THE ROLE OF NONPROFITS IN THE PROCESS OF PLACE BRANDING: A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH CULTURAL CENTERS

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ABSTRACT: Place branding has gained significant attention among academicians and practitioners. Countries apply branding strategies to be competitive, attract visitors, encourage business growth, and increase foreign investment. Little research explores the role of nonprofit organizations in the place branding process. The objective of this research is to propose a framework that delineates the role of nonprofits in the place branding process of a particular place. Turkish Cultural Centers play an essential role in the branding of Turkey. Using informational and interaction strategies, thus nonprofit organization motivates people to learn more about Turkish culture, and encourage positive behavioral intentions and behavior towards Turkey.

Keywords: Place branding, Nonprofit organizations, Theory of Planned Behavior

KAR AMACI GÜTMEYEN GÖNÜLLÜ KURULUŞLARIN ÜLKE MARKALAŞMASI SÜRECİNDEKİ ROLÜ: TÜRK KÜLTÜR MERKEZLERİ ÖRNEĞİ

ÖZET: Ülke markalaşması kavramı akademisyenler ve uygulayıcılar arasında git gide önem kazanmaktadır. Devletler rekabet edebilmek, ziyaretçi çekebilmek, ticareti teşvik etmek ve yabancı yatırımlarını artırmak amacıyla markalaşma stratejilerini uygulamaktadır. Ülke markalaşması sürecinde gönüllü kuruluşların rolünü inceleyen çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Bu araştırma, kar amacı gütmeyen gönüllü kuruluşların ülke markalaşması sürecindeki rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye'nin markalaşmasında Türk Kültür Merkezleri önemli rol oynamaktadır. Kar amacı gütmeyen gönüllü kuruluşlar, bilgi ve etkileşim stratejilerini geliştirerek, bireylerin Türk kültürünü daha yakından tanımalarını ve Türkiye'ye yönelik olumlu tutum ve davranışları sergilemelerini teşvik etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ülke markalaşması, Planlı Davranış Teorisi, Kar amacı gütmeyen gönüllü kuruluşlar

Introduction

The increasing power of international media, rising consumer expenditure power, decreasing cost of international travel, limited number of international investors, competition for professional immigrants, and growing consumer demand for different cultural experiences are among the conditions that influenced the evolvement of place branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Place branding is an important tool for global wealth distribution and economic, and cultural development (Anholt, 2002) because it "determines the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the city, region, or country, and ensures that this vision is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of investment and communication between that place and the rest of the world" (Placebrands, 2012). According to Gertner (2011) there was a debate in the field of place branding that places cannot compete with each other as businesses do. However, it diminished with time. Today, communities, cities, states and nations are more open to using strategic management and marketing concepts. Strong country brands help to differentiate a place from another (Baker and Cameron, 2008), grow exports, attract tourism, increase foreign investment, and draw talented people (Fetscherin, 2010; Gertner, 2007). Research indicates that place branding plays a significant role in sustainable development of a place, and sustainable developments help promote place and by doing so, form strong brands (Maheshwari, 2011). Place branding is one of the elements that fuel economic growth, therefore governments and private companies must develop, manage and continuously evaluate branding strategies. Brand is an important

