www.ejthr.com

CONTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL FAIRS IN CITY BRANDING:

THE CASE OF IZMIR, TURKEY

Nahit Erdem Köker
Deniz Maden
Aylin Gözta
Ege University

ABSTRACT: Izmir is the third largest city in Turkey, situated at the Aegean Coast. With its natural and cultural richness, historical heritage and being an important port, Izmir is one of the most valuable destinations in Turkey. With its economy based on trade and port, Izmir has been a city of fairs for a long time. Since 1936, Izmir International Fair has been taking place every year for a whole month. The fair gets attention from many foreign participants and investors. This event is an essential part of the city which makes Izmir the most important city to host fairs in Turkey. In fact, Izmir has been a candidate for EXPO 2015, but lost against Milan. Currently, Izmir is a candidate for EXPO 2020. The contribution of international fairs to the branding process of Izmir has always been considered to be one of the most important factors which affect the total brand image of the city. Therefore, in this study, the contribution of international fairs to the branding process of Izmir will be evaluated according to the views of the locals. For this, a qualitative research will be carried out by two focus group meetings which will include questions to determine both evaluations of the past and expectations for the future. It is aimed to reach results which will contribute to the academic literature in city branding, international fairs and branding Izmir, as well as presenting a guide for further branding strategies and international fairs in Izmir. **Keywords:** *City Branding, International Trade Fairs, Destination Marketing*

RESUMEN: Esmirna es la tercera mayor ciudad de Turquía, ubicada en la costa Egea. Con su riqueza natural y cultural, patrimonio histórico y siendo un importante puerto, Esmirna es uno de los más importantes destinos en Turquía. Con su economía basada en el comercio y en el puerto, Esmirna ha sido desde siempre una ciudad de ferias. Desde 1936, la Feria Internacional de Esmirna ocurre todos los años durante un mes entero. La feria recibe la atención de muchos participantes e investidores extranjeros. Este evento es una parte esencial de la ciudad, lo que hace de Esmirna la ciudad más importante para recibir ferias en Turquía. De hecho, Esmirna fue una de las ciudades candidatas a la EXPO 2015, pero perdió para Milano. Actualmente, Esmirna es candidata a la Expo 2020. La contribución de las ferias internacionales para el proceso de *branding* de Esmirna siempre fue vista como uno de los factores más importantes en términos de la imagen de marca de la ciudad como un todo. Por eso, en este estudio, la contribución de ferias internacionales para el proceso de *branding* de Esmirna será evaluada de acuerdo con los puntos de vista de los habitantes locales. Para eso, será realizada una pesquisa cualitativa a través de dos reuniones de grupos de foco, que incluirán preguntas

---

para determinar, sea las evaluaciones relativamente al pasado, sea las expectativas para el futuro. Se pretende llegar a resultados que contribuyan para la literatura académica en *city branding*, ferias internacionales y marca Esmirna, así como presentar un guía para futuras estrategias de *branding* y ferias internacionales en Esmirna. **Palabras-clave**: *City branding*, Ferias Internacionales, Marketing de Destinos

RESUMO: Esmirna (Izmir) é a terceira maior cidade da Turquia, situada na costa do Mar Egeu. Com sua riqueza natural e cultural, património histórico e sendo um importante porto, Esmirna é um dos mais importantes destinos na Turquia. Com sua economia baseada no comércio e no porto, Esmirna tem sido desde sempre uma cidade de feiras. Desde 1936, a Feira Internacional de Esmirna tem lugar todos os anos durante um mês inteiro. A feira recebe a atenção de muitos participantes e investidores estrangeiros. Este evento é uma parte essencial da cidade, o que faz de Esmirna a cidade mais importante para receber feiras na Turquia. Na verdade, Izmir foi uma das cidades candidatas à EXPO 2015, mas perdeu contra Milão. Atualmente, Esmirna é candidata à Expo 2020. A contribuição das feiras internacionais para o processo de *branding* de Izmir sempre foi vista como um dos fatores mais importantes em termos da imagem de marca da cidade como um todo. Por conseguinte, neste estudo, a contribuição de feiras internacionais para o processo de *branding* de Izmir será avaliada de acordo com os pontos de vista dos habitantes locais. Para isso, será realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa através de duas reuniões de grupos de foco, que incluirão perguntas para determinar quer as avaliações relativamente ao passado, quer as expectativas para o futuro. Pretende-se chegar a resultados que contribuam para a literatura académica em *city branding*, feiras internacionais e marca Izmir, bem como apresentar um guia para futuras estratégias de branding e feiras internacionais em Esmirna. **Palavras-chave:** *City branding*, Feiras Internacionais, Marketing de Destinos

INTRODUCTION

The marketing of urban places has been studied since the 19th century (Ward, 1998). Making a study of the historical process, it is evident that the conscious marketing activities targeted at the unique embodiment of national, regional or civic management identities and at the presentation of these identities to the markets for approval goes back to many years prior to the present day. In the last three decades, many cities have increasingly tended to rely on marketing methods because the competition for inward investment, tourism revenues and residents at various spatial scales intensified (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). Just as in the past, the destinations standing at the core of tourism activities make huge efforts to get a share from the current market or to increase their market shares, to make a difference in accordance with economic, political and socio-psychological motives. According to Ashworth and Voogd (1994: 39), there isn't any new thing about places being promoted by those likely to profit from their development. Similar to any other product, a destination is required to thoroughly explicate its components and to settle and direct their meanings in order to succeed in its marketing activities.

