

Students' Perception of City Branding: The Case of Kastamonu and Kastamonu University

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Abstract

Recent developments in technology have led to changes in the way we manufacture and the manufacturing volume which allowed for increased competition in the global market. Such competition applies not only to products and businesses, but also to cities, states and destinations. In this context, branding plays an important role in the marketing of cities and states. With its unique natural, historical and cultural assets, Turkey has a number of cities eligible for city branding. Turkish city of Kastamonu, one of the candidates for city branding, boasts a number of cultural assets which drive the tourism sector in the city. The aim of this study was to measure the Kastamonu University, Faculty of Tourism students' perception of city brand associated with the city of Kastamonu. A total number of 505 questionnaires were completed by the university students and the data collected was analyzed using a statistics software suite; frequencies, percentages, means, factor analysis, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for data processing. As a result, a total number of seven dimensions were found with respect to the students' perception of Kastamonu as a city brand. Statistically significant differences were found between parameters such as age and gender of the students, years of academic study, income, place of origin, previous knowledge of the city, first impression of the city and current opinion about the city and these dimensions.

Keywords: Marketing, Brand, Branding, City Brand, Kastamonu

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Introduction

With the Industrial Revolution, the world entered into a time of great change in the manufacturing style and the production volume. We were introduced to mass production with increased mechanization (Fordism), and the governing manufacturing style of that time catered only to specific needs and demands. Later on, the world changed in a way that consumer needs drew more attention and human-oriented production, sales and marketing has become the key. As a result, a time of competition (post-Fordism) has arrived (Kozak, 2014; Kozak, 2012: 9; Yediyıldız, 1994: 78).

The age of competition opened the doors of the market so a great number of manufacturers; some of which prevailed while others failed as they did not have a flexible corporate structure, and therefore the competitive advantage required for the survival of a company. Today, such competition applies not only to products and businesses but also to cities, states and destinations. Such places which aim for competitive advantage strive for cost advantage and differentiation in the face of the competition using their assets and abilities (Porter, 1985).

In this context, branding plays an important role in the marketing of cities and states. The reason behind this statement is the fact that cities need to create an image in people's minds, and an identity, a logo and a slogan which will resonate with such mental image if it is for them to claim the market share they deserve. The concept of 'city brand' was born in the light of these factors and it affects the people's decision to invest in, move to, work in and travel to a certain place (Kotler, Gertner, 2002: 249-261; Özdemir, Karaca, 2009:118; Yüksel Avcılar, Kara, 2015; Erdoğan, 1996, 51).

With its unique natural, historical and cultural heritage, Turkey has a number of cities eligible for city branding. One of these cities, Kastamonu, boasts a total number of 564 immovable cultural assets. Many of these cultural assets are branded as "Kastamonu Mansions" (URL-1, 2017) with their distinctive architectural features such as facades with motifs. There is no doubt that architectural assets play an important role in city branding (Manic, Backovic, 2010; Garaca et al., 2011). In addition, local dishes such as the traditional meat buns, banduma, einkorn wheat meal, sour rice meal, and Taşköprü garlic, and influential people from the city such as Şaban-ı Veli, Şerife Bacı and Sgt. Halime also play an important role in city branding of Kastamonu. Moreover, thanks to the opportunity now offered by to local businesses to the tourists to watch how ground halva is made using authentic techniques, this type of halva has become yet another cultural asset adding value to Kastamonu.

With the influence of the university located in the city, Kastamonu makes progress in the way to become a city brand with its increasing number of recreational venues, its booming local economy thanks to the increasing number of university students, and therefore the increasing amount of investment, employment ratio and dynamism which is backed by innovative landscaping efforts. In this context, university students play an important role in Kastamonu's progress in the way to become a city brand along with the aforementioned touristic assets and the supporting infrastructure and superstructure. This study aimed to measure the Faculty of Tourism students' perception of city branding of Kastamonu.

Literature

Brand, the Concept of Brand Image and City Branding

A brand is associated with creation of value, i.e. “added value,” in an organization. The term can be defined as the sum of the efforts made by a group of sales personnel to differentiate a product or a service from the competition. Such efforts include a number of rational, tangible, visual, and auditory aspects such as catchphrases, colors, logos and slogans (Avcılar, Varinli, 2013; Aaker, 2009; İlgüner, 2006).

