The Process of Branding a City
-Antakya as a Model-

Cemal Yükselen* · Emel Gönenç Güler**
R. Ayşen Wolff***

[ABSTRACT]

In studies about the branding of destinations, one finds the need to involve all the local and international stakeholders in the process of SWOT analysis and prepare a unique action plan. The Brand Destination Project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey is interested in making various famous cities culturally attractive to tourists. They expect economic and social development as they carry their historical values into the future.

Antioch, the ancient name of Antakya, is one of the destinations targeted for branding in this project. Antioch was once the third largest trade and tourism center in the Roman Empire. It was also one of the first places to become a center for Christianity, drawing many pilgrims. It was a melting pot for many ancient civilizations in Anatolia. The purpose of this paper is to brand Antioch as a place where people have been living in the spirit of tolerance and brotherhood for many centuries against the backdrop of different religions and ethnicities.

Furthermore, this paper includes suggestions for branding processes, responsibilities of stakeholders, and conclusions which may be realized by SWOT analysis and other exploratory research.

Key Words : Branding, SWOT, Antioch, Antakya.

Introduction

The Destination Marketing Approach in Destination Branding : Destination marketing aims to

* Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Department of Business Administration İstanbul Arel University, Turkey
** Trakya University, Turkey
*** Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences Department of Business Administration İstanbul Arel University, Turkey

render a destination identity applicable to the core qualifications of a destination effectively communicated to targeted tourists (Yavuz,2007:40). Establishing and implementing a certain destination marketing strategy emphasizes a presentation of differences.

In recent years every country has been developing new destinations to attract tourists. Without planning expenses and investments are in vain. A marketing strategy is formed by various qualifications. The identity of a destination has cultural, historical and social dimensions. Olins (2002) points out that culture, image and appeal together constitute a brand name. Yeoman et al. (2005:135) draw attention to the history of a place as affective on image. These various dimensions of a marketing strategy require various actors and stakeholders. Marketing and branding strategies need the participation of local government and civil establishments.

Branding strategy and process defines the marketing strategy of a destination. The American Marketing Association defines a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those competitors" (Kotler and Keller, 2009:276). By this definition a destination's brand should have some different characteristics compared to other destinations incorporated into name, sign, symbol or design or the combination of them.

The tourism Strategy of the Turkey-2023 study is in line with the objectives of the 9th Development Scheme (covering the period between 2007-2013). The Scheme has this statement that says, "A Tourism Industry Master Plan shall be drafted down to ensure sustainable and healthy development of the tourism sector". The efforts covered herein are pursued to achieve this objective.

Our country has several unique opportunities for different types of tourism compiled under the category of alternative tourism, which include in addition to coastal tourism, health and thermal tourism, winter sports, mountain climbing and layout tourism, adventure trips, plateau tourism and ecotourism, conference and expo tourism, cruise ship and yacht tourism, golf tourism and etc. (Wolff, Kucukaltan,2009)

Branding Elements

Hankinson (2005:25) defines the following components of a brand:
- brand name, symbols and logos,
- identity elements of the brand,
- the positioning elements of brand image.

Within this framework branding Antioch (Antakya) refers to the symbol of the city and the logo which visually refers to something unique to city its history, natural environment, etc. images which evoke Antioch and in the process targets tourists (Yükselen, Güler, 2009:17).

Antioch is in the south of Turkey and has a border with Syria. Antioch was once the third largest trade and tourism center in the Roman Empire. It was also one of the first places to become a center for Christianity therefore, drawing many pilgrims. It was a melting pot for many ancient civilizations in Anatolia.

In the Ottoman Empire, Antakya was province "Sandjak of Alexandretta" in the state of Aleppo (1517) which is today in Syria. After France and England invaded Syria and Lebanon, a Turkish and French Agreement was ratified in 1921 in Ankara creating a special status for Antakya. With Ankara