The implementation of a marketing philosophy and methodology, or at least of marketing techniques that were easy to adapt and use in the practice of city governance, has been mirrored by the increasing interest of academics from various fields, who believe that the principles of marketing are, with the necessary modifications, applicable to cities and their operational environment (Kavaratzis, 2004: 59). Currently, the studies aimed at improving the tourism sector are more important than

ever due to the rapid growth of the tourism sector and its increasing share in national economics. Destination branding gains more importance as the competition in the sector increases and the destinations become conscious about the increasing importance of tourism activities and start applying new strategies as a consequence. On the other hand, the increasing consciousness level of target audiences, differentiation of destination preferences and technological abilities enabling the comparison of destinations have carried the competition to a new dimension. Increasing competition and the changing target audience make the destination marketing activities and content strategies very important, as they are devoted to gain superiority in the competition environment.The most appropriate marketing strategy that can be applied by the coordination and construction units of destinations' tourism activities is to determine the elements that can create a value in accordance with the resources and abilities of the destination. These elements which can create a value will also represent a brand value regarding the destination. These elements are the things that lie beneath the marketing processes executed by destinations in order to become a brand and create value. Considering destinations in terms of resources that can create equity, a destination with rich resources and a good command on these, would have more power than a destination with a lower ability to use its resources (Cathy, Kara & Soo, 2004: 121-126).

Being a tourism brand is a wish shared by any destination, however only a few hold the necessary specifications. Considering from the basis of brand establishment and success, brands are like people; a tourism destination with distinguished merits will always be remembered and preferred (Gotta, 2004). The most important action to be taken on the way to establish a destination brand is to determine what makes a place unique and different for customers, using the historical, cultural and natural beauties. This unique specification will defy imitation by competitors. There may be many romantic cities all over the world, however there is only one Rome and its romantic existence can never be replaced by another city (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004: 65). Both the increasing competition in the world tourism business and the changing identity of tourists make it vital to gain superiority in the competition environment. Gaining superiority in the competition environment brings the question of how destination marketing organizations are responsible for increasing the effectiveness of destination marketing in highlighting the tourism values of their destinations. Competition in tourism business ends up with the quest for new ways to become different.

The essential component of marketing mix is product. Product fulfills various functional necessities desired by the consumers (Jobber, 2004: 260). Consumers cover their different necessities by using the product. The necessities can either be concrete or abstract. The functional require-

ments expected from the product within the marketing mix are satisfied through these concrete and abstract components. In some products, concrete specifications are more important, whereas abstract specifications are more important in others. In the current tourism business, the abstract specifications of products are at the forefront as much as the concrete specifications. Considering products in the business, it is clear that concrete specifications are perfectly constructed in the presentation of most of the products to target audiences. Most hotels, airlines or beaches which can be handled as concrete specifications are at certain standards to satisfy their target audiences. However, in the tourism business, the value and reputation of concrete specifications in the eyes of target audiences is in direct proportion with the success achieved in the construction of abstract functions. Highlighting the abstract specifications is a hard process; especially in a service based product like tourism, in which it is hard to gain and sustain a product advantage in the eyes of consumers (Storey and Easingwood, 1998: 336). For this reason, marketing of products in the tourism business and achieving their approval by consumers can only be possible through the planning of active marketing strategies constructed with an effective preparation process.

A tourism destination is a center of attraction for visitors with its various tourism resources and a holistic output consisting of direct or indirect tourism services supplied by enterprises or organizations which are frequently visited by tourists. Due to these specifications within the holistic structure, destinations not only stand as one of the most important elements of tourism activities, but also as the hardest tourism product to manage and market. For the effective management and marketing of destinations within tourism activities, it carries vital importance to understand the components that form the holistic structure of destinations and the links between them and to accurately establish the destination's identity, which is defined in other words as "a group of human characteristics related to a tourism destination (Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2007: 63-64). In this paper, the relationship between tourism and destination, destination marketing, destination" resources which create value in marketing, international fairs as the elements of attraction for destinations, the impact of fairs and destination brands on tourist loyalty will be analyzed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

City Branding

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these which is used to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong, 2002: 48). "It helps consumers

make healthy choices by introducing the difference between the products" (Ozkan, 2002)". It fuels the beliefs, arouses the feelings and encourages the individuals to make the move (Kotler & Gertner, 2002: 249-265). De Chernatony and McDonald (1992) describe a brand as: …an identifiable product augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.

Many locations which can be qualified as tourism areas have become brands with certain images in people's minds, sometimes smaller than the general scope of a company, but larger than many cities in the country (Tosun & Jenkins, 1996: 7). From a traditional point of view, tourism regions are perfectly defined as geographical areas like an island or a town (Hall, 2000: 58). According to Leiper, tourism regions are a mixture of tourism products consisting of many elements. These products mentioned under the title of a tourism region present an integrated experience to the consumers (Leiper, 1995: 85). This integrated nature of tourism regions makes them marketable products. At this point, branding strategy has gained importance for tourism regions as an essential element in marketing activities. Especially, the cities which have recently become destination centers are the tourism locations where branding strategies are intensely executed.

There are many motives for a tourist while choosing a location (Pyo, Mihalik & Uysal, 1989: 277-282). However, the competition atmosphere existing in tourism business, as in all other sectors, brings the rapid loss in any motive's effect and the ability to easily imitate any unique specification by the competitors. Contrary to this fact, the concept of destination branding has provided an initial point to implementers functioning as an element of advantage in the competition environment. Destinations can be turned into brands just as any other products (Killingbeck & Trueman, 2002: 1-22). However, the successful branding of a destination is only possible through choosing its most appropriate marketable equities which can differentiate it from its competitors considering its own resources and abilities and by supporting these equities with effective communication strategies.