Brand image, on the other hand, is associated with the consumers’ feelings, opinions, beliefs about and perception of a certain brand. Created as a result of consumers’ impressions, brand image reveals the public perception about an organization when compared to its competition. Positive and negative qualities of a product, its strengths and weaknesses, are processed to create the brand image (Özdemir, Karaca, 2009:117; Perry, Wisnom, 2003:15). Brand image, in this context, acts as a guide to city branding.

City branding is the application of the strategies—commonly used in product branding—at an urban level. In this context, a city aims to differentiate itself from other cities using its natural, cultural, historic, and social features supported by certain symbols and slogans. Thus, cities become specialized at a rational and emotional level (Peker, 2006: 21; Banger, 2006:15). Another definition of the term suggests that city branding is the sum of the efforts aimed at making a city attractive for the people for residential, occupational, educational, economic, and touristic purposes using branding techniques and strategies, as opposed to the public perception of an unexceptional city. Accordingly, the city will be distinguished from the others and it will be more often preferred when compared to its competition (Dinnie, 2011:7; Ailawadi, Keller, 2004: 334).

A closer look into the literature shows that Altunbaş (2007) underlined the importance of city branding efforts and the author made some suggestions about the marketing communication which needs to be used. Avcılar, Kara (2009) explored the city branding methods and commonly used marketing strategies. Merrilees, Miller and Herington (2009) analyzed the case of Gold Coast City, Australia. The authors, as part of their survey analysis, reported the brand perception of the Locals and the key factors affecting such perception. Kavaratzis (2009) designed a case study for Amsterdam and Budapest and explored urban planning and city branding in this context. Tek (2009) analyzed the “Brand City” project which was brought about with the Turkish Tourism Strategy (2023), and revealed the shortcomings and weaknesses of this project. Ceylan (2011) studied the brand image of Pamukkale, a touristic destination in Turkey, and reported the perceived brand image of tourists visiting this destination based on their gender and their accommodation choices. Cevher (2012) explored a theoretical framework for city branding and suggested its positive impact at a regional level. Can, Kazancı, Başaran (2014) aimed to measure the perceived city image of the Turkish city of Rize and its dwellers both in terms of their tangible and intangible characteristics. Güler and Gürer (2015) focused on the relationship between local participation trends and commitment to the ‘brand city’ concept in the Turkish city of Nevşehir. Moreover, the authors attempted to identify the factors influencing the commitment to the ‘brand city’ concept and the variables associated with the attractiveness of this city. Fırat and Kömürçüoğlu (2015) explored the city image of the Turkish province of Muğla as perceived by the students of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University.

Purpose of City Branding and the City Branding Process

In today's globalized world, survival of states in the global marketplace depends on the consumer preferences. In this context, city branding protects the states from going into a price-oriented competition (Özdemir, Karaca, 2009: 118). The reason behind such protection is the fact that branding has a significant effect on consumers' decision to visit a city, to purchase products originating from that city, to invest in a business in that city, and even to move to that city (Anholt, 2005:18).

Accordingly, the purpose of city branding is to attract more tourists and investors which will add value to the city with their economic activities and investments, respectively. The main purpose, on the other hand, is to ensure economic growth and therefore to offer a better and happier life for the people (URL-2, 2017).

There are a number of city brands built on these principles. While the Turkish city of Antalya assumed a city brand based on the Sun, the sea and golden sands, cities such as Kyrenia and Las Vegas are identified with casino tourism. Cities of Rome and Istanbul are associated with cultural tourism, while Paris reminds people of romanticism and the Eiffel Tower and these cities attract visitors with the image they created.

When compared to product branding, city branding is a much more complicated and difficult pursuit. The reason behind this is that city branding requires creation of an image for both tangible and intangible assets including natural resources, touristic potential, infrastructure and superstructure, local businesses and the locals (Avcılar, Kara, 2015: 77-78). In order to be able to know "where we stand" in this process, we need to analyze the outskirts of the city, city center and the stakeholders involved and to clearly define the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks available (Ülgen, Mirze, 2006:116).

Some suggested that the branding process needs to find an answer to the question, "*Which feature of the city, an important feature for the target audience, distinguish the city from others?*" In light of this question, we can define the branding process as the identification of the distinct characteristics of a city and the development of a marketing strategy accordingly (Saran, 2005).