asset that can bring together government and businesses in economic uncertainty or turmoil and encourage trade and tourism (FutureBrand, 2011). Many countries are known, but have image problems that damage their ability to compete in the marketplace. According to Osei and Gbadamosi (2010:297), "a meticulous review of issues on Africa reveals that there are several business opportunities in the continent in various sectors such as agriculture, real estate, banking and tourism but not adequately publicized; therefore, there is a need to espouse these potentials by rebranding Africa such that these virtues would be widely communicated to the international community to enhance the brand equity of continent." Sometimes, inaccurate information or general stereotypes provided by the media promote negative images. Negative images may also be founded on such past events as political unrest, natural disasters, violence and economic crisis (Gertner, 2007). As a result, Turkey is trying to reshape its image. The government intends to change negative images and prejudice towards Turkey by reforming its political, economic, and social domains. For example, Spanner (2012) reports that Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, rise to power was accomplished with "an astonishing transformation of economy that just 10 years ago had a budget deficit of 16 percent of gross domestic product and inflation of 72 percent. The prime minister combined social conservatism with fiscally cautious economic policies to make his Justice and Development Party (AKP), the most dominant political movement in Turkey since the early days of the republic. "Such changes in Turkey have had positive results. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2011), the number of departing visitors increased 5.5 % compared to the same period of the previous year (7,423,747 departing visitors in last quarter of 2011). Tourism expenditure increased 3.6% compared to the same period of the previous year as examined $1,408,802,538 (Tourism Statistics, 4th Quarter of 2011; TSI, 2012). According to the provisional data, produced with the cooperation of Turkish Statistical Institute and Ministry of Customs and Trade (December, 2011), exports increased by 5.6% and reached to 12.4 million dollars while imports increased by .2% and reached to 20.6 million dollars compared with December, 2010. At the same month, Turkey's foreign trade deficit decreased from 8.7 to 8.1 million dollars (Foreign Trade Statistics, TSI, 2012). According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Turkey is the 15th most attractive destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the world (UNCTAD World Investment Prospects Survey, 2008-2010). The highest amount of FDI flows to Turkey from EU member countries, Asian and the Middle Eastern countries (FDI in Turkey, 2010).

A particular place cannot be branded just by conducting glamorous commercials, actions of the government, business people and citizens are needed to affect and change perceptions of people in a positive way. Using marketing communications without performing actions is just a waste of resources (Anholt, 2008). "Good products, services, culture, tourism, investments, technology, education, businesses, people, policies, initiatives and events produced by a good country also acquire a positive brand image, which eventually reflects on the country, and perhaps also becomes its principal asset (Anholt, 2010:10)."

Tourists, public sector and government, tour operators, tourism agencies and companies, host population and other groups (Konechnik Razzier, 2012) are significant stakeholders in place branding process. Nonprofit organizations are among these stakeholders because they present a particular place and contribute to the branding process.

The objective of this study is to explain the significant role of nonprofit organization such as Turkish Culture Center in the branding process of Turkey. We propose a framework using the Theory of Planned Behavior model, and include additional variables in order to provide increased understanding of the contribution made by nonprofit organizations. Using informational and interaction strategies, this nonprofit organization motivates people to learn more about Turkish culture, and encourage positive behavioral intentions and behavior towards ***Brief Overview of***

Turkish Cultural Centers (TCC)

The Turkish Cultural Center, located in upstate New York, provides opportunities to learn about Turkish history, culture, traditions, and people. By doing so, this nonprofit organization intends to positively contribute to the image of a country brand. As research shows, brand image significantly affects destination choice (Pars and Gulsel, 2011), and country images impact individuals' buying, making investments, visiting decisions (Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

The Turkish Cultural Center is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to build, increase, and promote strong friendships among United States (US) citizens and those of Turkish origin. The center introduces, promotes and informs the people in the US regarding historical, cultural, and current aspect related to Turkey (TCC, 2012).

The Turkish Cultural Center has branches in New York State, including Albany, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Long Island, Queens, Staten Island, Westchester, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. There are also 12 other branches three of which are located in New Jersey, four in Pennsylvania, two in Connecticut, and three in Massachusetts. Among the activities that the TCC organizes are Friendship Dinners, trips to Turkey, Turkish Language classes, Ambassadors series, Turkish Festival, Family matching project, Award ceremonies, Conferences, and Panels. The purpose of these activities is to introduce cultural and historical aspects of Turkey to the individuals residing in the United States by developing, establishing and enhancing a dialogue between individuals of different backgrounds (TCC, 2012).

