



The Role of City Brands in National Branding¹

Kent Markalarının Ulusal Markalaşmadaki Rolü

Esmâ Ebru ŞENTÜRK² , Cihat KARTAL³ 

ABSTRACT

The perception of a country as a brand is influenced by various factors, including the global economy, political structure, and location. However, the literature lacks sufficient information on identifying the items that can strengthen these variables. This research argues that it is crucial to identify the distinguishing features of each city and use them to create a country brand model from the collective city brands. The study employed a survey method, collecting 1,637 questionnaires from three distinct cities (Çorum, Sivas and Kırıkkale) in Türkiye. The brand identities of these cities, as perceived by their citizens, were then analyzed. The obtained data was used to propose a model enabling Türkiye to establish a brand identity from local to general. Based on the analyses, it was found that the mean brand perception of participants residing in Çorum is higher than that of participants residing in Kırıkkale, and the mean brand perception of participants residing in Sivas is also higher than that of participants residing in Kırıkkale. In the context of distinctive features of cities from others, the sub-dimension of Business Relations and Infrastructure stands out in Çorum; the sub-dimension of Education stands out in Kırıkkale; and the sub-dimensions of City Architecture, City Personality, and Events and Entertainment stand out in Sivas. The sub-dimensions of city identity as perceived by the citizens of the three cities form the basis of the proposed country branding model. In future research, it is recommended that the model be re-examined for different target groups and different countries.

Keywords: City Brand Image, City Branding, Country Branding, Country Branding Model, Türkiye

ÖZ

Bir ülkenin marka olarak algılanması, küresel ekonomi, siyasi yapı ve coğrafi konum gibi çeşitli faktörlerden etkilenmektedir. Ancak, literatürde bu değişkenleri güçlendirebilecek unsurların belirlenmesi konusunda yeterli bilgi mevcut değildir. Bu araştırma, her bir şehrin ayırt edici özelliklerinin belirlenmesinin ve bunların kolektif şehir markalarından bir ülke markası modeli oluşturmak için kullanılmasının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Araştırma, anket yöntemini kullanarak Türkiye'nin üç farklı şehriden (Çorum, Sivas ve Kırıkkale) 1.637 anket toplamak suretiyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Şehirlerin vatandaşları tarafından algılanan marka kimlikleri analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, Türkiye'nin yerelden genele bir marka kimliği oluşturmasını sağlayacak bir model önermek amacıyla kullanılmıştır. Analizler sonucunda, Çorum şehrinde ikamet eden katılımcıların ortalama marka algısının Kırıkkale'de ikamet eden katılımcıların ortalama marka algısından daha yüksek olduğu, ayrıca Sivas şehrinde ikamet eden katılımcıların ortalama marka algısının da Kırıkkale'deki katılımcılardan daha yüksek olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Şehirlerin diğerlerinden ayrılan ayırt edici özellikleri bağlamında, Çorum'da İş İlişkileri ve Altyapı alt boyutu, Kırıkkale'de Eğitim alt boyutu, Sivas'ta ise Şehir Mimarisi, Şehir Kişiliği ve Etkinlikler ve Eğlence alt boyutları öne çıkmıştır. Üç şehrin vatandaşları tarafından algılanan şehir kimliği alt boyutları, önerilen ülke markalaşma modelinin temelini oluşturmaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalarda, bu modelin farklı hedef gruplar ve farklı ülkeler için yeniden incelenmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şehir Marka İmajı, Şehir Markalaşma, Ülke Markalaşma, Ülke Markalaşma Modeli, Türkiye

¹ This paper is retrieved from a doctoral dissertation.

² **Corresponding Author:** (Lec. Dr.) Hitit University, Osmançık Ömer Derindere Vocational School, ebrucesurr@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-4528-1518

³ (Assoc. Prof.) Kırıkkale University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, dr_cihat_kartal@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-2390-8268



INTRODUCTION:

Countries, like businesses, are complex organizations with financial and human resources. Cities are the functional units of countries. A country's development hinges on effectively using its economic and social power. Just as business units contribute to overall success, cities must align with national identity and objectives. Many cities are similar globally, and their growth depends on effective branding to differentiate themselves. Thus, cities today focus heavily on branding.

City branding is a type of city marketing approach that tries to improve relationships with internal/external visitors (Kavaratzis, 2004) and commercial targets (Zhou & Wang, 2013), as well as to create a good image for the city. To brand a city, it is first necessary to create a unique identity for the city. The way to do this is to create a strong image of the city's identity that local people perceive and form in their minds (Zinaida et al., 2022, p. 207). The identity of a city is based on image and awareness (Aaker, 1996, p. 56). Therefore, the three essential elements of identity building are identity, personality, and communication (Zinaida et al., 2022, p. 208).

Every city has a unique identity shaped by internal stakeholders' values and views (Drugan, 2014, p. 84), comprising positive or negative images and experiences (Riza et al., 2012, p. 294). Therefore, identity is always unique and cannot be replicated. This identity, dynamic and constructed (Dalbay, 2018, p. 163), is used by local governments for city branding. Brand identity positions a city in customers' minds (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 48), and should be a distinguishing feature. Factors like environment, parks, safety, economy, nightlife, arts, politics, employment, and freedom shape city perception (Resonance, 2017, p. 3). Identity should be a distinguishing feature of cities that is obvious at first glance. When all city elements embrace the identity, it creates the desired image and perceived personality. Therefore, Zhang and Zhao (2009) stress the need for consensus on city identity and core values. Because alignment between constructed identity and consumer perception (Peker, 2006, p. 17) differentiates the city brand.

Brands, like people, have unique personalities (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Local governments shape a city's brand personality to influence consumer perception, defining city identity through deliberate attitudes. In contrast, image is how the external environment perceives this identity. A consistent and positive image is crucial for differentiating a city brand and aligning with target audience associations. Aaker (1991) describes image as a differentiating phenomenon that highlights a brand's benefits and fosters positive consumer attitudes. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2010, p. 118) define it as a perception or need, and not necessarily real (Aaker, 1997, p. 347), shaped by consumer experiences. In short, brand image can be defined as the characteristics/qualities consumers perceive about the brand and their attitudes toward it. Brands want and work toward an image consistent with the associations they want to create in the target audiences' thoughts. This is also the case for cities. A city's image, essential to its brand value, affects both residents and visitors. A positive image boosts the city and country brand. Cities now compete internationally for resources, talent, and prestige across trade, tourism, and cultural domains.

Country branding is more complex, making it challenging to manage (Rojas-Méndez, 2013, p. 463). Much of place branding literature focuses on destination and tourism marketing (Hanna et al., 2021, p. 105), adding to this complexity. According to Kotler and Gertner (2004), a place's image comes from its geography, history, art, music, famous citizens, and other features. Loo and Davies (2006) argue that products, services, political actions, art, popular culture, sports, media, and architecture also shape a place's image (Rojas-Méndez, 2013, p. 463). Beyond these elements, countries carry unique meanings; for example, Brazil evokes *joie de vivre*, and Germany is known for engineering excellence (Gondim Mariutti & De Moura Engracia Giraldo, 2020, p. 258).

Cities are less impacted by the external environment than countries. Countries are influenced by geography and policies. Governments aim to strengthen their position due to factors like the rise in independent nations, increased government transparency, stronger international media, shifting markets due to lower global travel costs, and improved access to information via communication technologies (Papp-Váry, 2019a). Consequently, country branding has become part of government agendas in recent decades. Jaworski and Fosher (2003) note that traits like skin color, language, music, traditions, and religious practices differentiate nations, cities, and countries. The mindset of nations, geographical influence, history of the country, and experiences, just like brands, create their fingerprints or DNA. Social assumptions and lifestyles influence, and are influenced by, country brands. Thus, a country brand is a multidimensional mix of unique elements for all target audiences (Dinnie, 2022).