In this context, we can say that it is a must to create an identity, an image, a logo, a symbol and a slogan for the city as part of the city branding process.

A city's identity involves establishing an outlook for the city as part of the branding process and making efforts accordingly (İslamoğlu, 2002:56); city image, on the other hand, involves communication of the characteristic features of the city to promote a certain perception in the audience, therefore making a difference in the face of its competition (Rainisto, 2003: 24). The logo and symbol are the visuals attached to the brand. These are the designs prepared using authentic shapes, objects, themes, characters, letters or words in order to ensure that the brand is memorable. Slogan is the catchphrase identified with the brand. It adds meaning to the brand name and symbol as part of the brand positioning and strategy development efforts. In order for a slogan to be effective, it needs to be relevant, interesting, allegorical and catchy (Tek, 2005).

Among the literature reports, Yuen (2005) explored the case of Singapore and suggested that the cultural heritage of a city plays a very important role in creating the identity of that city. Özdemir and Karaca (2009) focused on a city brand image with respect to the requirements and dimensions of city branding. İri, İnal and Türkmen (2011) underlined the importance of promotion and recognition in city brand creation process. Kaypak (2013) investigated the need for city branding in the globalized world and explored the social, economic and cultural impact of city branding. Paunović (2014) performed statistical tests in order to analyze the factors influencing brand loyalty in Serbia. Authors reported a number of suggestions for the creation of national and regional target marketing strategies.

Method

This study aimed to measure the Kastamonu University students' perception of city branding of Kastamonu. We decided to use the sampling method, as it was impossible to reach out to all the students of Kastamonu University, and non-random sampling was used. In non-random sampling, the participants are selected among a pool of correspondents from which the researchers believe they will find the answer to a research problem (Coşkun et al., 2017: 149).

The Faculty of Tourism was selected as the sampling group. The most important reason behind this selection was that the assets and abilities which constitute the perceived city brand of Kastamonu are closely associated with touristic activities in the city. Thus, we envisioned that it would be important to measure the city brand of Kastamonu as perceived by the students of the Faculty of Tourism.

In this context, data was obtained from a total number 589 Faculty of Tourism students during the academic year of 2017-18 using the survey method. A part of the data was collected during the exam sessions. And the rest of the data was collected using an online survey which was sent to the students via email. However, it was not possible to collect a round number of completed surveys as some of the students were not actively attending to the classes during the academic year and some of the students were not Turkish speakers and they reported their inability to fill out the questionnaire which was in Turkish.

Using the convenience sampling method, the questionnaires collected between the dates of 10.13.2017 and 05.22.2018. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section included a total number of 9 questions aimed at collecting demographics data of the participants and measuring their thoughts about the city. The second section included a total number of 40 statements prepared using the Merrilees, Miller and Herington (2009) and Cop and Akpınar (2014) studies on measuring the perceived city brand and the statements were organized in a 5-point Likert scale.

Among the completed questionnaires, 18 were excluded as they had data errors; a total number of 505 questionnaires were then analyzed using SPSS software suite. We believe that the total number of 505 questionnaires included in this study was sufficient to achieve the purpose of this study. Moreover, it is commonly accepted that the number of questionnaires included should at least be equal to ten times the number of statements in the questionnaire. In this context, the number of completed questionnaires included to this study, i.e. 505, was more than the suggested 10x the number of statements, i.e. 400, (Kerlinger, 1978; Hair et al., 1998; Kline, 2011) and the fact that the number representing the infinite universe, i.e. 384, was exceeded showed the reliability of this study (Kozak, 2014).

A reliability test was performed in order to measure the internal consistency of the scale. In this context, Cronbach's Alpha is the most commonly used and trusted measure. Table 1 shows the reliability of our scale.

Table 1. *Reliability Test*

Cronbach's Alpha	Item Counts
0.934	40

A closer look at the Table 1 shows that the reliability of the city brand scale was 0.934 as found using Cronbach's Alpha measure, and this was a rather high level of reliability.