The Nonprofit Role in Place Branding
Place branding

Country branding first emerged from the marketing literature (Fetscherin, 2010). Kotler and Armstrong (2011: 231) defines brand as "a name, symbol, term, sign, or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service." Brands differentiate products and offer social and emotional value to consumers (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Successful branding of products pioneered place branding efforts by branding places in a similar way and toward similar ends (Anthony, 2008). Branding strategies can be also applied to countries in order to differentiate them in today`s highly intensified competitive market. However, there are debates that countries, nations, regions, cities are not simple products which can be marketed and branded as commodities (Dumbraveanu, 2010). Nevertheless, place branding can provide fruitful effects and invaluable benefits for countries and cities that are capable to designate and communicate a distinctive and attractive brand (Wills and Moore2008; Kaplan Demirbag et. al., 2010).

The discipline of "place branding" is a new phenomenon that should be researched further (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006:183) define place branding as the "practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, political, social, and cultural development of cities, regions and countries." Zenker and Braun (2010, cited in Zenker and Martin, 2011:33) define place branding as "a network of associations in the consumers` mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place`s stakeholders and the overall place design."

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Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) suggest that there are many similarities between corporate brands and place brands in terms of multidisciplinary roots, different stakeholder groups, high levels of intangibility and complexity, social responsibility, dealing with multiple identities and long-term development. Fan (2006), however, points out that there are essential differences between the place branding and the product branding. He states that while products can be discontinued, changed or removed from the market, repositioned or replaced by better products; places do not have such a choice.

Place branding incorporates not just marketing and communications, but also international relations and policy (Anholt, 2007). While different fields of study provide an opportunity to study the same subject from several different aspects, it also impedes developing a place branding definition (Sevin and Salicigil White, 2011). Gertner (2011:96) also raises questions whether "place branding" is or should be considered a business topic, that is clearly differentiated from fields such as public diplomacy, urban planning and design and political sciences, or as a multidisciplinary discipline with a broader range and reach."

Caldwell and Freire (2004) revealed that people perceive countries, regions, and cities differently. Whereas countries are perceived in terms of the representational part (i.e. people`s self-expression) of their brand identity, cities and regions are perceived in terms of the functional part (e.g. sun, beaches, palaces, shopping).

Hankinson (2010) concludes that there is a "gap in the place branding research agendas to date with regard to the potential contribution of concepts and models from corporate, services, nonprofit and internal branding." According to author, because there is a relationship between place branding and these four areas, they need to be included in future research.

Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are mission centered to improve society (Kolb, 2008). Nonprofit organizations hold a differentiating feature in that they are not financially profit motivated, but instead aim to provide a social profit to individuals and society through offering services related to health, education, and cultural enrichment (Gallagher and Weinberg, 1991). Solomon (2010:185) states that nonprofits organizations aim "to fulfill a broad range of essentially "expressive" functions such as civic and advocacy, culture and recreation, environmental protection, and business, labor, and professional representation, as well as the more commonly perceived service functions such as education, health care, and social services." Nonprofit organizations include non-governmental organizations (NGO), charities, public-services organizations and clubs, societies and unions (Wells, 2012). Nonprofit organizations are among the stakeholders of a particular country which greatly contribute to place branding efforts. Activities performed by Turkish Cultural Centers therefore are significant as they aim to build and enhance positive images of Turkey.

The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a model that helps to understand the role of nonprofit organization in a country's place branding process. According to TPB, (Ajzen, 1991) "an individual's behavior is largely dependent on his or her intention to perform a behavior, which in turn, is affected by the individual's attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms he or she believes significant others have concerning the behavior, his or her perception of whether the behavior can be performed (Gordon et. al., 2006:225)." Ajzen et. al. (2011) report four studies that support TPB, and Connor and Armitage (1998) report a meta-analysis and conclude that TPB is a useful concept. TPB asserts that a behavioral intention such as forming positive associations related to a particular place is determined by a visitor's attitude, his/her beliefs and affect toward a place.