Herstein (2012) emphasizes that city branding depends on visitor perception rather than local government definitions. He suggests evaluating regional assets, from architecture to culture and inhabitants, for effective branding. Anholt's (2006) country brand hexagon model highlights six elements for branding: government, citizens, culture and heritage, tourism, exports, and investment attraction (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019; Papp-Váry, 2019b). Successful country branding requires citizen involvement, not just government efforts. However, this model relates to how the country brand is perceived from the outside. Anholt (2011) argues that international branding should focus on product development and marketing. In Türkiye, destination marketing studies suggest identifying local products as brand symbols benefits branding (Şentürk & Kartal, 2020). Effective branding needs new ideas from coalitions of civil society, government, and business (Morgan, 2012). Moreover, focusing solely on product development and external perception is inadequate; internal self-perception and alignment with branding goals are crucial. This study, therefore, emphasizes inductive marketing for country branding.

In corporate brands, the parent brand is the sum of the perceptions of its sub-brands in the target audience, and the sub-brand associations influence the parent brand's associations (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 14). In this model, the country brand is viewed as the sum of the perceptions of the city brands in the target audience. Therefore, to implement the country model, the central government should conduct a current situation analysis for all cities within the country's borders. The strengths and weaknesses of the cities, their advantages that can be used in branding, and the threats they may face in global competition should be identified in detail.

Place branding involves various perspectives. Hanna et al. (2021, p. 3) categorize place branding literature into themes: practice, brand identifying elements, political dynamics, cultural heritage, brand communication, and use of origin. It's crucial to address these themes holistically. Effective country branding requires stakeholders to embrace the brand identity/personality and collaboratively create brand associations using the destination's assets (infrastructure, buildings, celebrities, origin, etc.) and communication power.

Table 1: Themes in Place and Destination Branding Literature

Themes	Research/Practice Focus	Assumption
Concepts and Practice	Information about place and destination branding, and what challenges arise during their implementation.	Destination and place branding can be applied to diverse locations.
Brand identifying elements	Establishing a positive brand image for places/destinations involves focusing on key aspects.	Aligning brand identity, image, and personality with the essence of the place and evolving them together is crucial.

Political dynamics	Identify key stakeholders and explore methods for engaging them.	Crafting place identity and representing it through a place brand requires negotiation among various stakeholders.
Cultural heritage	Highlighting the importance of heritage in place and destination branding.	In different situations, the presence, abundance, or absence of heritage influences BIIP.
Brand communication	Effectively communicate a place or destination brand.	Sustaining stakeholder engagement requires communicating a consistent place brand.
Use of origin	The relationship between destination branding and country-of-origin branding.	Using a place name implies product quality, which impacts the place brand identity and image.
Infrastructure	Align design scape and infrastructure with place and destination branding.	Design scape and infrastructure significantly influence place brand identity and image through physical, functional, and experiential attributes.

According to Kotsi, Balakrishnan, Michael, and Ramoy (2018) it is essential to understand how effective place brand communication works. Still, there is a research gap in the literature on understanding how place brand communication works. Researchers such as Jansson and Power (2010), Clifton (2014), and Dinnie (2022) argue that the primary way to create culturally-based differentiation is to establish a holistic regional policy. Despite its significance in practice, city and country branding has limited academic literature, with a dominance of business science-oriented approaches. Türkiye's place branding literature is relatively new, with few studies focusing on different cities and variables. Country branding is often discussed in terms of public diplomacy and tourism. However, no study in the literature deals with a country using the inductive method and presents a country brand model based on city branding. For all these reasons, this research aims to develop a holistic model of country branding by examining the brand personalities of three different cities as perceived by stakeholders in the relevant cities.

1. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The process of branding a city is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the brand of the city, the intrinsic characteristics of the city brand, and the associations that contribute to the formation of the city's brand identity. City branding is not merely the creation of a visual identity; rather, it is a comprehensive process that encompasses a multitude of factors, including stakeholder perceptions, the characteristics of the city, and collaborations. The perceptions of all stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and local governments, have a significant impact on the creation and perception of the brand. While the city's distinctive characteristics, such as its historical, cultural, economic, and physical features, form the foundation of the city's brand, the collaboration of various institutions and organizations in its formation contributes to its strengthening and sustainability.

1.1. Consumers' Perception of Brand Cities

It is of paramount importance to consider the perspectives of all potential stakeholders in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a country brand (Rojas-Méndez, 2013, p. 465). For this reason, for a city to become a brand, all stakeholders must agree on the branding goals and act according to the brand value (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2010, p. 154). Although it is the top management that makes the branding decision and adopts the strategy (Dudovskiy, 2014), if the product to be branded is a city or a country, the expectations of the stakeholders living in the city, their perceptions and attitudes towards the city, and how they act according to the strategy determined for the brand are critical

factors in achieving the goal (Insch, 2011; Drugan, 2014). This is because when internal stakeholders adopt the city's brand message and identify themselves with their city (Ruiz et al., 2019), they can support the city's brand values and strengthen the city's brand perception (Kavaratzis, 2004). They can also influence the attractiveness and economic performance of the city through the attitudes they form when describing the city to others (Dinnie, 2011). When locals identify with their city and institutions respect their opinions, the city can offer cultural events that enhance its image while attracting tourists, new residents, or investors. In other words, a city's success as a brand hinge not only on strategic decisions made by top management but also on the active involvement and alignment of all stakeholders, particularly the residents. In this context, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: City residents of Çorum perceive the city as a brand.

H₂: City residents of Kırıkkale perceive the city as a brand.

H₃: City residents of Sivas perceive the city as a brand.

1.2. City Brand Characteristics

Regarding positioning strategies, it is essential to consider which feature(s) will position the brand in the target audience's minds (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006; Kotler et al., 2017). While the city's natural beauty is an essential differentiator for visitors, the critical difference for investors may be the city's commercial connections. For this reason, although each city has more than one feature, the most prominent feature that distinguishes it from rivals in the target audience's thoughts should be emphasized (Peker, 2006; Balakrishnan, 2008; Resonance, 2017). Therefore, the prominent city brand features of the city should be identified. In this context, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₄: Çorum has at least one prominent characteristic according to city residents.

H₅: Kırıkkale has at least one prominent characteristic, according to city residents.

H₆: Sivas has at least one prominent characteristic, according to city residents.

1.3. City Brand Associations

Another essential feature of city branding is to determine which characteristics of the city can be used together to create the desired associations in the target audience (İçyer, 2010; Yıldız, 2015). This is because, despite all the good characteristics of the city, the part of the city that remains most in the minds of consumers is its experiential identity (Perry & Wisnom, 2004, p. 19; Selvi, 2007, p. 19). In other words, the impressions they get when they visit the city or the things they think about the city after learning about it change their brand perception of the city. Consumers attach more importance to experiential than functional values, significantly impacting their purchase decisions (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In this context, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₇: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Çorum as a brand.

H₈: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Kırıkkale as a brand.

H₉: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Sivas as a brand.

2. Methodology

The general survey model was used to conduct this research. According to Karasar (2014), the survey model is an approach that defines a past or current situation within its conditions without any effort to change or influence it. The survey method was used to measure the perceptions of the three cities'

residents regarding the cities' brand personality. The study complies with national and international research and publication ethics. Ethics Committee approval was obtained with the decision of Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Kırıkkale University dated 01.03.2019. Ethical principles were followed throughout the process. The data collection process for the research was carried out between May 2019 and January 2020.

This study was supported by the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Kırıkkale University under project number 2019/067.

