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**CORPORATE IMAGE, BRAND, REPUTATION CONCEPTS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR TOURISM ESTABLISHMENTS**

*Review Article*

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**ABSTRACT**

Concept of corporate image expresses the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts that first come to the minds of all the stakeholders of the establishments and target audience when they hear the name of the establishment. When the impact on all stakeholders is considered, the prospect for establishments will also emerge. The brand is also an important concept that affects the perception of product specifications and quality and at the same time makes the product recognized by the customer. The notion of reputation has become very important in today's world where the limits and protectionism no longer exist and the transparency of communication and openness are dominant. Individuals, families, corporations, international institutions, non-governmental organizations and even governments recognize the importance of the reputation concept and see how necessary it is to manage their reputation. Although the meanings are different from each other, the concepts of image, brand and reputation seem to be used instead of each other. In this study, these concepts are explained in detail by evaluating the relevant literature and their importance in terms of tourism establishments is being investigated.

**Keywords:** Corporate Image, Brand, Reputation, Tourism

**Jel Codes:** M14, L83

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## INTRODUCTION

Corporate image, brand, reputation concepts and the importance these concepts in terms of tourism establishments will be examined theoretically in this section.

### Concept of Corporate Image

In the ever-increasing competitive conditions of modern society, enterprises no longer compete only within the dimensions of products, functions, specifications and quality but also within the areas of corporate image, brand and reputation. As we analyze concept of image, it is detected that a myriad of disciplines such as marketing, public relations, environment and management are collectively intertwined as well (Finn, D. 1961:135).

Corporate image is the picture emerging in the mind of target mass that any given enterprise aims to reach. In a different saying; corporate image is the accumulation of all judgments that exist in the minds of target mass as regards the adjectives associated with a given enterprise. In addition, it refers to a compilation of all analyses related to the way enterprises are recognized and perceived by the audience. All these analyses make-up of the entire corporate image (Çetin and Tekiner, 2015:419).

Ensuing the 1970s in particular, the gravity of corporate image studies has increased. Having then construed that image has nothing to do with visuality or pretentious moves to fool customers, enterprises have been trying to align their corporate image with the corporate behaviors making the whole of an enterprise (Köktürk et al., 2008:3).

Researchers from the disciplines of marketing, strategy and communication disciplines delineated image via associating with concept of corporate reputation. In that they defined *image* as the effect that an enterprise creates on the entities outside the business circle; in another saying they described image as the thoughts and beliefs in the minds of people outside the scope of any organization (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 359).

Corporate image relates not only to beliefs, thoughts and impressions regarding the enterprise but also related to the name of an organization, impressions on its architectural structure, product and services, traditions, ideology and quality aside

from the communication that each employee establishes with their corporate customers. It consists of two components as functional and emotional (Fombrun, C. J., Gardberg, N. and Sever, J. 2000:4). Functional component integrates physical qualities and can be measured easily whereas emotional component is related with psychological dimensions surfacing with emotions and attitudes and such emotions derive by processing personal experiences in tandem with knowledge. Thus, corporate image can be defined as the outcome emerging once customers make a comparison on various qualities of enterprises (Ateş, 2016:27).

Image is the derivation of the word 'icon' that means the mental recreation of visualized face of any given entity. It refers to impressions on a person, enterprise, product or situation created in one's mind to help the person remember and recognize the entity. Image has the character of guiding purchase behaviors of individuals and on a broader scale, it can be defined by employing adjectives such as positive, negative and average. In everyday life image refers to positive or negative perceptions created consciously or unconsciously about people, enterprises, cities or countries (Akdu, 2017:67).

Image is recognized as perceptions of stakeholders based on the short-term impressions on an enterprise whereas corporate image refers to the specifications of manufactured products or services. It entails achievements and impacts that a company has attained since its establishment, behaviors in the relationships between employers and workers, a sense of responsibility toward the environment, personal experiences with the enterprise, informing people in line with their comprehension levels about the enterprise, in-company communication, and the impact created on the target mass by the company (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2015:2668).

The organization should analyze all its functions and take necessary steps to boost its effectiveness. Empowering corporate image can be actualized in coordination with communication skills. In that viewpoint, all shareholders of any company should communicate with all its shareholders and improve the communication in all platforms. Communication that a company establishes with its employees would not be identical with the

interaction to be built with customers and suppliers; thus for each part involved different communication styles should be developed in accordance with a professional approach.

### **Brand Promotion and Conceptual Framework**

Turkish Code of Commerce defines concept of brand such; in order to differentiate the product and services of an enterprise from the product and services of another company, including but not limited only with names of individuals, words in particular, figures, letters, numbers, drawing on the form or packages of goods or any signs that could be expressed in a different way or published or duplicated via print

Brand not only repeats the recognition of a product by the consumer but also affects the perception style of product specifications and overall quality of the good. In that way, a brand distinguishes a product from the same type of goods manufactured by its rivals (Yüksel and Mermod, 2005:2).