The most important function of brands within contemporary marketing strategies is to distinguish the products and services of a company from others. "A brand enables consumers to make healthy choices by displaying the difference between the products" (Ozkan, 2002). A brand urges the beliefs, arouses the feelings and provokes individuals to move (Kotler & Gertner, 2002:1). Due to a brand's function of displaying the difference between the products, managers try to produce more qualified goods to turn their brand into a popular and preferable one. One of the vital functions of a brand is the image it cultivates over the consumer. The image of a brand is a considerable capital for its owners.

"Image can both be the trails left in mind about something perceived with senses or a mental fiction constructed by a person. Brand image which is frequently used in marketing is management's identity which it tries to get it accepted by the public" (Grand Dictionnaire Encyclope-dique Larousse, 1983). "Destinations can be branded just like any other product" (Killingbeck & Trueman, 2002: 1-22). A destination brand and its image among the target audience would reflect the destination's identity. Considering the components of destination marketing process "cultivating a positive image in regional scope is more comprehensive and harder than creating an image for a product" (Gunlu & Icoz, 2004: 84). Destination image is composed from the total images perceived by a tourist mass, existing under the title of target audience. Perceived destination image can be better understood through the "communication life curve" experienced by the tourist. "Tourist will perceive images of destination related to the communication life curve level he is at." (Lack of knowledge, realization, understanding, acceptance, response) (Batchelor, 1999: 183-198). The main component of destination image at this point is the communication process that has been constructed. Creation and management of image are based on active communication. The image desired to be cultivated on target audiences should be directed through correct communication channels with correct strategies.

Creating an international brand image and identity and alluring the investments and capital in circulation have become an economical development strategy for current destinations. The desire to make destinations an international brand depends on economical reasons (Paul, 2004: 572). "The way to have an international destination brand for a city by benefiting from tourism for economical gain purposes is to underline the supporting identical specifications and relating them in a way to empower each other" (Rainisto, 2003:12).

The necessity to establish a regional identity stands in the very beginning of the destination brand creation process. Constituting a brand for a tourism region is the process of bringing its differences from other tourism regions to the foreground, in other words calling an identity into being. "Brand positioning necessitates the creation of a well known brand with positive, strong and unique brand connotations. This can be done both with the choice of brand identity in the beginning and with the support given to the uniting of brand identities within marketing program" (Uztug, 2003: 55). Being able to think globally in the establishment and strategic marketing processes of a destination brand, planning its future with its current resources and abilities, taking environment into consideration, constituting a brand identity with inner consistency, sustaining harmony with outer elements and communicating this identity to target audiences through channels underlie as important points within tourism activities.

Destination Marketing and Trade Fairs

The competition between the destinations trying to get a share from tourism income has recently gained a global characteristic. All destinations in this process develop new specifications and try to highlight their distinctions in order to survive in the market. Most destinations arrange and apply new communication strategies, especially for the aim of changing their negative image. In order to become a brand and differentiate from others, the attention should be directed to the destination's marketable equities, in other words its elements of attraction. "Destination attractions are resources which are managed and controlled for pleasing the customers, letting them have fun and educating them" (Gianna, Bill & Eric, 2000: 57). Marketable destination equities are the point of departures of tourism activities and movements. These equities have the major role in destination branding and in the creation of a destination brand. Marketable destination equities can be classified in three categories; being the places to be seen (historical places, natural beauties), events to be joined (fairs, festivals, ceremonies) and experiences to be gained (important sports games, shopping). This trio lies on the basis of destination branding and brand strategies.

The existence of destination branding in the current tourism and marketing literature and the complicated structure of the process of creation of a destination brand needs to combine various concrete or abstract products related to destination brand like culture, environment and economy. Also, it turns researchers' attention to focusing on interdisciplinary studies (Gnoth, 1998: 759). Besides these specifications about destination branding strategies, market conditions and the factors influencing them also force tourism entrepreneurs to develop different strategies in accordance with the equities and the markets they are located in (Icoz, 2001: 194). Positioning in marketing activities is made according to the equities owned and the competitors. Successful positioning includes being different from the competitors and also the creation of fronts in time (Borca, 2004: 161). At this point, the brand becomes the basic tool for marketing experts to distinguish between products while "the differences about product can easily be imitated" (Kotler & Gertner, 2002: 249). Brand differentiation studies are frequently used by the service sector in which abstract products are intensely found, as well as for concrete consumer goods (Douglas, 1990: 398).

The fair concept, born out of various commercial necessities, is influential in tourism business as well as in other sectors. Fairs, which are generally described as exhibitions aimed at improving production and trade by attracting consumers' or visitors' attention and displaying the contemporary developments in production technologies, are also events where companies present their products and services to the consumers,

where sellers and buyers meet and contact directly. Fairs, according to Okay (2002: 202), are events where sellers meet buyers to whom they furnish their products and services. They are important communication tools enabling face-to-face communication of the participants. From a communication point of view, fairs create a communication atmosphere in the locations they take place and an interaction is established between the participants within this atmosphere. Durmaz (1985: 4), who defines fairs in a general scope, considers them as "organizations aimed at the union of economic, social and political activities" and widens the extent of fair concept within the limits of social processes. According to Durmaz, a social and political integration takes place between the participants in the locations where fairs are organized. This integration had major supports to many sectors, especially to tourism. Another opinion claims that fairs are "large bazaars arranged periodically at a fixed dated in a fixed location where goods are sold and bought" (Faralyali, 1985: 27). In this definition which resembles fairs as large bazaars, fair locations are the common meeting points of sellers and buyers. From a tourism point of view, fairs take place in a location for a specific time period and present an experience to people who are targeted primarily for buying or selling and collecting information.