2.1. The Purpose and The Model of the Research

This research aims to develop a model proposal for Türkiye's country branding, ranging from local to global, by examining consumer perceptions in Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas cities. Inspired by the concept of top brand - sub-brand in organizational branding, the study employs an inductive method drawing from corporate branding literature. Each city, as a sub-brand, comprises "n" number of sub-elements whose perceived characteristics may vary among consumers due to factors like economic structure and resident perspectives. Identifying basic sub-elements for each city is crucial, considering their interrelations and varying statistical weights of attributes. By developing city brand strategies based on these sub-elements, elements of the country brand can be formulated. Flexible strategies tailored to each city will empower the central government in maintaining and evolving the country brand. The research model is outlined in Figure 1.

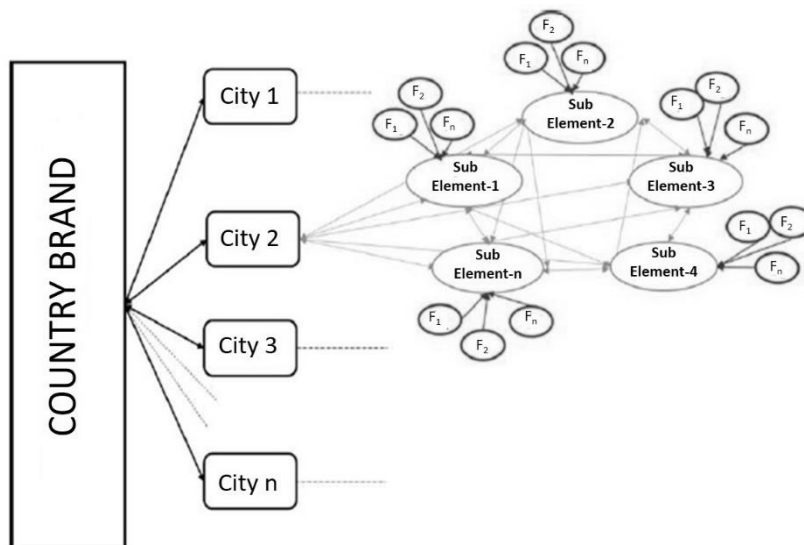


Figure 1: Research Model

2.2. Population and Sample Selection

The research aims to cover all provinces within the borders of Türkiye. Still, due to limited financial resources and time, only the cities of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas were selected as the study population. Çorum is a city distinguished by its historical and cultural richness. It hosts significant archaeological finds from the Hittite period and is located near the ancient Hittite capital of Hattuşaş. The city is particularly renowned for its chickpeas and offers important examples of traditional Turkish cuisine. Positioned at the junction of the Black Sea and Central Anatolia, Çorum has a strategic location. Economic activities focus on agriculture, animal husbandry, and small-scale industry, with crafts and traditional arts also being significant. Additionally, the natural beauty and outdoor activity areas surrounding Çorum support local tourism. Kırıkkale is an advanced city in terms of industry and

commerce, known especially for its defense industry and automotive sector. It plays a crucial role as one of Türkiye's defense industry centers, with agriculture and animal husbandry also holding substantial importance in its economy. Its central location in Central Anatolia makes it a strategic point for transportation and logistics. Kırıkkale is noted for its modern residential areas and infrastructure, while also being recognized for its surrounding natural beauty and historical sites. Sivas, located in the eastern part of Central Anatolia, is a city with a rich historical and cultural heritage. It is known for significant Seljuk-era structures, including the Ulu Mosque and Divriği Great Mosque. The city's extensive natural areas and rich agricultural potential highlight the central role of wheat and other agricultural products in its economic activities. Sivas's cold and harsh climate provides suitable conditions for winter sports. Traditional crafts and folk music reflect the city's cultural richness. The following criteria were considered when selecting provinces⁴: The chosen cities, although not globally recognized as brands, possess the potential for city branding. Sivas has a branding process (Arslan, 2013), while Çorum gained attention by being labeled as the center of the world on Google Maps (Arabacı, 2018), offering an opportunity for strong brand association nationally and internationally. Kırıkkale was identified as a potential candidate for branding by the central government, thanks to its favorable geography and industrial potential (Pusula, 2012). One of the objectives of city branding is to increase the city population. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) (2018a), all three provinces experience regular migration. As a city's population expands, so does the number of stakeholders crucial for branding efforts. Frideres (2006) suggests that the appeal of small cities (non-metropolitan cities) over large ones lies in the potential for more inclusive policies conducive to holistic branding. Consequently, small cities typically exhibit lower population density and diversity compared to larger counterparts, making provincial population a significant criterion. According to TÜİK (2018b), the selected three cities hold the status of small cities. An essential aspect of branding is unveiling the brand's history, often achieved through leveraging the city's historical heritage and landmarks. The history of all three cities traces back to ancient times, influenced by various cultures throughout the ages. Given the constraints of conducting a comprehensive study across all of Türkiye, the research focused on the provinces of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas. These provinces were chosen based on their significant historical heritage, promising prospects for future growth, and their potential for successful branding. Commonalities among these provinces include their deep-rooted historical backgrounds, potential for development, and suitability for establishing strong brand identities

According to the 2018 population data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, there are 536,483 individuals residing in Çorum, 286,602 individuals residing in Kırıkkale, and 646,608 individuals residing in Sivas (TÜİK, 2018b). The sampling frame was first determined to select a correct sample from this population. Both probability and non-probability methods were used to select the sample. Firstly, the convenience sampling method was used. People over 18 who lived in provincial and county centers were selected. 392,004 people are living in Çorum, 245,458 people are living in Kırıkkale, and 470,589 people are living in Sivas. Based on the province/district and town/village population ratios, it can be said that the population over the age of 18 living in the provincial centers of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas is 297,240, 188,121, and 350,988, respectively. The participants to be included in the study were selected by simple random sampling method. Yamane's (2001) sample calculation formula was used in this study. The sample size sufficient to represent the population with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ at the 95% confidence interval was calculated to be a minimum of $n=384$ in each of the three cities. After data collection, 1,637 people from all three cities were reached. However, after eliminating the inappropriate forms, 1,500 forms were included in the evaluation process to be used in the research.

2.3. Data Collection Tool and Data Analysis

⁴ All these criteria were determined according to the conditions of the period in which the research study was conducted

The data collection tool used in the study consists of three parts. The first part aims at defining the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In the second part, the brand city identity scale developed by Drugan (2014) for the analytical measurement of city brands was used. In his study, Drugan stated that the scale was prepared considering economically strong cities and should be tested in cities with different cultures or economically less powerful cities. The scale designed by Drugan did not achieve a sufficient reliability coefficient in the pilot study. Therefore, the scale was restructured using structural equation modeling. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis, a new scale consisting of 34 questions with six dimensions was obtained. These factors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: CKES Brand City Scale Factors and Explanations

FACTOR	EXPLANATION
Business Related and Infrastructure (BRI)	This factor includes characteristics of the city's business relationships, such as potential business partners, development potential, public-private partnerships, and economic infrastructure, such as trade and service facilities, international transportation links, and business support structure.
City Characteristic (CC)	This factor includes personal characteristics such as independence, innovation, and assertiveness that treat the city as a living organism.
Culture and Architecture (CA)	This factor includes characteristics that shape the city's history, such as significant architectural structures, museums, art galleries, cuisine, history, and landmarks.
City Personality (CP)	This factor includes characteristics such as cool, modern, universal, etc., emphasizing the city as a living entity and highlighting its personality.
Education (ED)	This factor includes characteristics related to the city's educational institutions.
Events and Entertainment (EE)	This factor includes national or international festivals organized about cultural characteristics, city-specific products, stories, or people from the city community.

In the third part, the participants were asked whether they considered their city a brand city. The researchers carried out the data collection process for the city of Çorum. In contrast, the data collection process for the provinces of Kırıkkale and Sivas and all the analyses for the research were carried out by a private market research company.

