliminate this issue, prior to quantitative measurement, interviews with several people from different disciplines have been performed as mentioned above.

The questionnaire consisted of three sets of items. The first set was used to measure the perception of respondents about city brand attributes, the second set asked participants to assess the brand attitude of living place, studying place, and visiting place. Demographic variables (age, gender, family status, educational background, duration of city experience) were asked at the conclusion of the survey. The five point Likert type scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) was used to measure the perception of city brand attributes and brand attitude. Nominal and internal scales were used for the set of demographic variables depending on the element.

We have used the correlation matrix to check the similar items. Since crime rate and urban security had high correlation rates (0,76, 0,73, 0,80 for residents, students, and tourists respectively) and evoke similar meanings, we have combined these attributes and formed a new item called crime rate and urban security. Later, an explorative factor analysis with varimax rotation method was performed. Scales used to measure city brand attribute were loaded under the relevant factor and had no cross-loading issues. Prior to factor analysis, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value was checked for 3 samples separately, all were in an acceptable range. Additionally, Bartlett test of sphericity were significant (at 0.,000 level) for all samples. The final list of attributes and attitudes used in the regression analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Alpha Value of Items for Attributes and Attitudes

Item (Factor name)	Residents	Students	Tourists	Sources
Urbanity and cultural activities				
A wide range of cultural activities: theatre, museum etc.				Kazançoğlu and Dirsehan, 2014; Merrilees et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2007; Zenker et al., 2013
Variety of shopping opportunities	0,88	0,84	0,81	
The atmosphere of the city				
Good for families				
Crime rate, urban security				
Infrastructure				
Accessibility from other cities or countries				Brandt and de Mortanges, 2011; Hankinson, 2004; Santos et al., 2007
Availability and convenience of public transportation	0,79	0,77	0,73	
Technology infrastructure (internet infrastructure, access to wifi etc.)				
Nature and Environment				
Parks and picnic facilities				Merrilees et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2007; Zenker et al., 2013
Cleanliness of the city	0,84	0,72	0,74	
Air, water, noise pollution				
Economic conditions				
The general price level in the city				Zenker et al., 2013
Availability of accommodation units (houses, hotels, dorms etc.)	0,86	0,78	0,76	
General economic growth of the city				
Job opportunities and business networks				
The general level of wages				Zenker et al., 2013
Job and promotion opportunities	0,78	0,74	n.a.	
Professional networks in the city				
Living place				
	0,83	0,80	0,72	

Proud to live in Gaziantep				Merrilees et al., 2012
Overall lifestyle is good				
Good reputation among residents				
Studying place				
Gaziantep has a good reputation among university students				
Attitude towards Gaziantep as a brand for studying is good	n.a.	0,89	n.a.	Adapted from Merrilees et al., 2012
Overall evaluation of Gaziantep as a brand for studying is good				
Visiting place				
Gaziantep has a good image among tourists				
Attitude towards Gaziantep as a brand for visiting is good	n.a.	n.a.	0,71	Adapted from Merrilees et al., 2012; Hankinson, 2004
Overall evaluation of Gaziantep as a brand for visiting is good				

n.a. : not applicable.

Reliability of the data was checked by Chronbach Alpha coefficient (see table 1). The alpha coefficients were all higher than the minimal standards (>0,70) recommended by Hair et al. (2006). For all samples, multicollinearity is checked with tolerances and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. All tolerances were greater than 0,3, and VIF were less than 3, therefore multicollinearity was not an issue for our data set to perform regression analysis.

Prior to the regression analysis, an explorative factor analysis was employed to test the distinctiveness of all items measuring dependent variables (for living place and studying place). According to the results, 43% of variance for living place and 35% of variance for studying place, in total 78% of variance is explained by two factors. Items used to measure the dependent variables were all loaded onto their respective factors obtained from the sample of students. Another explorative factor analysis was also done for the tourist sample to check the appropriateness of measuring city brand as both a living place and a visiting place. Results showed that the items used to capture the dependent variables of living place and visiting place have explained 73% of variance, 41% for living place, and 32% for visiting place. All items were loaded onto the relevant dependent variable, hence, tourist sample data was appropriate—in terms of distinctiveness of dependent variables—to employ regression analysis.