Fairs have a huge potential in supporting and developing tourism. Currently, around 30,000 fairs are organized all over the world with approximately 3.2 million participant companies/ institutions and around 350 million visitors. In other words, 1 of every 20 people is a fair visitor. Especially European countries have an important share in the world fair industry. Currently, the largest and most important fairs in the world take place in Europe, mostly in Germany. Every year, approximately 400-450 fairs are being organized in Germany. By 2003, 37 fair organization firms existed, the total revenue of Germany's fair industry was 2.5 million euros and the contribution of the fair sector to the general economics of Germany was 23 million euros. In the European fair industry, Germany is followed by; Italy, France and England. In 2003, 125 fairs were organized in Italy, 122 in France and 121 in England (Sülün, 2004: 56). For this reason, fairs are not only functional in trade but they also perform an important task in creating centers of tourism and turning target audiences into loyal customers for the destinations. Fair organizations contribute not only to the organizers and participants, but also to the host city, region and country in socio-cultural and economic means.

According to a research by the Institute of Fair Industry and Distribution Researches of Köln University regarding the increasing importance of fair business, the field capacity of fairs had been subject to an undeniable increase between the years of 1990-2000. The research shows that fair fields in Germany and in the world had been subject to an increase of 2.3 million square meter (+35%) and 15 million square meter (+50%)

respectively. The expansion of fair fields also reflected in fair organizations and exhibitions which increased in number during the last 10 years. The research states that the number of fairs and exhibitions had been subject to an increase of more than 700 (+40%) in Germany and more than 12,000 (+100%) all over the world (Kalka, 2000).

Tourism is a cultural interaction. According to the World Tourism Organization, 37% of international tourists travel for cultural reasons (Du Cluzeau, 2000: 37). The nature of interaction between cultures is shaped by the profile and expectations of tourists, the specifications of interaction location and the role of people's contribution to the marketing of culture, such as tourist guides (Lea, 2001: 79). Cultural attraction points of a destination determine the nature of interaction at this point. These attraction points include events related to prehistoric and historic actions in science, religion and fine arts, sports and entertainment, festivals, exhibitions, celebrations, sound and light shows, fairs, competitions and sports games (Boret, 1989; Swarbrooke, 1999). In the historical process of development, fair organizations have been a generator of cultural attraction for the locations they are organized in and made important contributions to the social and cultural development of these places' inhabitants. Fairs support the destinations in tourism means by gathering people from different regions and cultures, giving them a chance to get to know each other and the destination and enable cultural interaction.

Examining the examples of contemporary fairs, it can be stated that fairs bring a significant economic bounce to their locations with the flow of visitors and movement in trade activities. During the fair period, the fair location becomes commercially and economically active even for a limited period due to the huge number of participants and visitors in the region. The income of many managements acting in accommodation, food, beverage and other related businesses significantly increases in the fair location. On the other hand fairs make it easier to publicize the company or city they are located in and the economy develops in international scope. They are closely related to the publicity of a destination as they enable the exhibition of a country's culture, folklore and history. The communication environment and visits taking place in fairs and fair activities play a fundamental role in changing and overcoming negative thoughts in tourism means (Cildir, 1991: 42).

General fairs are usually organized for the publicity and sales of products and services, but they also provide chances for a country to develop its tourism activities and create new opportunities. Along with the fairs where international publicity is provided, the fair locations started to be introduced to target audiences as well as the publicity of the fair itself. In order to attract more participants and visitors to the fairs organized, publicity and communication activities executed in national and international scope focus on appealing to many different target audiences

in accordance with the location and indirectly publicize the destination. These activities result in the increased awareness of the destination in the minds of its target audiences. "As a country publicizing itself as the 'country of fairs' in the international tourism market, 41,9% of Spain's tourism income consists of the gain from international fairs" (Akbay, 1997: 76). The participants or visitors of fairs are also visitors of the city or country who experience the destination within the borders of their opportunities. Fairs create a chance to execute target audience oriented experimental marketing within the marketing arrangements made for tourism. The chance of experimental marketing not only establishes an emotional link about both the participants and the destination, but also acts as the message transmitter in the process of word of mouth activities to be used in the publicity of destination to its target audiences. In this way, the opinions and thoughts are transmitted to different parties; in fact this is the voluntary accomplishment of "word of mouth", one of the most important marketing strategies of the present day. Specialized trade fairs multiply the volume of international business tourism and enable the destination to gain reputation in accordance with the scope and success of the fair organization.

In the United States, great importance is attached to the organization and development of fair organizations in the cities, especially in sectors like industry, trade and tourism. Paralel with this importance, some cities in the United States are better known in the business of fairs and the advantage they gain in the sector of fairs in the international arena turns out to be destination brand equity as a marketing strategy for the tourism activities. "A research made by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research-CEIR states that 50% of fairs organized in the United States are accumulated in 16 cities. According to this result, Orlando, Las Vegas and Toronto share the top three of the list by hosting 625, 589 and 582 respectively" (Weintraub, 1991: 9). Germany, the locomotive country of the European Union in terms of economy, started to adopt destination branding through the creation of strategies which can develop business through raising tourism activities in cities not as economically developed as the others. In these activities executed for the establishment of a destination brand, the most important strategic resource that can establish a brand is the activity of organizing fairs. The cities where fairs are organized in, especially the ones in Germany, started to be mentioned in the international arena with the name of the fair.