SPSS 25.0, SPSS AMOS, and MS Office Excel 2013 programs were used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires. Before starting the analysis, the scale's validity, reliability, and normal distribution tests were conducted. Reliability analyses of the sub-dimensions of the CKES Brand City Scale were calculated separately, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Measurement Reliability Statistics

Sub-Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Sub-Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
BRI	.919	11	CP	.870	5
CC	.891	6	ED	.767	3
CA	.855	6	EE	.874	3

2.4. Research Scope and Limitations

The study covers individuals living in Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas. Hence, visitors to the city were not included in the research. People over 18 years of age residing in the respective cities and provincial and district centers were included in the study. The results obtained in the quantitative part of the study are limited to the responses of the sample group to the scales within the scope of the data collection tools. The findings are discussed within the constraints of the sample size and the time frame of the research. Opinions may change over time.

3. Research Findings

The questionnaires obtained in the research were evaluated regarding the extreme values and the criteria with which each question was answered. In the research, descriptive statistics were used to determine the characteristics of the participant group, independent samples t-test and one-way

ANOVA tests were used to determine differences between the groups, and Tukey's multiple comparison test was used to determine which group(s) the differences, if any, were due to. According to the evaluated questionnaires, 33.3% of the respondents live in Çorum, 33.3% in Kırıkkale, and 33.3% in Sivas. 45.0% of the respondents were female and 55.0% were male. 30.8% of the respondents were 18-24 years old, 26.7% were 25-34 years old, 16.6% were 35-44 years old, 13.3% were 45-54, and 12.7% were 55 and older. 51.9% were married and 48.1% were single. Of the respondents, 11.2% were elementary school, 9.1% were middle school, 40.9% were high school, 10.1% were associate degree, 21.8% were undergraduate, and 7.0% were postgraduate graduates. 19.1% were public employees, 20.1% were private sector employees, 10.3% were self-employed, 7.0% were retired, 23.7% were students, and 19.9% were not working.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics of Brand Perception

An understanding of how residents perceive their city as a brand is critical for evaluating the effectiveness of branding strategies. Descriptive statistics provide insights into these perceptions by analyzing responses from participants regarding their views on the city's brand status. Table 4 presents the data on how residents of Çorum, Sivas and Kırıkkale perceive their city in terms of branding. According to the table, 34.4% of the respondents who live in Çorum do not perceive the city as a brand. In comparison, 65.6% (44.0% regional brand, 14.0% national brand, and 7.6% international brand) perceive Çorum as a brand.

Table 4: Distribution of Brand Perceptions Related to Cities

Brand Perception	Çorum		Kırıkkale		Sivas	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not a Brand	172	34.4	330	66.0	183	36.6
Regional Brand	220	44.0	123	24.6	218	43.6
National Brand	70	14.0	39	7.8	65	13.0
International Brand	38	7.6	8	1.6	34	6.8

The hypothesis "**H₁**: City residents of Çorum perceive the city as a brand" was supported. While 66.0% of the respondents who live in Kırıkkale do not perceive the city as a brand, 44.0% (24.6% regional brand, 7.8% national brand, and 1.6% international brand) perceive Kırıkkale as a brand. The hypothesis "**H₂**: City residents of Kırıkkale perceive the city as a brand" could not be supported. While 36.6% of the respondents who live in Sivas do not perceive the city as a brand, 63.4% (43.6% regional brand, 13.0% national brand, and 6.8% international brand) perceive Sivas as a brand. The hypothesis "**H₃**: City residents of Sivas perceive the city as a brand" is supported.

3.2. City of Residence and Brand Personality Dimensions

Based on the cities of residence, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the sub-dimension(s) by which participants perceived their cities. Brand personality responses were obtained using a seven-point Likert scale, and cut-off points were determined. The first four rows of cut-off points cover the response range from strongly disagree to neither agree nor disagree. For a sub-dimension to stand

out, it is expected to have a score above the midpoint of the mean score. For this reason, dimensions with partially high, high, and completely high mean scores were considered on a sub-dimension basis.

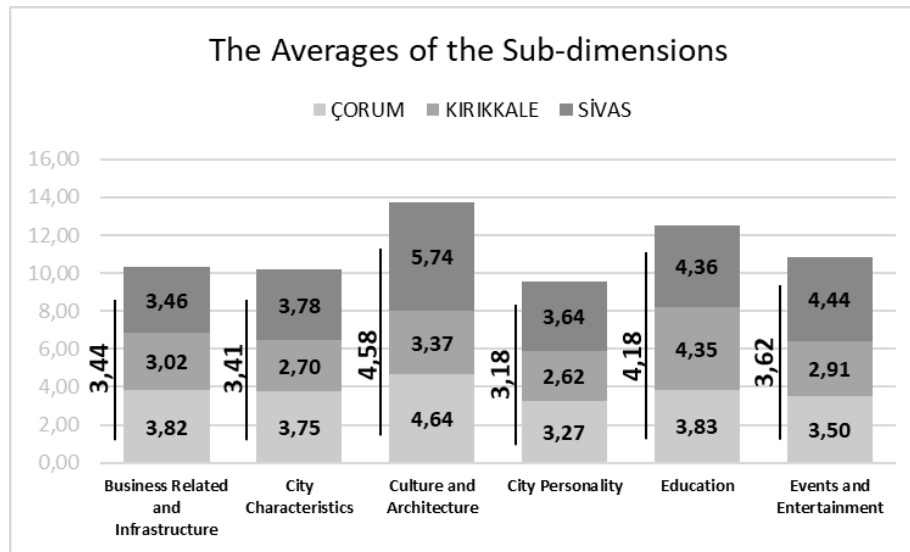


Figure 2: Distributions of the Averages of the Sub-Dimensions by City of Residence

As shown in Figure 2, the sub-dimension of CA stands out among all the sub-dimensions for Çorum. The hypothesis "H₄: Çorum has at least one prominent characteristic according to city residents" was supported. It was found that none of the sub-dimensions for the city of Kırıkkale did not reach a sufficient average. The hypothesis "H₅: Kırıkkale has at least one prominent characteristic according to city residents" could not be supported. In Sivas, the sub-dimensions of CA and EE stand out. The hypothesis "H₆: Sivas has at least one prominent characteristic according to city residents" was supported.

Table 5: Distribution of Perceived City Brand Personality by City Residents

Sub-dimension	City	Group Statistics			Test Statistics			Tukey
		n	\bar{X}	σ	F	s.d.	p	
BRI	Çorum	500	3.822	1.332	50.792	1497	.000	Ç > K Ç > S S > K
	Kırıkkale	500	3.024	1.221				
	Sivas	500	3.465	1.208				
CC	Çorum	500	3.748	1.498	93.678	1497	.000	Ç > K S > K
	Kırıkkale	500	2.705	1.347				
	Sivas	500	3.783	1.397				
CA	Çorum	500	4.636	1.285	526.273	1497	.000	Ç > K S > Ç S > K
	Kırıkkale	500	3.365	1.165				
	Sivas	500	5.736	1.003				
CP	Çorum	500	3.266	1.508	64.543	1497	.000	Ç > K S > Ç S > K
	Kırıkkale	500	2.618	1.325				
	Sivas	500	3.644	1.494				
ED	Çorum	500	3.833	1.557	21.834	1497	.000	K > Ç S > Ç
	Kırıkkale	500	4.353	1.458				
	Sivas	500	4.356	1.295				
EE	Çorum	500	3.504	1.528	129.881	1497	.000	Ç > K S > Ç S > K
	Kırıkkale	500	2.908	1.493				
	Sivas	500	4.444	1.537				

Tukey's multiple comparison tests were used to determine which paired group(s) the difference was due to. An analysis of Table 5 shows that the perceived brand personality of the cities differs based on all sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Figure 3 shows the prominent characteristics of the cities based on the differentiation perceived by the city residents based on their cities. In Çorum, the sub-dimension of BRI; in Kırıkkale, the sub-dimension of ED; in Sivas, CA, CP, and EE stand out.