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Variables
Information

Figure 1 contains a framework depicting the role of nonprofits in the behavioral intention of visitors to a place. Information provided through communication can be beneficial in accomplishing at least three levels or sets of characteristic behavior outcomes such as attitude change and reinforcement, creation of opinion on new issues, and significant changes in thought and behavior (Markin, 1969, cited in Hackleman, 1973). Brochures, websites, history, demographics, religion, geography, pictures, past visitor testimonials are among information sources provided by Turkish Cultural Centers. These sources lead to individuals' awareness and beliefs related to places in Turkey. Research findings show that individual's beliefs about advertising are antecedents of attitudes towards an advertising (Brackett and Carr, 2001; Wang and Sun, 2010).

Figure 1 about here

Beliefs formed from information provided by Turkish Cultural Centers determine attitudes towards a place. If individuals express sympathy to the source of information, the outcome will be positive. Therefore, credibility of the information source is also significant.

Markin (1969) proposed that place related information and place related interaction are important elements in forming, developing and maintaining individuals` perceptions in place branding process. Information is a prerequisite for forming positive attitudes towards a particular place and leading people to form positive associations towards a place.

Social-cognitive theories accentuate the role of social interaction and social influence on learning process (Kim and Baylor, 2006). Interaction leads to forming of an emotional connection between people through developing and accentuating distinctive features of a particular place People relate individual and motherland images. If an individual with whom they communicate is a nice and pleasant one, positive feelings are formed and these positive feelings naturally extended to his or her motherland. Turkish cultural centers are operated and supported by educated Turkish citizens who provide relevant and current information to United States' citizens, and also take part in forming mutual understanding between cultures. These individuals invite their friends, neighbors and coworkers to different events which are organized and conducted at Turkish Cultural Centers. United States citizens learn about Turkey through

Friendship dinners, Turkish language courses, luncheon forums, Abraham`s tables, Ambassadors series, award ceremonies, conferences and panels. Such interactions result not only in positive beliefs and affect towards Turkey, but also provide opportunities for individuals to socialize.

Attitude

An attitude is a mental state of readiness learned through experiences and information, which influences behavior. An attitude is a positive or negative evaluation of the intended behavior or behavior towards a place (i.e., visitation). Attitudes have three parts: cognition, affect, and behavior. Cognition is "what individuals know about themselves and their environment…and implies a conscious process of acquiring knowledge", affect is "the emotional component learned from others", and behavior is a tendency to act in a certain way (Ivancevich et.al, 2011:75). Attitudes are subject to change, and can be shaped by changing cognition, affect, or both (Petty and Fabrigar, 2008; Roe and Ester, 1999). The use of information and experiences to shape attitudes is important for place branding efforts targeted to form positive associations regarding a specific location. Information efficacy is contingent on communication source credibility, the message persuasiveness, and situational factors such as perceived alternatives and consequences (Krone, 2005). Ajzen et. al. (2011:116) conclude that attitude change results with "information or knowledge that guides the behavior of interest (i.e., with beliefs about the behavior). Once we have identified the behavioral, normative (what respects others believe), and control beliefs (amount of control individual believes they have over the behavior) that are readily accessible for individuals .., we can provide them with information to challenge beliefs that are contrary to the desired behavior, with information that strengthens their existing supportive beliefs, or with information that leads to the formation of new beliefs supportive of the desired behavior." According to Burke and Edell (1989) emotions, evaluations and attitudes have an informal interconnectedness which impacts individuals' affective response to the promoted brands. Study results indicate that attitudes and subjective norm significantly predicted intentions of young people to engage in high level social networking Web sites (Pelling et. al., 2009). In a case of Turkish cultural centers, information regarding to the country was provided through varied activities which formed belief and affect towards a place. United States citizens getting know better Turkish people and their culture by interacting with them. Personal interactions impacts individuals' attitudes towards a particular country much more significantly than advertisement. People might not pay attention to an ad about a specific place if they do not know much about this place or are not interested in it. However, in the case of Turkish cultural centers, United States' citizens form positive attitudes about Turkey through enhancing their knowledge regarding the history, culture, traditions and also about political and economic aspects of Turkey. Also, another important factor that affects attitudes of US citizens is the advocacy of local community leaders composing of US senators, writers, academicians, and businessmen who are invited as speakers at different organizations, conferences and panels conducted by Turkish cultural center. These people behave positively towards Turkey and by doing so, affect other individuals' attitudes. "Word-of-mouth" is not least significant factor also. Turkey trips are among most popular organizations of Turkish cultural centers. US citizens provided with a chance to visit Turkey, see its historical places, learn about culture, and interact with local people. These experiences lead to the forming of positive attitudes towards a place.