A requirement to constitute a successful and strong destination brand and to position it in the minds of target audiences is to make it "different" from its competitors. Positioning is the placement of a product or enterprise into the most appropriate place in accordance with the chosen market divisions, competition facts and company abilities. It is a process devoted to determine consumers' per-

ceptions, approaches and consumption habits (Burnet, 1988: 35-37). Along with the establishment of brand awareness, brand positioning is the element that determines which "personality and identity" components of the brand will be remembered by the consumers (Kapferer, 1992: 96). The goal of destination brand positioning is to place the brand in the minds of its target audience at a level that is different from its competitors with a feeling of superiority in competitive structure. A successful brand positioning includes a distinctive differentiation from the others and the "added values" consisting of positively perceived qualifications or connotations. The added value to be created by the destination, especially in the process of establishing a destination brand, should be meaningful to the existing and potential visitors. Destinations are positioned upon the added values in the minds of their target audiences. Branding makes a destination different in terms of the basic value it has and this value represents the pledge of brand. The superstructure of a destination can be differentiated through physical qualifications such as architecture, however the physical specifications are far from motivating the consumer adequately and consistently as they can easily be copied and imitated. The value presented by destination branding is considered as the most powerful force of contemporary destination marketing experts holding a place in global competition (Hannam, 2004: 258). However, the points that need utmost attention in differentiation of civic brands must be functional and performance specifications, life styles and internal experiences (Palomar, 2007). In this sense, considering the historical and geographical facts of Izmir, many marketable brand values can be offered on the way to establish a destination brand for the city. Tourism, Izfas International Fairs, Port of Izmir, Monuments/ Architectural Equities, Districts/ Public Spaces/Social Fabric, Local Celebrities, Educational Institutes, Sports/Sporting Events/Clubs, Cultural Events/Facilities, Culinary Culture, Regional Agricultural Products represent some of the most important starting points in the marketing strategies to be adopted for the creation of a destination brand.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Research:

International trade fairs are held in many cities and contribute to the city branding process. The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of these contributions on the locals of the city. Hence, in this study, the views of the locals of Izmir about the International Izmir Fairs and the contribution of these fairs to the perception of Izmir, according to the locals' point of view, will try to be determined.

Method:

With the aim of defining the contribution of the international fairs to the city brand of Izmir from the point of view of the locals, a case study method, which is a frequently used qualitative research method in social sciences, has been applied. In this method, multiple events, situations, topics, programmes, social groups or systems are investigated in detail (Yin, 1994: 185). In this research, focus group interviews were used because they give researchers the opportunity to reach a sufficient amount of information in short term, and they enable the enrichment and development of the subject of research in accordance with the structure of the chosen sample.

Another important reason for choosing the method of focus group is that this method enables a group of participants to share and affect each other's thoughts. (Krueger, 1994: 6). According to Aaker et. al. (2004: 196), focus group is a method which aims to discuss and find solutions to problems and subjects, especially on the topics of marketing, marketing communications, advertisement and public relations. Focus group discussions actuate people more than face-to-face interviews. The contributions of the participants raise the meaning and increase the views on the research topic. Focus group is especially an effective method for studies which aim to discover the approaches of people to a specific view, case, situation or subject (Krueger, 1994: 10). Also, it facilitates discovery of new comments about the topic (Daymon, 2002: 187) and displays the attitudes, approaches and tendencies via the interaction between the group members (Krueger, 1994: 10). For these reasons, focus group was chosen as the most appropriate method to use in the interest of this paper.

This research carries the charecteristics of a situation analysis, which presents ideas about the perceptions of how international trade fairs in Izmir affect the city brand, depending on the points of view of the people who work in the fair industry and the university students in Izmir. In this paper, the answers to the following questions are being searched:

1. How do people who work in the fair industry evaluate the contributions of international trade fairs held in Izmir to the city's brand image?.

2. How do university students who study in Izmir evaluate the international fairs held in Izmir?

3. Is there a relation between the trade fairs organized by several cities and the brand images of these cities? If yes, how can this relation be explained?

Sample

The sample includes 2 groups:

- 8 people who live and work in Izmir and have participated in some fairs in Izmir.
- 8 university students who study in Izmir.

For the sampling, a frequently used method in qualitative research, theoretical sampling developed by Glaser and Strauss, was used (Merriam, 1998: 63). The most important reason for choosing theoretical sampling is that the homogeneity of the group is more important than the variety in the group which enables one to choose participants who are thought to represent the searched features (Yazıcıoglu & Erdogan, 2004: 44).

Data Collection:

In the first stage of the research, focus group and semi-structured interview techniques were combined. The semi-structured interview form was designed, depending on the existing literature in the field, with the aim of learning the views of people who work in companies which participate in the trade fairs of Izmir and the university students in Izmir. To be able to create a comfortable communication platform, first of all introduction questions and demographic information have been asked (Creswell, 1998: 131).

Research has been carried out first with the group of university students, then with the group of people who work in different companies. According to some researchers, in the method of focus group interviews, the number of groups are usually between 2-4, but this number may increase according to the field of study (Aaker *et al.*, 2004: 199; Daymon, 2002: 192; Krueger, 1994: 6).

The aim in a focus group meeting is to display what people really think about the subject, in a platform where participants hear each other's ideas and think of their own in this social platform (Gibbs, 1994: 211). For this, an environment where people could hear each other's ideas was created and the data of the interviews recorded. Afterwards, the recorded data was analysed with content analysis.