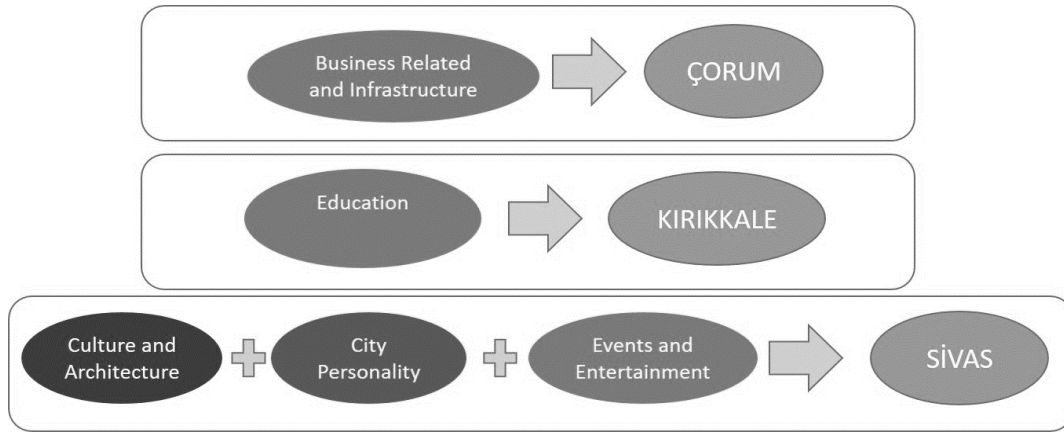


Figure 3: Distinctive Features on the Basis of Cities from Others

3.3. City of Residence and Brand Perception

The perception of a city's brand is deeply influenced by the residents who live there. How locals perceive, interact with, and represent their city plays a crucial role in shaping the overall brand image. This connection between city residency and brand perception highlights the importance of understanding local attitudes and behaviors in the development and sustainability of a city's brand.

Table 6: Distribution of Brand Perception by Cities

	City	Group Statistics			Test Statistics			Tukey
		n	\bar{X}	Std. Deviation	F	s.d.	p	
Brand Perception	Çorum	500	1.95	.887	55.304	1497	.000	K < Ç K < S
	Kırıkkale	500	1.45	.707				
	Sivas	500	1.90	.872				
	Total	1500	1.77	.855				

According to Table 6, the cities of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas differ regarding brand perception. When the results of Tukey's multiple comparison test were analyzed, it was found that there was a significant difference between the participants residing in Çorum and Kırıkkale and between the participants residing in Kırıkkale and Sivas in terms of brand perception mean scores. While the mean brand perception of the participants residing in Çorum city is higher than that of the participants residing in Kırıkkale city, the mean brand perception of the participants residing in Sivas city is higher than that of the participants residing in Kırıkkale city.

3.4. Examining the Relationships of Brand Personality Sub-Dimensions Based on Cities

The relationships between the CKES Brand City Scale sub-dimensions based on the cities of residence were analyzed by Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

Table 7: Relational Distribution of City Brand Personality Scale Sub-dimensions

Brand Personality	BRI		CC		CA		CP		ED		EE	
	r	p (2-tailed)	r	p (2-tailed)	r	p (2-tailed)	r	p (2-tailed)	r	p (2-tailed)	r	p (2-tailed)
Çorum	.916**	.000	.878**	.000	.759**	.000	.811**	.000	.811**	.000	.777**	.000
Kırıkkale	.854**	.000	.792**	.000	.849**	.000	.762**	.000	.596**	.000	.773**	.000
Sivas	.834**	.000	.761**	.000	.497**	.000	.789**	.000	.707**	.000	.593**	.000

*The table includes only the relationship between the city brand personality and its sub-dimensions.

When analyzing Table 7, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between all the sub-dimensions for the city of Çorum. However, it is seen that the highest relationships between the sub-dimensions are between the BRI sub-dimension and the CC sub-dimension and again between the BRI sub-dimension and the ED sub-dimension. The relationship between all other dimensions remains at a medium level. The hypothesis "H₇: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Çorum as a brand" was supported. When the relationships between the city brand personality and the sub-dimensions are examined, it is found that all the sub-dimensions are related to the city brand personality in the same direction and with high intensity. Regarding the magnitude of the relationships among the sub-dimensions, it was found that the sub-dimensions influenced the brand personality of Çorum in the order of BRI, CC, ED, CP, EE, and CA. The city of Çorum is perceived as a brand by its residents, not with a single dimension but several dimensions supporting each other. In the branding process of Çorum, it can be said that the local administration should increase brand perception by using more financial and social resources on BRI, CC, ED, and CP dimensions.

It is observed that there is a positive relationship between all the sub-dimensions of the city of Kırıkkale. In other words, all sub-dimensions relationally affect the brand city personality. A change in one sub-dimension will affect the other in the same direction. However, the relationships between all the sub-dimensions were found to be moderate or weak. The sub-dimension of ED, which the residents of Kırıkkale perceive as increasing the awareness of the city, is weakly related to all other sub-dimensions except the sub-dimension of CA. The highest relationship among the sub-dimensions related to the city is between the CC sub-dimension and CP sub-dimension. The lowest relationship is between the ED sub-dimension and the CC sub-dimension. Hypothesis "H₈: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Kırıkkale as a brand" was supported. When the relationships between the city brand personality and the sub-dimensions are examined, it is found that there is a unidirectional and moderate relationship between the ED sub-dimension and the city brand personality and a unidirectional and high relationship with all other sub-dimensions. It is understood that Kırıkkale residents who do not see the city as a brand position the university in the city at a different place in their minds. Regarding the relational magnitude of the sub-dimensions, it has been observed that BRI, CA, CC, EE, CP, and ED affect the brand of Kırıkkale in order.

For the city of Sivas, there is no relationship between the BRI sub-dimension and the CA sub-dimension, but there is a positive relationship between all other sub-dimensions. A change in one sub-dimension will affect the other in the same direction. However, the relationships between all sub-dimensions were found to be moderate or weak. The highest relationship among the sub-dimensions related to the city is between the sub-dimensions of BRI and CP. The hypothesis "H₉: There is a relationship between city brand sub-dimensions in the perception of Sivas as a brand" is supported. When the relationships between the city brand personality and the sub-dimensions are examined, it is found that there is a positive and high-strength relationship with the sub-dimensions of BRI, CC, and CP, a positive and medium-strength relationship with the sub-dimensions of ED and EE, and a weak positive relationship with the sub-dimension of CA. In terms of the relational magnitude of the sub-dimensions, it is seen that they affect the Sivas brand in the order of BRI, CP, CC, ED, EE, and CA. Analyzing the residents' responses of Sivas to the scale, it is seen that their perception of the CA dimension is high in terms of personality and brand perception. However, it was found that the relationship between the CA dimension and city brand personality is weak. It is obvious that the cultural and architectural values of the city are fundamental to city residents. Residents may consider the city's culture as the most essential value that defines the city.

To summarize, in the context of brand perception, residents of Çorum and Sivas view their cities as distinct brands, while Kırıkkale is not perceived as a brand. Among the city brand dimensions perceived by Çorum and Sivas residents, at least one dimension stands out for each city. In contrast, all

dimensions for Kırıkkale fall below the average. Overall, residents of both Çorum and Sivas have a higher perception of their city brands compared to the perception held by Kırıkkale's residents. Additionally, high-level and unidirectional relationships are observed among the sub-dimensions of Çorum's city brand personality. In comparison, Kırıkkale's city brand personality and its sub-dimensions show medium to high-level relationships. For Sivas, there are weak relationships with the city brand personality dimension CA, while other dimensions exhibit medium to high-level relationships. Notably, the dimensions that stand out are BRI in Çorum, CA, CP, and EE in Sivas, and ED in Kırıkkale.