Corporate branding is unquestionably vital to create the target differentiation in modern-age markets to cope with rival companies. To achieve profit maximization in the entire market it is essential for the firms to establish a corporate structure before working on the notion of brand and actualize an effective brand management in the aftermath of corporate branding process. In novel market structures in which the key objective is profit maximization, taking one-step further as regards the brand is acknowledged to be one of the most effective conditions of opportunity for the firms involved (Beşiray, 2016:1).

The fact that concept of brand has overlapping features with social value judgments motivated manufacturer companies to conduct researches on designing their authentic brands. Further to that, structure of a brand is also of great significance in modern conditions of the market in which customers are more attentive than ever in making their final choices (Sirgy, M. J., 1982:297).

In relevant literature, the very first emergence of the notion of corporate brand coincides with the marketing practices. Once corporate brand is analyzed through the lens of marketing practices, it is seen that this concept entails sub-concepts such as brand expansion and customer reviews. Based on this insight it has been identified that corporate brand reflects presentation of a product and service

harnessed by the consumers of an organization (Arslan, 2017:92).

Corporate brand means clarifying the target audience about the company by the enterprises themselves and helping them to make accurate detections. Accurate representation of a brand in the face of society allows enterprises to secure a remarkably strong position in the ongoing competition with their rivals. Emergence of brand concept continues synchronously with the hegemony of mass production channels over the market (Morgan and Pritchard, 2006:338).

Corporate branding provides strategic focus for the creation of a brand; allows consistency in a general dimension of company's communication programs and assists the service department of any company in understanding its employees. All these advantages offered by a corporate brand transfer a company's corporate /product brand to the customers while also helping them to perform consistent behaviors (Yeygel and Yakın, 2007:103).

### **Concept of Corporate Reputation**

To be loved and revered by people is of great importance to be deemed as reliable and creditable. Since reputation and approval are among the most critical aspects of life, they are the natural expectations of all individuals. The same sentiment holds true for enterprises. It is of vital significance to have a good impression on customers if the enterprises seek to continue to exist in the market and maximize their profits by increasing their potential customer portfolio (Karaköse, 2007:3).

Reputation as a term refers to respectability. It is an abstract value indicating people's evaluation on a given situation and certain level of reliability. Trust and reputation are hard-earned concepts that is why reputation, in the sense of being reliable, can only be earned after years long consistent behaviors but on the other hand they can easily be lost. As regards enterprises in particular to be successful, to be institutionalized and profit-making are critical steps to earn their reputation (Bozkurt, 2011:12).

As an outcome of globalization that fueled ongoing competition, decreased the life term of products and multiplied similarities between goods in the market, customers now look for certain standards to make choices while enterprises seek certain

standards to acquire additional corporate values on the road to achieving success (Fombrun, C. J. and Shanley, M. 1990:233) . As we examine concept of reputation on the basis of enterprises and individuals, we come across with the concept of corporate reputation (Kahveci, 2015:40).

Corporate reputation is among the lead features essential to reach the respectability of companies in a highly-competitive environment to the highest level. Concept of reputation refers to the sum of the views of shareholder groups; in another perspective corporate reputation is equated with the statement of collective image. From a generic perspective, reputation is the effect of the former actions of enterprises (Yaşlıoğlu, 2012:2).

Corporate reputation is an abstract concept indicating how an enterprise is perceived based on all its dimensions. It is a notion impacting financial performance and offering competitive advantage. Reputation is the strongest indicator of the sustainability of an enterprise. The risks involved with corporate reputation are direct threats against the future of enterprises. It is a salient value that can establish trust with shareholders and remove the barriers in front of the improvements in the market (Kahveci, 2015:40).

Upon realizing that a vast portion of corporate value does not derive from physical entities, there has been an accelerated interest each new year to identify the value of these assets and manage their presence. Corporate reputation makes the product and service attractive for buyers and it can make stocks alluring for investors. The employees select enterprises with higher reputation when faced to choose a company offering the same benefits; suppliers opt for reputed companies to cooperate in which they would face no contractual risks and a more loyal customer attitude would then be formed in respectable enterprises, all of which indicate the created financial advantage (Göker, Aral and Uysal, 2017:137).

### **Relationship among Corporate Image, Brand and Corporate Reputation**

Researchers from the disciplines of marketing, strategy and communication disciplines delineated image via associating with concept of corporate reputation. In that they defined image as the effect that an enterprise creates on the entities outside the business circle; in another saying they described image as the thoughts and beliefs in the minds of

people outside the scope of an organization (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 359).

Corporate image is the internal picture reflected on those outside the sphere of enterprise in question. A positive corporate image would forge sense of trust thereby ensuring satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, a negative corporate image would lower potential customer portfolio and reliability of the firm. All in all a positive image is vitally crucial for corporations. From that perspective, enterprises having a corporate image, via fueling positive customer perceptions, can achieve and sustain their corporate reputation after long-lasting efforts spanning over a considerably-long time interval (Kahveci, 2015:47).