Analysis of the Data

According to Merriam (1998: 155-197), data analysis of qualitative research is a complicated and hard process. Data should be explained by separating and analysing. The moderators of the focus group interview were the authors. The recorded data has been written and content analayzed. The writing process of the recorded data was done by researchers to avoid loss of data. After the writing process, the data has been coded. A "code list" was created for the research and themes which explain these code lists were found. Separating content analyzed qualitative data code lists in themes is a suggested process (Lincoln & Guba, 1984: 178). Also, as suggested by Merriam (1998:79), to increase the reliability of the research, visions of experts were taken, frequencies of the themes were found and data were set on tables. The findings were both set on tables and interpreted.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings are presented in two categories according to the two different groups that took part in the research. When qualitative data was analyzed, two different categories concerning the research field were determined. These two categories are valid in two different groups. Differences were detected categorically in the thoughts of the participants of the two groups. These two categories, valid for both of the groups, are the contribution of fairs to the city in social, cultural, economic way and fairs' communicative effects in the city branding process.

Findings about Fairs' "Social, Cultural and Economic" Contributions to the Host City

All participants in both groups were asked the question: "What do you think about the effects of fairs which are organized in many fields on the host city?" According to the answers to this question, categorized fields and the most specified views of each participant are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Fairs "Social, Cultural and Economic" Contribution to the Host City

Participants	S1	C1	S2	C2	S3	C3	S4	C4	S5	C5	S6	C6	S7	C7	S7	C8
Cultivates the social life of the city	√	√			√		√	√	√				√	√	√	√
Cultivates the trade in the city		√		√	√		√	√		√		√		√		√
Affects the culture of the city			√	√	√					√			√	√		
Affects the economy of the city		√		√		√	√	√		√		√	√	√		√
Enables the city tourism to develop	√	√		√			√	√				√	√	√		√
Contributes to get new investments to the city			√	√			√	√	√	√				√		√
Contributes to increase the employment in the city	√	√			√							√		√		

* S= Student Participants , C= Participants from the Sector.

The question: "What do you think about the effects of the fairs to the host city?" was asked to the participants who work in the sector. According to the answers, the fields were organized in categories and coded. In Table 1, it can be seen which participants have given their views most frequently in which field. According to this coding procedure, the most frequent answer given was: "It contributes to the city's economy" (f=8). In second place was: "It develops the trade life in the city" (f=7). These answers follow the first two: "It contributes to the new investments to

the city." (f=5), "Develops the social life of the city." (f=4), "Develops the city in the field of tourism." (f=4), "Contributes in increasing the employment in the city." (f=3), "Affects the culture of the city" (f=2).

The frequencies of the answers given by the university students who study in Izmir were different from the people who work in the sector. The most frequent answer was: "It develops the social life of the city. "(f=6). Secondly: "Develops the city in the field of tourism." (f=4), Afterwards: "Affects the culture of the city" (f=4), "It contributes to the new investments to the city." (f=5), "It develops the trade life in the city." (f=2), "It contributes to the city's economy." (f=2), "Contributes in increasing the employment in the city." (f=2).

Findings about the Communication Effects of Fairs to the Branding Process of the City

According to the answers of both groups of participants to the question: "what do you think about the effects of fairs in terms of the branding process of the host city" the fields were categorised and the views of participants were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Communication Effects of Fairs to the Branding Process of the City

Participants	S1	C1	S2	C2	S3	C3	S4	C4	S5	C5	S6	C6	S7	C7	S7	C8
Contributes the city brand image to retain in people's mind. -4		√			√			√	√		√		√	√		√
Increases the awareness about the city.-5	√		√	√	√				√	√		√	√	√		√
Enables the city to be known.-7	√	√	√				√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	
Communicates the culture and the identity of the city.-3		√	√	√			√								√	√
Enables to experience the city life.-2	√							√					√			√
Supports the efficiency of other publicity events about the city.-3					√					√	√		√	√		
Increases the reputation of the city.-5	√	√		√			√	√	√		√		√	√		√
Enables people to have information about the city directly.-2			√		√	√								√		√
Enables the indirect publicity of the city through various commercial events. 3			√		√	√	√	√			√	√	√			√

* S= Student participants, C = Participants who work in the sector.

According to Table 2, the most frequently indicated and spoken category by the participans was: "Enables the indirect publicity of the city through various commercial events." (f=6). Secondly, "Increases the awareness about the city." (f=5). Afterwards, the following categories were indicated in the following order: "Enables the city to be known." (f=5), "Increases the reputation of the city." (f=5), "Contributes the city brand image to retain in people's mind." (f=4), "Enables people to have information about the city directly." (f=3), "Communicates the culture and the identity of the city." (f=3), "Enables to experience the city life." (f=2) and "Supports the efficiency of other publicity events about the city." (f=2).

It was seen that the frequency of the answers of two different groups of participants were different from each other. According to table 2, the most frequent indicated category by university students was: "Enables the city to be known." (f=7). Then the following categories were indicated in the following order: "Increases the awareness about the city." (f=5). "Increases the reputation of the city." (f=5), "Contributes of the city brand image to retain in people's mind." (f=4), "Communicates the culture and the identity of the city." (f=3), "Supports the efficiency of other publicity events about the city." (f=3), "Enables the indirect publicity of the city through various commercial events." (f=3), "Enables people to have information about the city directly." (f=2).

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Currently, the most important competitive strategy for cities to be positioned as a brand is to create a unique city brand image. With this, cities will be able to differentiate themselves from their competitors. The branding of the cities is possible by choosing the marketable issues about the city and promoting these in accordance with their capabilites. Fairs are one of the important events which contribute to the branding process of the cities.