4. Country Brand Model Proposal

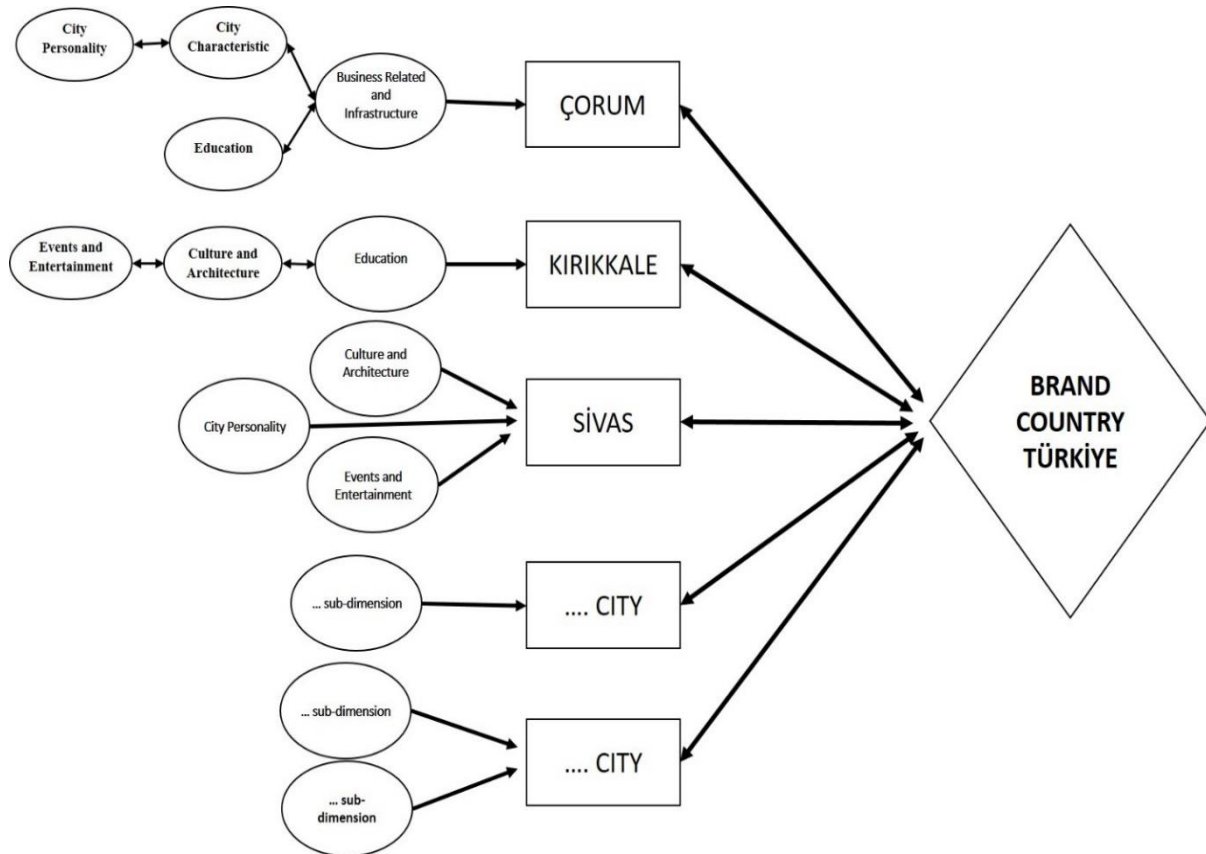


Figure 4: Brand Country Model in the Context of Local to General City Branding Using the Examples of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas

From a holistic perspective, it is clear that each city has one or more characteristics that set it apart from the others. However, the positive and significant correlations observed between the sub-dimensions of the city brand also underscore the importance of enhancing and strengthening all aspects of the city personality at the point of perception as a brand. In this regard, the differentiating factors of Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas, which are the sub-brands of the Türkiye brand, and the prominent characteristics that constitute these factors have been identified in this research according to the perceptions of the city's residents. The prominent elements and their interrelationships based on the cities are depicted in the proposed country brand model shown in Figure 4.

The "country" is chosen as the major element in the proposed model, and it is said that the constituent parts of this element are the cities it contains, and each city consists of an "n" number of sub-dimensions. Three cities were used to test the model. Four sub-dimensions have emerged as the most important for Çorum among the cities. These sub-dimensions are BRI, CC, ED, and CP. Three sub-

dimensions stand out for Kırıkkale city: ED, CA, and EE. Three sub-dimensions of the city of Sivas stand out: CA, CC, and EE.

According to the proposed model, it is stated that the sub-elements that stand out based on cities may be related to each other or may have a direct effect on the city brand. In analyzing the prominent sub-dimensions based on cities, four sub-dimensions have been quantitatively identified for Çorum, Kırıkkale, and Sivas. On the other hand, city personality, one of the important sub-dimensions in Çorum, influences CC, whereas CC and ED sub-dimensions' influence BRI sub-dimensions. BRI is the key sub-dimension that stands out in the branding of Çorum, but the other three sub-dimensions directly or indirectly affect this sub-dimension. In other words, BRI is the main sub-dimension for the branding of Çorum from the perspective of internal stakeholders. Still, it is anticipated that the sub-dimensions of CC, ED, and CP should be improved to use this element in the branding process.

Although no sub-dimension directly influences the city brand when evaluating the city of Kırıkkale, it is thought that internal stakeholders favorably evaluate the ED sub-dimension and that this dimension should be reinforced. When the relationships between the sub-dimensions are examined, it is predicted that improvements to the city's EE sub-dimension affect the CA sub-dimension, and changes in the CA sub-dimension affect the Kırıkkale brand by affecting the ED sub-dimension.

When considering Sivas City, it appears that the circumstance in which more than one sub-dimension might directly affect the city brand, as specified in the model proposal, has been accomplished. Sub-dimensions affecting the Sivas city brand include CA, CP, and EE.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As Anholt (2006) states, the outside views cities determine brand communication in the branding of a country. A good city image requires effective communication. Communication aims to portray a city's promises through messages generated from the city's socioeconomic conditions and assets (Rainisto, 2003). If this communication between city inhabitants and brand managers is successful, a common language and aim for the city brand can be established. In this regard, this study on city branding attempted to develop a country brand model using the inductive technique. The "CKES Brand City Scale" restructured throughout the research phase based on corporate brand literature was employed. The cities of Çorum, Kırıkkale and Sivas, which are similar in many ways but not yet branded, were taken into consideration, and the city brand personalities perceived by these cities' citizens were evaluated. Although the cities were similar, internal stakeholders experienced them differently. In terms of brand perception, while residents of Çorum and Sivas perceive their cities as distinct brands, Kırıkkale is not perceived as a brand. Among the city brand dimensions perceived by the residents of Çorum and Sivas, at least one dimension stands out for each city, while all dimensions are below average for Kırıkkale. The residents of Çorum and Sivas exhibit more favorable perceptions of city brands than do residents of Kırıkkale. Furthermore, a high level of correlation is evident between the sub-dimensions of Çorum's city brand personality. The city brand personality and its sub-dimensions of Kırıkkale exhibit moderate to high-level relationships. For Sivas, while weak relationships are observed with the CA dimension of city brand personality, other dimensions show moderate to high level relationships. Particularly prominent dimensions are BRI in Çorum, ED in Kırıkkale, CA, CP and EE in Sivas. Accordingly, while hypotheses H₁, H₃, H₄, H₆, H₇, H₈ and H₉ are supported, hypotheses H₂ and H₅ are not supported. The internal stakeholder perceptions identified in the study provide the brand council (local governments) with guidance on how to position the city brand as a brand. Furthermore, the data analyzed for the three cities provided guidance for developing the proposed country model in this context, as well as for identifying the sub-dimensions that should be prioritized when developing a country brand.