4. FINDINGS

Linear multiple regression was conducted for three different brand attitudes (city brand as a living/studying/visiting place) separately in order to assess the predictive power of city brand attributes as independent variables.

4.1 City brand as a Living Place

City brand attitude as a living place was tested separately for three samples, residents, students, and tourists, and the regression model results are shown below: Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 respectively.

The model explains 67% of variance in the residents’ city brand attitude as a living place (see Table 2). For the sample of residents, all of the factors used in the current study contributed to the prediction of brand attitude. The strongest city attribute is economic conditions but there is a minor difference between beta coefficients of this factor and urbanity&cultural activities. The weakest factor is infrastructure, though still having a remarkable contribution to the dependent value at the 90% level of confidence.

Table 2 - Regression Results for the Attitude as a Living Place (resident sample)

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F (t)	Beta	p
Model	0,690	0,674	41,895		
Constant			(-3,098)		0,003
Urbanity&c.a.				0,246	0,002**
Infrastructure				0,119	0,099***
Nature&envir.				0,181	0,013**
Economic cond.				0,275	0,002**
Job opp&b.n.				0,229	0,005**

* p<0,001, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,1, Dependent variable: place to live

The model fits well and only three factors have statistically significant effects on brand attitude of students (see Table 3). The 63% of variance is explained by three factors, and this rate is slightly less than the residents'. Job opportunities&business network is the strongest factor, urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment have also contributed to the city brand attitude perceptions.

The factor of economic conditions shows a major difference between residents and students, making no contribution for the student sample while making the strongest one for the residents. Urbanity&cultural activities and job opportunities&business make major contributions for both samples.

Table 3: Regression Results for the Attitude as a Living Place (student sample)

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F (t)	Beta	p
Model	0,646	0,627	32,904		
Constant			(-2,792)		0,006
Urbanity&c.a.				0,304	0,000*
Infrastructure				0,087	0,325
Nature&envir.				0,208	0,011**
Economic cond.				0,073	0,425
Job opp&b.n.				0,363	0,000*

* p<0,001, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,1; Dependent variable: place to live

The factor of job opportunities&business network was not applicable for the tourist sample, yet the model fits and explains 54% of the variance (see Table 4). The most important factor for the tourist sample is economic conditions (as also seen with the resident sample). Urbanity&cultural activities is the second most important factor, having a beta coefficient only slightly less than the highest one. Nature&environment makes a major contribution to the dependent variable. Infrastructure factor is insignificant in predicting the brand attitude as a living place.

Table 4: Regression Results for the Attitude as a Living Place (tourist sample)

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F(t)	Beta	p
Model	0,559	0,539	28,175		
Constant			(-0,765)		0,446
Urbanity&c.a.				0,302	0,003**
Infrastructure				0,035	0,697
Nature&envir.				0,216	0,046**
Economic cond.				0,320	0,001**

* p<0,001, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,1, Dependent variable: place to live

Urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment make significant contributions in predicting city brand attitude as a living place for all samples with an overall look. Infrastructure is significant (p<0,1) only for residents and insignificant for the students and tourists, thus, it seems to be the weakest factor in general.

4.2 City Brand as a Studying Place

Another regression analysis is performed to predict a different dependent variable, city brand attitude as a studying place, and the results are shown in Table 5. The model fits and explains 58% of the variance in the attitudes of the student sample. Urbanity&cultural activities, infrastructure, nature&environment, and economic conditions are significantly related to the city brand attitude, and all these factors have very similar beta coefficients. However, job opportunities&business network factor is insignificant.