Behavioral Intention

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, Joyce, Sheikh, and Cote, 2011; Ajzen, 1991) provides a conceptual framework for determining the place branding role of nonprofit organizations. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) posits that behavior stems from one's intention to perform that behavior. Intentions, in turn are influenced by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Pelling and White, 2009; Sommer, 2011). Pelling and White (1991:755) define subjective norms as "perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior", and perceived behavior control as the "perceived ease or difficulty that the individual attaches to performing the behavior". As reviewed by Attia et.al. (2011), attitudes affect behaviors towards a particular product, brand, or place, and characteristics of attitudes are favorability, accessibility (ease of recall, Hoyer and MacInnis, 2008), confidence, persistence, resistance, and ambivalence. Assuming free will, individuals have control over their behavioral choices, and a "strong attitude and intention toward performing a particular action, actual behavior will occur" (Attia et. al., 2011).

Attitudes and behavioral intentions are contingent on the relevant information that is available to individuals. Beliefs about a certain object or place constitute an element of one's attitude, and are informational in nature. The belief that information influences behavior has been questioned (DiClemente, 1989; Fisher and Fisher, 1992), but after conducting four studies, Ajzen (2011) concluded that the amount or accuracy of information may not be as important as the perceived relevance of information to a specific behavioral intention. The perceived consequence of a planned behavior is a belief that may be important. According to Ajzen et. al. (2001:102), "beliefs about a behavior's likely

consequences (behavioral beliefs) are assumed to determine attitudes toward the behavior, beliefs about the expectations and behaviors of others (normative beliefs) are assumed to determine subjective norms, and beliefs about potential facilitating or inhibiting factors (control beliefs) are assumed to determine perceived behavioral control. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control in turn combine to produce intentions which, together with actual control, determine performance of the behavior".

The question that remains is what inventions in the form of relevant information nonprofit organizations should provide potential visitors. In the case of Turkish Cultural Centers, individuals hold an intention to visit Turkey.
Behavior
TPB states that behavioral intentions lead to actual behavior. When people begin to talk about their intention to visit a particular place, they are getting ready to realize this behavior. Little work has been conducted regarding nonprofit organizations, their role and possible interventions that influence individuals' intention to visit a particular destination or place.

That is, what information will most influence potential visitors to develop behavioral intentions to visit a place? Bamberg, Ajzen, and Schmidt (2003) showed that the provision of a prepaid bus ticket to students positively influenced their intention to visit a place. These authors found that this "intervention influenced attitudes toward bus use, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control and, consistent with the TPB theory, affected intentions and behavior in the desired direction" (Bamberg et al., 2003:175). Studying potential Chinese outbound tourists, Sparks and Pan (2009:483) shown that five destination attributes were rated as most important: "beauty and icons of a destination, quality infrastructure, autonomy, inspirational motives and social self-enhancement. In terms of predicting intentions to travel, social normative influences and perceived levels of personal control constraints were most influential based on TPB".