In light of the aforementioned findings, it can be posited that local administrators in the three cities should prioritize the following issues for their respective municipalities.

- In Çorum's branding process, priority should be given to the BRI sub-dimension. This may involve supporting significant projects aimed at increasing the city's brand value and enhancing regional recognition. Additionally, the relationship between CC and ED should be strengthened; integrating cultural events with economic incentives will support the city's brand image. Encouraging active community participation in brand strategies is essential, as this aligns and strengthens local perceptions of the brand. Effective use of internal and external resources will ensure a strong brand perception.
- To strengthen Kırıkkale's city brand, focus should be on the ED sub-dimension. Projects that boost economic incentives and job opportunities should be central to this process. The relationship between EE and CA should be reinforced; educational institutions should be integrated with cultural activities. Additionally, when creating the city brand, the contributions of universities and other key institutions to the city's image should be considered. Re-shaping Kırıkkale's brand and highlighting its key features could positively influence the city's perception.
- For Sivas's branding, focus should be on the CA, CP, and EE sub-dimensions. The integration of these three sub-dimensions can strengthen the city's brand image. It is essential to highlight the city's cultural and architectural values as core elements of its brand; this can enhance Sivas's brand perception. Effective relationships among the CA, CP, and EE sub-dimensions should be identified and incorporated into the brand strategies.

The results obtained for the three cities indicate that to support the national brand, distinct sub-dimensions and strategies need to be developed for each city that constitutes the nation, and it is essential to determine how these strategies will interact. This approach can enhance the brand perception of the cities and contribute positively to the overall image of the national brand.

Similar to this research, Saygın (2023) conducted a study on the branding of Silifke using the CKES Brand City scale. As a result of the study, similar to this research, it was revealed that there are relationships between the brand personality sub-dimensions of the small-sized city. Still, the highest branding antecedents perceived by the city residents are the city's personality and characteristic dimensions. Karadal et al. (2023) conducted a study on city personality and value for Aksaray, which is a small city. In this study, it was observed that the cultural and architectural features of the city came to the fore. In addition, the result that the perceptions of those who are from Aksaray and those who are not from Aksaray are different supports the assumption of our study.

On the other hand, economic stability is critical for countries (Kotler et al., 2017, p. 9). According to Anholt (2006), a country's participation in the global arena is closely tied to its economic power. Economic power is intimately tied to the country's brand. Since the research study was conducted, the socioeconomic environment in Türkiye and worldwide has changed and continues to change. According to statistics released by the Press and Public Relations Consultancy of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2023, Istanbul, a well-known destination brand, managed to increase its number of visitors by 9.9% compared to the previous year despite economic turmoil (T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2023). This example emphasizes the significance of identifying and maintaining the significant features of the sub-brands, namely the cities. When the major elements of the cities were examined, it was discovered that some cities had no essential characteristics, while others had more than one. The challenge of choosing from the significant attributes of all cities to build a country brand arises at this point. As we stated at the outset, country branding is a multifaceted idea. Identifying important qualities of cities aids in differentiating them from competitors and developing a sustainable

economy. This raises awareness of the elements of the country. The master brand is the sum of the sub-brand impressions (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), but it also has brand value on its own. City brands will bring diversity to country brand managers, shaping the country's image and message. Furthermore, growing the economic might of cities strengthens the nation's brand. After defining the critical components of cities, the relationship between them and other cities should be investigated. The relationships that form will provide recommendations on where to focus under Anholt's country brand hexagon's areas of Exports, Culture, People, Immigration and Investment, and Tourism. It will also preserve the country's image's long-term viability because positioning a country in a way that affects all of these dimensions will ensure its branding (Papp-Váry, 2019a).

In the context of corporate brands, the message presented during the creation of a brand identity should encompass the shared goals and objectives of the brand members and be deemed acceptable (Knapp, 2003; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2010). In alignment with this perspective, this study prioritizes the perception of city residents, as countries are conceptualized as analogous to organizations. As a result, the research is limited to internal stakeholders. However, the literature indicates that there are discrepancies between the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders with regard to city branding (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013). Furthermore, the perceptions of all city stakeholders exert an influence on city branding (Trueman et al., 2004). Therefore, the perceptions of both groups are important for branding. This implies that it is insufficient to consider only the perspective of internal stakeholders when building city brands. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it would be beneficial to extend the study to visitors and people who have never been to the city. This would provide a broader perspective for the literature and branding studies. Researchers are advised to re-test this model in different locations and with various target groups for future studies. Additionally, re-testing with different countries will enhance the model's generalizability.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interest: The author(s) declare that they do not have a conflict of interest with themselves and/or other third parties and institutions, or if so, how this conflict of interest arose and will be resolved, and author contribution declaration forms are added to the article process files with wet signatures.

Ethics Committee Permission: The article complies with national and international research and publication ethics. Ethics Committee approval was obtained with the decision of Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Kırıkkale University dated 01.03.2019. Ethical principles were followed throughout the process.

Financial Support: This study was supported by the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Kırıkkale University under project number 2019/067.

Acknowledgements: -

REFERENCES:

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. The Free Press.
- Aaker, D. A. (1996). Building strong brands. Free Press. Retrieved May 30, 2019 from <https://www.scribd.com/read/224313057/Building-Strong-Brands#>.
- Aaker, D. A., & Joachimsthaler, E. (2000). The brand relationship spectrum: The Key to the brand architecture challenge. *California Management Review*, 42(4), 8–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000812560004200401>
- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, XXXIV(August), 347–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379703400304>
- Anholt, S. (2006). The Anholt-GMI city brands index: How the world sees the world's cities. *Place Branding*, 2(1), 18–31. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.5990042>
- Anholt, S. (2011). Beyond the nation brand: The role of the image and identity in international relations. In A. Pike (Ed.), *Brands and Branding Geographies* (pp. 289–297). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. Retrieved May 12, 2020 from https://books.google.com.tr/books?hl=tr&lr=&id=F06g3OI2eq4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA289&dq=anholt+nation+brand+index&ots=dUQxypHryH&sig=mHNZfejA2j5YAZ_y1Kpeab829Vs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=hexagon&f=false.
- Arabacı, A. O. (2018). Google'ın Çorum'u dünyanın merkezi olarak belirlediği iddiası. www.teyit.org. Retrieved November 11, 2019 from <https://teyit.org/google-in-corum-u-dunyanin-merkezi-olarak-belirledigi-iddiasi/>.
- Arslan, E. (2013, September 15). Marka kent Sivas. Retrieved November 29, 2018 from <http://www.sivasirade.com/haber/-2167.html>.