When we compare the attitude as a studying place and living place for the student sample, similar major contributions are made by the factors of urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment. However, students do not consider the infrastructure and economic conditions when they evaluate the place for living, but the same factors have remarkable relations with the attitude of the place for studying. Conversely, job opportunities&business factor makes a major contribution to the attitude as a place to live, while it has no effect on predicting the attitude as a studying place.

Table 5: Regression Results for the Attitude as a Studying Place (student sample)

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Beta	p
Model	0,604	0,582	27,427		
Constant				0,089	0,929
Urbanity&c.a.				0,251	0,005**
Infrastructure				0,276	0,004**
Nature&envir.				0,216	0,012**
Economic cond.				0,235	0,016**
Job opp&b.n.				0,021	0,792

* p<0,001, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,1, Dependent variable: place to study

4.3 City Brand as a Visiting Place

Regression analysis is conducted for predicting the city brand attitude of tourists in terms of a visiting place, and the results are shown in Table 6. Adjusted R-square value is 0,472 which indicates 47% of the variance can be explained by the model. The model suggests that urbanity&cultural activities, infrastructure, nature&environment are predictors of the city brand attitude as a visiting place for the tourist sample. Economic conditions are the only factor which is not significant.

The tourist sample has some similar views in terms of a living place or visiting place. Urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment factors are significant for both attitudes. On the other hand, infrastructure makes a contribution to the city brand attitude as a visiting place; but has no effect on attitude as a living place. Conversely, economic conditions are not significant in predicting the city brand attitude as a visiting place while making the highest contribution to the attitude as a living place.

Table 6: Regression Results for the Attitude as a Visiting Place (tourist sample)

	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F(t)	Beta	p
Model	0,495	0,472	21,815		
Constant			(1,327)		0,188
Urbanity&c.a.				0,358	0,001**
Infrastructure				0,203	0,038**
Nature&envir.				0,246	0,033**
Economic cond.				0,022	0,829

* p<0,001, ** p<0,05, *** p<0,1, Dependent variable: place to visit

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

Different brand associations of various stakeholders for a city brand in an emerging country, Turkey, is examined in the current study. In this way different views of various stakeholders might be better explained for a specific brand meaning

such as a living place, studying place, or visiting place. Moreover, stakeholders' evaluations about different brand meanings can be compared.

Previous studies—those focusing on the link between multi-stakeholder and city brand—have been carried out mostly in developed countries (Germany, Australia). The current study, however, was conducted in an emerging country, Turkey, thus a noteworthy contribution is made towards the efforts to generalize the attitude of multiple stakeholders. Findings of this study support the Merrilees et al.'s (2012) filter approach, and makes theoretical contributions to the city branding literature with covering tourists and students as stakeholders to examine various brand meanings.

From a broad perspective, some of the factors have significant impacts on city brand attitude as a living place for different stakeholders. Urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment make the remarkable contributions to the city brand attitude as a living place for the samples of residents, students, and tourists. These results have supported Merrilees et al. (2012), who suggested that nature, cultural activities, and clean environment have impacts on city brand attitudes for the business owner and non-business owner samples of residents. However, transportation was insignificant according to the findings of the mentioned study, and infrastructure—including transportation items in the current study—had a significant impact on attitude of residents even as it was the weakest factor. Additionally, the factor of infrastructure had no contribution to attitude as a living place for students and tourists which parallels Merrilees et al.'s (2012) findings. Economic conditions are also a major factor for residents and tourists but insignificant for students. Discrete results of this factor for students might have arisen from their expectations about earning money in a full-time position and have better income after they graduated. Job opportunities&business network is a major factor for residents and students, and has the strongest impact for the latter. This might be related to a high unemployment rate in Turkey—9,7% overall and 18,7% for youth (TÜİK haber bülteni, 2014a; TÜİK haber bülteni, 2014b).