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This paper extends TPB to explain the role of non-profit organizations in the place marketing process. Based on the literature, the proposed framework suggests that activities organized by nonprofit organizations play an important role in place branding efforts of particular country by help to form attitudes toward a particular place. Information then leads to attitudes towards a place, that in turn create behavioral intention and results in actual behavior. In a case of TCC, United States citizens who attend TCC events and especially those who visit Turkey form positive associations related to this country. Positive associations enhance brand image and reinforce a brand itself. For example, the TCC contribute to Turkey's place branding efforts by fostering a positive Turkish brand.
Research Propositions
This study aims to facilitate future research effort therefore propositions are listed below. Turkish Cultural Center activities frame the behavior of individuals. Information is an important factor in changing people perceptions regarding a particular place. By organizing conferences and panels, holding friendship dinners and coffee nights, offering Turkish language, cooking and art classes, Turkish Cultural Centers aim to provide an objective and education information regarding historical, cultural and social aspects of Turkey. As information an initial prerequisite to perform a behavior, individuals present an interest in visiting this country. The propositions that are proposed as followings:

Proposition 1. There is a positive relationship between place related Turkish information and individuals` attitudes towards a place.

Proposition 2. There is a positive relationship between place related Turkish interaction and individual's attitudes towards a place.

Proposition 3. There is a positive relationship between individuals` attitudes and behavioral intention to visit a particular place.

Proposition 4. There is a positive relation relationship between individual's behavioral intention to visit a particular place and actual visit.

Conclusion
Place branding is an effective tool for developing countries in their efforts to differentiate themselves from others and add value to overall image of their country. Place branding is not just about developing and maintaining advertising strategy, but a culture that should be emphasized starting in early childhood to succeed. Behavior is a window into society, and therefore it should be correct. Politicians, economists, professors, businesspeople, students, adults and

children, all should behave in a such way that does not harm themselves, others, society, or country. The key is that behavior across a place should be consistent and aligned with the intended place brand.

Turkey is a rapidly developing country that significantly moved forward in last 10 years. If in the past, Turkey was not attention paid country in the world, today this situation is changed as the country became leader in the Middle East and Central Asia. However, government of Turkey realizes that expensive commercials are not enough in order to fix country`s image. Therefore, there lots of reforms are done and continued to be done in the political, economic and social fields of country. Progress in all areas is one the most significant objectives that is aimed by the government. Also, there should be a congruity among efforts of different stakeholders in place branding process. Actions and activities of them should just support each other and not be in conflict.

Nonprofit organizations are one of the stakeholders and voluntarily provide information and organize different activities related to history, culture, traditions and people of Turkey. Turkish Cultural Centers in the United States contribute to the understanding of Turkey as a country. Place related information and place related interactions are concepts and tools that assist policymakers to solicit constructive feedback from their stakeholders that improve place branding efforts. In addition, individuals express their favorable beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intentions to others within their social and professional networks. Well-known local opinion leaders can therefore strategically help establish trust and spread positive information and engage in positive interactions, thus contributing to a place's brand.

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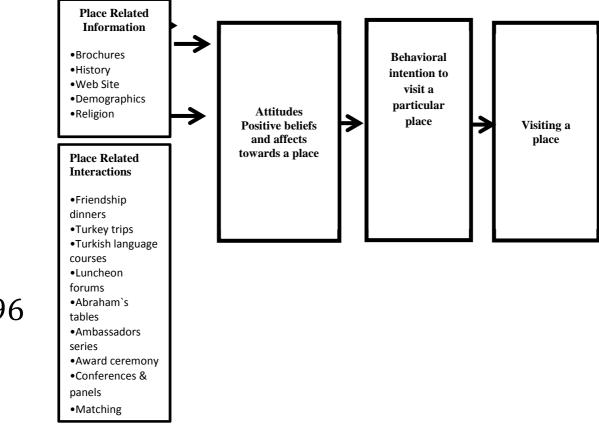
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Figure 1: The Impact of Nonprofit Organizations on Behavioral Intention of Potential Visitors Framework

Place Related Information

- Brochures
- History
- Web Site
- Demographics
- Religion

Place Related Interactions

- Friendship dinners
- Turkey trips
- Turkish language courses
- Luncheon forums
- Abraham`s tables
- Ambassadors series
- Award ceremony
- Conferences & panels
- Matching

Attitudes Positive beliefs and affects towards a place

Behavioral intention to visit a particular place

Visiting a place