According to the results of this focus group research, university students indicate that the most important contribution of fairs to the host city is developing the social life of the city (f=6). About this, one of the participants has used the following expression:

"…… especially in places where social life is not well developed, various events which are organized to increase the interest on fairs, also generate the social life of the city and this enables such events to be organized even after the fair."

Various events are organized to increase the attention to the fairs. These events also generate the social life of the city. In this research, fairs' effects on generating the social life of the city was the most

indicated statement by the university students. Thereby, within the limitations of this study, it may be said that this is one of the contributions of the fairs to the city. Another important effect of the fairs, according to university students, is that fairs contribute to the tourism of the city.

Currently, many cities are trying to become brands. Looking at the success of brands, it is seen that brands are like people, the ones with outstanding features are always remembered and preferred (Gotta, 2004). A lot of visitors come to the fairs with the primary aim of visiting the fair, but also they get to spend time in the host city, shop and experience the city. Thereby, fairs contribute to the tourism of the host cities indirectly. In this sense, fairs are not only serving to producers and consumers, but also presenting opportunities to the countries and destinations to create brand value.

Participants who work in the center have indicated the most important effect of the fairs to the city is an economic contribution. In accordance to this view, they have also indicated that with fairs, the commercial life in the city increases and as a result, fairs contribute to the new investments to the city.

Currently many countries are organizing fairs to develop the cities and regions which are not well developed. With these fairs, many visitors come to the regions and the commercial activities in the region develop. During the fair period, serious commercial contributions occur to the region's economics with the visitors from different countries. Needs of visitors like accomodation and catering contribute in enhancing the income of the places in the region. With fairs, many businesses in the city like hotels, restaurants,, bars and taxis have an increase in their work. This increases the economics of the region and the development of the local public. In this way, fairs contribute to the development and refreshment of the city, as well as making the city a center of attention.

The most indicated answer by the participants from the sector to the question of fairs' effects on the branding process of the cities was that fairs, enable the indirect publicity of the city through various commercial events. Visitors who come to the city with the aim of participating in the fair also have the chance to visit the city. Thereby, they know the city as an indirect effect of the fairs. This situation is very important for fairs especially those held at international level. As well as the participants from the sector, also the university students have indicated similar views.

Both participant groups have indicated that fairs contribute to the reputation of the host city. One of the participants has used the following expression to state this:

"……. In Izmir, international fairs have a strong effect on the reputation of the city because these fairs are open to international participation. These fairs are grand events which are organized in a long time with an important know-how, so they are very prestigious events. Thereby, they have an important effect in enhancing the reputation of the city."

In accordance with this view, today many countries have identified some of their cities with fairs by organizing grand fairs and branding the city with these. Another important result of this research is that fairs enable the participants to feel the atmosphere, culture and the values of the city; in other words, they are able to experience the city. Today, experiences are categorized in many fields, but in general they are categorized as primary and secondary experiences. Primary experiences are the experiences which people live with their five senses in their daily life. Secondary experiences are the thoughts which are generated by internal senses. For example, the feelings of a person generated by decisions and thoughts are secondary experiences. In fairs, visitors both live secondary and primary experiences at the same time. A fair enables the participant to experience the city, have an emotional feeling and judgements about the city. With this, the rememberance of the city increases and as a result of the strong experiences lived, visitors may have a strong bond with the city, which leads to brand loyalty.

REFERENCES

Aaker, D., Kumar, V., & Day, G.S. (2004). *Marketing Research*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Akbay, H. O. (1997). Uluslararasi Pazarlamada Onemli Bir Promosyon Araci Fuarlar, Ankara: Igeme.

Ashworth, G. J. & Voogd, H. (1990). "Selling the City: Marketing Approaches in Public Sector Urban Planning", Belhaven Press, London, UK.

Batchelor, R. (1999). Strategic Marketing of Tourism Destinations. Vellas F., Becherel L.(Eds), *The International Marketing of Travel and Tourism: A Strategic Approach,* (pp. 183-198). London: Macmillan Press..

Borca, G. (2004). *Bu Topraklardan Dunya Markasi Cikarmi?(Marka Olmanin ABC'si).* Istanbul: Mediacat Kitaplari.

Boret, A. (1999). Itinéraires de Tourisme Avec Annales, Malakoff-France, L.T. Lanore, J., Swarbrooke, J. (Eds.) *Sustainable Tourism Management.* Wallingford: CABI Publishing.

Cathy, H. C., Kara, W., & Soo, K. K. (2004). Image Assessment for A Destination With Limited Comparative Advantages, *Tourism Management, V.25,N.1,* pp.121-126.

Cildir, N. (1991). Fuar Calismalarinin Turizm Acisindan Degerlendirilme-si, Ankara: Anatolia, Doruk Ofset.

Creswell, J. W., (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* London: Sage Publications.

Daymon, C. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications.* Florence: Routledge.

De Chernatony, L., & McDonald, M. (1992). *Creating Powerful Brands.* Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Douglas, T. (1990). The Power of Branding. Enis, B.M., Cox, K.K., Mokwa, M. P. (Eds.) *Marketing Classics:A Selection of Influential Articles (8th edition),*(p74). New Jersey:Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Du Cluzeau, C. O. (2000). *Le Tourisme Culturel.* Paris:Presses Universitaires de France.

Durmaz, M. (1985). Fuar Kavrami ve Onemi, *İzmir Ticaret Odasi Dergisi, V.12,* p.4.

Faralyali, E. (1985). Fuarlar Oncelikle Tanitim Acisindan Onemlidir*, Istanbul Ticaret Odasi Dergisi, V.4,* p.27.

Gianna M., Bill F. & Eric, L. (2000). Tourism in the twenty-first century: reflections on experience. New York: Continuum.