The strongest factor is the economic condition and the second most influencing factor includes urbanity&cultural activities for both resident and tourist samples in terms of a living place. These results partially support Zenker et al. (2013) who suggested that cultural activities and the urban image of the city are the most important factors for the residents in Germany. However, in the same study, economic related items (housing cost, general price level, level of wages) have very low importance to satisfy the citizens. Dissimilar evaluations between German and Turkish samples for this factor might originate from the substantial difference in GDP per capita (Germany: \$45.085, Turkey: \$10.946) between these two countries (World Bank national accounts data, 2014).

Evaluations of the student sample have remarkable differences depending on the brand attitude they have. Urbanity&cultural activities, infrastructure, nature&environment, and economic conditions all make significant contributions to attitude as a studying place. Most of the students probably do not have a full-time job or may not receive a high allowance from their parents, therefore economic conditions could be relatively more important from a student's viewpoint. The major effect of economic conditions supports Brandt and Mortanges (2011), who have suggested accommodation—a term included in the economic conditions in our study—is one of the most important criteria in the university town selection process. Additionally, infrastructure has the strongest impact with a slightly higher beta coefficient, which can be explained in many ways. Firstly, due to the limited income mentioned above, available and convenient transportation can be crucial for students. Secondly, families of the student sample were not living in the city of Gaziantep, so students can be placing greater importance on the accessibility of the city from other locations. Thirdly, the 16-24 age group has the highest internet usage in Turkey (TÜİK haber bülteni, 2014c). This internet usage reflects students' need to access resources for assignments and social media platforms. Job opportunities&business network has no impact on prediction of city attributes as a studying place, so the student sample may only be focusing on the time period until graduation.

City brand attitude as a visiting place has been affected primarily from urbanity&cultural activities. This impact can be explained by some items in this factor such as atmosphere of the city, gastronomic experience, and shopping opportunities are directly relevant to touristic purposes. Gaziantep is one of the most famous gourmet tour centers in Turkey, thus, food identified with the city could have been crucial for the visitors. Also shopping opportunities and atmosphere of the city may have affected tourists in deciding to come to the city, though any items questioning the purpose of their visit were not presented to the respondents. The factor of infrastructure is insignificant for the attitude as a living place, but becomes a major attribute for the tourist sample if the attitude is about a visiting place. Accessibility of the city and also convenient public transportation options could be affecting the perception of the tourist sample when they are evaluating the city as a visiting place. Limited time or budgets for traveling may be making these items more important for the tourist sample. However, they seem to be focusing on urbanity&cultural activities and economic conditions rather than infrastructure when the point is living in a city. Nature&environment has an impact in prediction of both brand meanings: as a living place or as a visiting place. Economic conditions are insignificant in predicting attitudes as a visiting place while this factor has a major impact on attitudes as a living place. This result may be due to the fact that tourists stay in the city for a limited time, and they may be ignoring the price level or the accommodation opportunities.

Urbanity&cultural activities and nature&environment are constant attributes affecting three brand meanings: living place, studying place, and visiting place across various stakeholders. The consistency indicates these two attributes are vital for citizens in any case. Local authorities and other organizations involved in brand management process of the city of Gaziantep must attach primary importance to these factors. Furthermore, decision makers need to consider the multiple stakeholders' attachment to the city brand and then they should decide the brand investments according to the brand meanings.

5.2 Limitations and Further Implications

We have used five factors to measure the link between attributes and city brand attitude. Even though the attributes have been derived from literature and filtered through interviews with experts, there could be other considerable attributes that need to be taken into account. Explorative research could be conducted prior to quantitative analysis in further studies.

The current study has some limitations about generalization. Only a single city in Turkey is examined in the current paper, therefore it is difficult to generalize the results for diverse stakeholders in other countries, or even in other cities in Turkey. Further studies should examine various additional stakeholders such as business tourists or investors in different cultural contexts. Moreover, a relatively small sample size is used for each group, which may not be ideal in order to generalize the results. Taking these limitations into account, we believe our findings have made substantial contributions to explain the perceptions of different stakeholders about diverse brand meanings in an emerging country.

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