Furthermore, we used factor analysis to confirm the construct validity of the scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests are used to see if the data obtained is suitable for Explorato-

ry Factor Analysis (Çokluk et al., 2012; Büyüköztürk, 2010; Karagöz, Kösterelioğlu, 2008). Higher KMO values signify that each variable of the scale can be estimated by the other variables of the scale at a high level of accuracy. In cases where the KMO values are equal to or in close proximity of zero, it is impossible to comment on the correlation as the distribution is disorderly. If the KMO test result is lower than 0.50, then it can be said that factor analysis cannot be performed on this dataset (Çokluk et al., 2012: 207; Field, 2000). Accordingly, we expected to obtain statistically significant results from Bartlett's test and a result higher than 0.50 from KMO test. Table 2 shows the results of Bartlett's test and KMO test for the sample size of this study.

Table 2. *KMO and Barlett's Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.930
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	11686.108
	df	780
	Sig.	.000

As shown in Table 2, KMO value was found to be 0.930, which suggests that the sample size was "perfect" for the factor analysis (Çokluk et al., 2012: 207). Nevertheless, a closer look at the results of Bartlett's test showed that the chi-square value found was statistically significant. Table 3 shows the results of factor analysis.

Table 3. *Factor Headings, Factors' Reliability Test Results, Item Counts, Cumulative Values of the Variance Explained*

Factors	Factors Headings	Cronbach's Alpha	Item Counts	Cumulative Variance
1	Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	0.937	13	18,870
2	Expectations from the Local Government	0.812	5	29.556
3	Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City	0.861	7	38.173
4	Support in City Branding	0,873	5	45.846
5	Locals	0,866	4	52.820
6	Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	0.826	3	58.297
7	City Planning	0,788	3	63,719

In accordance with the factor analysis as shown in Table 3, 1 statement out of 41 statements was excluded and a final number of 40 statements and 7 factors were used. In determining the number of factors, eigenvalue dimensioning method was used. When the variable number is 20-50, size determination according to eigenvalue gives reliable results (Coşkun et al., 2017: 280). It was further found that these factors accounted for 63.719% of the variance. The reason behind the exclusion of one of the statements was that it had low factor loading and that it was listed under more than one factors. According to the literature criteria, a statement is excluded if its factor loading is lower than 0.45 and if it is listed under more than one factors with a factor loading difference less than 0.10 (Balçı,1995:142-143; Büyüköztürk, 2002:118-119).

Frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation tests were performed in this study in order to form arguments about the demographics of the participants and their opinions about the city. Then, we conducted comparative analyses in order to find statistically significant differences between the demographics of the participants and their opinions about the city using the factors obtained from the factor analysis. Here, we used t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Findings

Demographics of the Participants/Students

Table 4 shows the demographic data about the participants of this study, i.e. Kastamonu University, Faculty of Tourism students, including their gender, age, region of origin, residence, income, and years of higher education.

Table 4. *Distribution of Demographics of the Participants/Students*

Gender	Frequency	%	Settlement	Frequency	%
Female	233	46.1	Province	258	51.1
Male	263	52.1	County	154	30.5
Missing data	9	1.8	Village	86	17
Total	505	100	Missing data	7	1.4
Age	Frequency	%	Total	505	100
18-20	189	37.4	Income	Frequency	%
21-23	240	47.5	1000 TL and under	128	25.3
24 and above	73	14.5	1001-1500 TL	111	22
Missing data	3	0.6	1501-2000 TL	77	15.2
Total	505	100	2001- 2500 TL	54	10.7
Geographical Region	Frequency	%	2501 TL and above	133	26.3
Marmara Region	86	17	Missing data	2	0.4
Black Sea region	171	33.9	Total	505	100
Central Anatolia Region	80	15.8	Grade	Frequency	%
Aegean Region	52	10.3	1st grade	102	20.2
Mediterranean Region	42	8.3	2nd grade	149	29,5
Eastern Anatolia Region	22	4.4	3rd grade	111	22
Southeastern Anatolia Region	21	4.2	4th grade	119	23.6
Missing data	31	6.1	Graduate	24	4.8
Total	505	100	Total	505	100

A closer look at Table 4 shows that 52.1% of the participants were male (n=263), and 47.5% of the participants were 21 to 23 years old (n=240). In terms of region of origin, 33.9% of the participants were from the Black Sea Region (n=171), and 51.1% lived in urban areas (n=258). A closer look at their income level showed that 26.3% of the participants reported an income level of

£2501 or more (n=133) and 25.3% of the participants reported an income level of £1000 or less (n=128). Finally, 29.5% of the participants were studying their second year in university (n=149).