It is detected the most-frequently used concept to refer to the same meaning with *corporate reputation* is *corporate image*. Corporate image answers the question of; *what do people think of the company?* (Dowling, 2004: 21). It is viable that an image may occur as an effect of conscious efforts of an enterprise or unconsciously as a result of certain behaviors adopted by the company (Whetten and Mackey, 2002).

Enterprises having a high level of reputation can extract considerable benefits by becoming the first choice of customers, investors, suppliers and employees. Corporate reputation can heighten brand value, drive purchase behavior and gain further yield (Karaköse, 2007: 42).

One of the key elements of corporate reputation is being a brand that reflects the face that any given enterprise welcomes all its partners and allows to be accessed by greater numbers of masses (Fombrun, C. J. 1996:70). Brand is a factor that can degrade or upgrade the reputation of an enterprise. Brand is a name, logo, sign and symbol that can help the consumers to distinguish a particular product from its counterparts. Another definition points out that aside from being a sign, it relates to the sum of emotions and thoughts that consumers hold about a product and services that an enterprise offers. Brand has a number of benefits such as demand stimulation and allowing to becoming popular in that way, securing the corporate image, bolstering competitive power, adding value to the business and catering for employee motivation (Yaşlıoğlu, 2012: 35).

Once brand values are compatible with organizational culture and company values then

they would be perceived as innovative, integral and reliable by company shareholders. Corporate brand's structure that appeals to multiple shareholders is known to climb the awareness and reputation among all shareholders as regards detecting the reliability of firms and what it represented. This model case is connected to the link between corporate brand and corporate image. It has been acknowledged that a successful corporate branding is required to enjoy a corporate image associated with organizational culture (Hatch&Schultz, 1997: 11).

It is suggested that a positive corporate reputation would motivate the customers to maintain loyalty to this particular brand and favor the product and services of the company. Unlike corporate image, brand image reflects perceptions of the consumers on a given brand. Image of the product or service brand refers to the idea that customers and consumers build in their minds as an effect of the marketing activities conducted on behalf of this brand (Shockley-Zalabak, P. Ellis K. and G. Winograd 2000:4).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Turkey has a large variety of natural beauties, historical assets and a diversity of climate. In regions that are loaded with tourism activities, there has been a jump in the numbers of hospitality business that acquired further significance. Considering that people of modern age no longer have a lot of time or opportunity to take long holidays, it becomes even more significant to analyze places to visit and make a thorough choice among all alternatives. In that sense the image, brand and reputation of companies emerge as critical factors impinging on customer choices and underlying reasons for their choice (Firestein, P. J. 2006:25).

Fierce competition in tourism market, eye-catching marketing activities and intense levels of communication motivate the enterprises to forge a corporate brand, to possess a worthy corporate image and to maintain their reputation (Formbrun, C. J. and Van Riel, C. 2004:17).

In tourism sector enterprises are engaged in all the essential activities that needed for building a solid corporate image by speeding up marketing,

communication and public relations to the end of securing a safe place in the mind of target mass.

Tourism companies can only take one-step ahead from their rivals with the value of their brand and created corporate image because in this sector identical products are already offered by their rivals on the market. Corporate image is the entirety of the experiences, perceptions, insights and impressions that are drawn in consumers' mind as regards the company in question.

In all of their marketing activities tourism companies are required to pay heeds to the image-related attempts to create in customers' mind; they should design their own brands and they are expected to manage their corporate reputation via a strong communication to be established with shareholders they are expected to manage their corporate reputation.

Benefits to obtain from the brand, image and reputation activities that tourism companies would engage in are as listed below (Seçkin, B., S, 2010:15, Selnes, F. and Sallis, J., 2003:82, Shamma, H. and Hassan, S. 2009:326, Shappiro, D.L., Sheppard, D.H., and C. Cheraskin,1992:377, Shortt, G. ve Ruys, H. 1994:17, Shenkar, O. and Yutchman-Yaar, E. 1997.1361.)

- They can gain competitive advantage against their rivals in tourism market.
- Product and services of the company would be of higher quality
- The risk perceived by customers in buying their product would go down.
- Customers' choices would be positively affected and customer satisfaction ratios would increase.
- Positive customer perceptions would increase their sales figures.
- Via enhancing companies market share, it can elevate its value in global markets.
- It boosts employees' quality and attracts them to the organization.
- During periods of crisis, it provides better advantages to the business.

Turkish tourism has recently developed to a considerable extent; thereby gaining an unquestionable brand value. Having internalized this reality, all of the national companies in tourism sector would gain major profits themselves and our national tourism would flourish provided

that they paid more attention to corporate image, brand and reputation activities.

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