Gibbs, A. (1994). *Focus Groups, Social Research*, Department of Sociology, Guildford: University of Surrey,

Gnoth, J. (1998). Conference Report: Branding Tourism Destinations, *Annals of Tourism Research, V.25,* pp.758-760.

Gotta, M. (2004). Tourismus Management Club, <http://tmc.suedtirol.org/jeder-moechte-eine-touristische-marke-und-nur-wenige-haben-eine-wunsch-und-wirklichkeit.html>.

Grand Dictionnaire Encyclopedique Larousse (1983). Paris: Larousse.

Gunlu, E., & Icoz, O. (2004). Turizmde Bölgesel Marka Imajı Yaratilmasi ve Turizm Istasyonlari Icin Markanin Onemi. Yuksel, A., Hançer, M.(Eds.), *Turizm: Ilkeler ve Yonetim*, (p.84). Ankara: Turhan Kitapevi.

Hall, C. M. (2000). *Tourism Planning: Policies, Processes, Relationship,* UK: Prentice Hall.

Hannam, K. (2004). Tourism And Development II: Marketing Destinations, Experiences And Crises, *Progress in Development Studies, V.4, N.3,* pp. 256-263.

Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y. & Uysal, M. (2007). "Destination Image and Destination Personality", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research,* 1 (1), pp. 62-81

Icoz, O. (2001). *Turizm Isletmelerinde Pazarlama Ilkeleri ve Uygulamalari,* Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi.

Jobber, D. (2004). *Principles and Practice of Marketing (4th edition),* London: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Kalka, R. (2000). *Fairs* [Seminar]. University of Cologne, Institute of Fair Industry and Distribution Research. April.

Kapferer, J. N. (1992). *Strategic Brand Management*. New Jersey: The Free Press.

Kavaratzis, M. & Ashworth, G. J., (2004). "City Branding: Useful Planning Instrument Or Deceptive Irrelevance?", paper presented at the IFHP International Spring Conference, 30th May–2nd June, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Kavaratzis, M., (2004). From City Marketing To City Branding: Towards A Theoretical Framework For Developing City Brands, *Place Branding*, Vol. 1, 1, 58–73.

Killingbeck, A. J., & Trueman, M. M. (2002). *Redrawing the perceptual map of a city (Working Paper)*, Bradford University School of Management, No.02, pp.1-22.

Kotler, P., Asplund, C., Rein, I. & Heider, D., (1999). 'Marketing Places Europe: Attracting Investments, Industries, Residents and Visitors to European Cities, Communities, London: Regions and Nations', Pearson Education.

Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J., & Wong,V. (2002). *Principles of Marketing*, Edinburgh: Pearson Education.

Kotler, P., & Gertner, D., (2002). Country As Brand, Product, And Beyond: A Place Marketing And Brand Management Perspective, *Brand Management, V.9, N.4-5,* pp. 249-265.

Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,* Londra: Sage Publishing.

Lea, J. (2001). *Tourism and Development in the Third World*. London:Routledge.

Leiper, N. (1995). *Tourism Management*. Melbourne: RMIT Press.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1984). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. California: Sage Publications.

Merriam, S. B., (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education: Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education,,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications.

Miles, M., & Heberman, M., (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. California: Sage Publications.

Morgan, N., & Pritchard, A. (2004). Meeting the Destination Branding Challenge. Morgan, N., Pritchard, A., & Pride, R. (Eds.), *Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Okay, A. (2000). Kurum Kimligi, Istanbul: MediaCat Yayinlari.

Ozkan, M.,(2006). Marka Hakkinda, <http://www.bilgiyonetimi.org/cm/pages/mkl_gos.php?nt=72>.

Palomar, J., (2006). City Tourism, <http://www.turizmpusulasi.com/viewpage.php?page_id=149>, 12.08.2007

Paul, D. E. (2004). World Cities As Hegemonic Projects: The Politics Of Global Imagineering In Montreal, *Political Geography, V.123,* pp. 571-596.

Pyo, S., Mihalik, B. J., & Uysal, M. (1989). Attraction Attributes and Motivations: A Canonical Correlation Analysis, *Annals of Tourism Research,* V.16, pp. 277-282.

Rainisto, S. K. (2003). Success Factors of Place Marketing: A Study of Place Marketing Practices in Northern Europe and the United States, *Doctorate Thesis, Helsinki University of Technology,* Institute of Strategy and International Business.

Storey, C., & Christopher, J. E. (1998). The Augmented Service Offering: A Conceptualization and Study of Its Impact on New Service Success, *Journal of Product Innovation Management,* V.15, pp. 335-351.

Sülün, U. (2004). *"Ihracatta Yeni Pazarlama Stratejisi Olarak Fuarlar ve Izmir Uygulamaları",* Izmir Ticaret Odası, Yayın No: 38, p. 21 (Izmir 2004).

Tosun, C., & Jenkins, C. L. (1996). Regional Planning Approaches to Tourism Development: The Case of Turkey, *Tourism Management,* V.17, p.7.

Uztug, F. (2005). Markan Kadar Konus, Marka Iletisimi Stratejileri, Istanbul: Mediacat Kitapları.

Ward, S. V. (1998). 'Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities 1850–2000', E & FN Spon, London, UK.

Weintraub, D. K. (1991). *Trade Show Exhibiting The Insider's Guide for Entrepreneurs,* USA: Liberty Hall Pres.

Yazıcıoglu, Y., Erdogan, S. (2004). *SPSS Uygulamalı Bilimsel Arastırma Yöntemleri.* Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* London: Sage.