- Balakrishnan, M. S. (2008). Dubai - a star in the east. A case study in strategic destination branding. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 1(1), 62–91. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17538330810865345>
- Clifton, N. (2014). Towards a holistic understanding of county of origin effects? Branding of the region, branding from the region. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 3(2), 122–132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2014.02.003>
- Dalbay, R. S. (2018). Kimlik ve toplumsal kimlik kavrami. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2(31), 161–176.
- Dinnie, K. (2011). Introduction to the theory of city branding. In K. Dinnie (Ed.), *City branding: Theory and cases* (pp. 3–7). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230294790_1
- Dinnie, K. (2022). *Nation branding: Concepts, issues, practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003100249>
- Drugan, G. A. (2014). The development of an analytical framework for the measurement of city brands. Doctoral Dissertation [University of Manchester, Faculty of Humanities]. Manchester City, England.
- Dudovskiy, J. (2014). Factors affecting brands and branding: A brief literature review. *Research Methodology*. Retrieved October 4, 2019 from <https://research-methodology.net/factors-affecting-brands-and-branding-a-brief-literature-review/>.
- Frideres, J. S. (2006). Cities and immigrant integration: The future of second-and thirddier centres. *Our Diverse Cities*, 2(Summer), 3–8.
- Gondim Mariutti, F., & De Moura Engracia Giraldo, J. (2020). Country brand personality of Brazil: A hindsight of Aaker's theory. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 16(3), 251–264. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-019-00153-3>
- Hanna, S., Rowley, J., & Keegan, B. (2021). Place and destination branding: A review and conceptual mapping of the Domain. *European Management Review*, 18(2), 105–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12433>
- Hassan, S., & Mahrous, A. A. (2019). Nation branding: The strategic imperative for sustainable market competitiveness. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 1(2), 146–158. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhass-08-2019-0025>
- Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132–140. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208906>
- İçyer, A. (2010). Marka kent oluşturma açısından stratejik kent yönetimi. Master Thesis [Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü]. Karaman, Türkiye.

- Insch, A. (2011). Ethics of place making. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 7(3), 151–154. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2011.23>
- Jansson, J., & Power, D. (2010). Fashioning a global city: Global city brand channels in the fashion and design industries. *Regional Studies*, 44(7), 889–904. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343400903401584>
- Jaworski, S. P., & Fosher, D. (2003). National brand identity & Its effect on corporate brands: The nation brand effect (NBE). *The Multinational Business Review*, 11(2), 99–113.
- Karadal, H., Akçı, Y., Sepetçi, T., & Dinçer, E. (2023). Aksaray ili marka değeri araştırması. *Kent Akademisi*, 16(2), 812–829. <https://doi.org/10.35674/kent.1225473>
- Karasar, N. (2014). *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemi*. Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.
- Kavaratzis, M. (2004). From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands. *Place Branding*, 1(1), 58–73.
- Kavaratzis, M., & Ashworth, G. J. (2006). City branding: An effective assertion of identity or a transitory marketing trick?. *Place Branding*, 2(3), 183–194.
- Knapp, D. E. (2003). *Marka akli* (Çev. A. T. Akartuna). MediaCat.
- Kotler, P., & Gertner, D. (2004). Country as brand, product and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective. In N. Morgan, A. Pritchard, and R. Pride (Ed.), *Destination branding* (2nd Edition, pp. 55–71). Routledge.
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2017). *Pazarlama 4.0* (N. Özata, Eds.). Optimist Yayın Dağıtım.
- Kotler, P., & Pfoertsch, W. (2010). B2B marka yönetimi (N. Orhon, Ed.). MediaCat Yayınları.
- Kotsi, F., Balakrishnan, M. S., Michael, I., & Ramsøy, T. Z. (2018). Place branding: Aligning multiple stakeholder perception of visual and auditory communication elements. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 7, 112–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.08.006>
- Loo, T., & Davies, G. (2006). Branding China: The ultimate challenge in reputation management? *Corporate Reputation Review*, 9(3), 198–210. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550025>
- Morgan, N. (2012). Time for ‘mindful’ destination management and marketing. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1–2), 8–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.07.003>
- Papp-Váry, Á. F. (2019a). A successful example of complex country branding: The ‘E-Estonia’ positioning concept and its relation to the presidency of the council of the EU. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies*, 14(1), 87–115. <https://doi.org/10.2478/auseur-2018-0013>

- Papp-Váry, Á. F. (2019b). The Role of visual identity guides and brand books in country branding—How to get inspiration from Finland and Estonia. In K. Hammes, M. Machrafi, & A. Samodol (Eds.), *Economic and Social Development 38th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development* (pp. 196–211). Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency.
- Peker, A. E. (2006). Kentin markalaşma sürecinde çağdaş sanat müzelerinin rolü: Kent markalaşması ve küresel landmark. Master Thesis [İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi]. İstanbul, Türkiye.
- Perry, A., & Wisnom, D. (2004). *Markanın DNA'sı* (Çev. Z. Yılmaz). MediaCat Yayınları.
- Rainisto, S. K. (2003). Success factors of place marketing: A study of place marketing practices in Northern Europe and the United States. Doctoral Dissertation [Helsinki University of Technology, Institute of Strategy and International Business]. Helsinki, Finland.
- Riza, M., Doratli, N., & Fasli, M. (2012). City branding and identity. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 35, 293–300. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.02.091>
- Rojas-Méndez, J. (2013). The nation brand molecule. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(7), 462–472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0385>
- Ruiz, E. C., De la Cruz, E. R. R., & Vázquez, F. J. C. (2019). Sustainable tourism and residents' perception towards the brand: The case of Malaga (Spain). *Sustainability*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11010292>
- Saygın, M. (2023). Competitiveness of the cities: Branding and positioning. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8(6), e02210. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i6.2210>
- Selvi, M. S. (2007). *Marka yönetimi*. Detay Yayıncılık.
- Şentürk, E. E., & Kartal, C. (2020). An investigation on academic research in the field of place branding in Turkey. *International Journal of Business Economics and Management Perspectives*, 1(1), 26–41. <https://doi.org/10.29228/ijbemp.44487>
- T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı. (2023, December 26). İstanbul 11 ayda 16 milyon yabancı ziyaretçi ağırladı. Retrieved December 28, 2023 from <https://basin.ktb.gov.tr/TR-362042/istanbul-11-ayda-16-milyon-yabanci-ziyaretci-agirladi.html>.
- Trueman, M., Klemm, M., & Giroud, A. (2004). Can a city communicate? Bradford as a corporate brand. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 9(4), 317–330. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563280410564057>
- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [TÜİK]. (2018a). Bölgelerin verdiği göç bilgileri. Retrieved October 31, 2019 from *TÜİK Merkezi Dağıtım Sistemi*. <https://biruni.tuik.gov.tr/medas/?kn=95&locale=tr>.

- Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [TÜİK]. (2018b). Adrese dayalı nüfus kayıt sistemi sonuçları, 2018. *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*. Retrieved October 31, 2019 from <http://tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=30709>.
- Resonance. (2017). World's best city brands—A global ranking of place equity. *The Resonance*. Retrieved October 31, 2019 from <https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/9743/WorldsBestCityBrands.pdf>.
- Pusula. (2012, February 18). Kırıkkale marka şehir olacak. *Pusula Gazetesi*. Retrieved November 5, 2019 from http://www.pusulagazetesi.net/haber/kirikale_marka_sehir_ola-4148.html.
- Yamane, T. (2001). *Temel örnekleme yöntemleri* (E. Alptekin, C. Aydın, E. Gürbüzsel, & M. A. Bakır, Eds.). Literatür Yayıncılık.
- Yıldız, O. (2015). Marka imajı yaratma ve marka yerleştirme stratejileri. Specialization thesis [T.C. Türk Patent Enstitüsü, Markalar Dairesi Başkanlığı]. Ankara Türkiye.
- Zenker, S., & Beckmann, S. C. (2013). My place is not your place – Different place brand knowledge by different target groups. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6(1), 6–17. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17538331311306078>
- Zhang, L., & Zhao, S. X. (2009). City branding and the olympic effect: A case study of Beijing. *Cities*, 26, 245–254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2009.05.002>
- Zhou, L., & Wang, T. (2013). Social media: A new vehicle for city marketing in China. *Cities*, 37, 27–32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.11.006>
- Zinaida, R. S., Sunarto, & Sunuantari, M. (2022). Revealing the new identity element to construct Palembang city branding. *Jurnal ASPIKOM*, 7(2), 207–217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24329/aspikom.v7i2.1110>