Students' Opinions about the City

This section explores the information Kastamonu University, Faculty of Tourism students had about the city before their first visit to the city, their first impression about the city and their current opinion about the city. Table 5 represents the distribution of responses collected in this respect.

Table 5. *Distribution of Students' Opinions about the City*

About the city before their first visit to the city	Frequency	%	Their first impression about the city	Frequency	%	Their current opinion about the city	Frequency	%
Yes	229	45.3	Positive	241	47.7	Positive	320	63.4
No	276	54.7	Negative	264	52.3	Negative	185	36.6
Total	505	100	Total	505	100	Total	505	100

Table 5 shows that 54.7% of the participants (n=276) did not have any information about the city before their first visit; 52.3% of the participants (n=264) had a negative first impression of the city and 63.4% of the participants (n=320) had a positive opinion about the city at the time of the survey.

Factor Analysis

This section includes the factor analysis of the scale. Table 6 shows the factors developed with respect to the perceived city brand of the participants, i.e. Kastamonu University, Faculty of Tourism students.

Table 6. *Perception Scale of Cities for Branding*

Items	Factors						
	Fac. 1	Fac. 2	Fac. 3	Fac. 4	Fac. 5	Fac. 6	Fac. 7
Q9: I would recommend moving to this city to the people I know	.790						
Q5: It is a privilege to live in this city,	.784						
Q4: I would like to work in this city	.781						
Q1: I could live in this city after I get my degree	.732						
Q13 I would recommend visiting this city to the people I know	.721						
Q12: I would recommend working in this city to the people I know	.705						
Q3: I would like to spend my holiday here	.679						
Q6: This city offers a good lifestyle	.678						
Q2: I would like to visit this city after I get my degree	.676						
Q11: I would recommend having a holiday in this city to the people I know	.676						
Q10: I would recommend studying in this city to the people I know	.651						

Items	Factors						
	Fac. 1	Fac. 2	Fac. 3	Fac. 4	Fac. 5	Fac. 6	Fac. 7
Q8: I think this city has a city brand	.639						
Q7: This city has distinctive features when compared to others	.575						
Q24: There are sufficient shopping centers in this city		.783					
Q25: There are many high-end stores in this city		.774					
Q22: There are arts events in this city		.703					
Q20: There are sufficient entertainment venues in this city		.665					
Q23: There are sufficient sports venues in this city		.651					
Q14: There are sufficient shopping options in this city		.628					
Q21: There are sufficient dining options in this city		.579					
Q27: I make an effort for positive presentation of this city			.761				
Q29: I would like to contribute to the development of this city			.753				
Q28: I inform the people I know about this city			.737				
Q30: I would like to play my part in the development of this city			.710				
Q26: I support the branding of this city			.619				
Q18: Urban transportation options of the city should be improved				.795			
Q17: Urban cleanliness of the city should be improved				.790			
Q16: Cultural amenities of the city should be improved				.755			
Q15: Social amenities of the city should be improved				.684			
Q19: Promotion efforts of the city should be improved				.615			
Q32: Locals are amicable towards outsiders					.817		
Q31: Locals are kind people					.768		
Q34: It is easy to communicate with the locals					.701		
Q33: Locals care for the development of the city					.700		
Q40: Urban transportation works smoothly						.807	
Q39: Pavements of this city are well-kept						.724	
Q41: Streets of the city are well-organized						.719	
Q36: This city is known for its natural beauty							.774
Q35: This city has beautiful natural characteristics							.769
Q37: The city has a rich tangible cultural heritage with mosques, madrasas, social complexes, etc. from the Ottoman period							.660

Comparative Analyses of the City Brand Dimensions and Demographics and Opinions About the City as Reported by the Students

In this section, we performed t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to identify the distribution of demographics of the participants, i.e. Kastamonu University, Faculty of Tourism students, and their opinions about the city and city branding dimensions.

Table 7 shows the correlation between gender and city brand dimensions.

Table 7. T-test Results Between Factors and Gender

Factors Headings	Gender	n	Mean	p
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	Female	233	2.6916	0.247
	Male	263	2.7900	
Expectations from the Local Government	Female	233	4.1090	0.017
	Male	263	3.9194	
Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City	Female	233	2.2305	0.000
	Male	263	2.6315	
Support in City Branding	Female	233	3.6146	0.608
	Male	263	3.5686	
Locals	Female	233	2.8155	0.031
	Male	263	3.0190	
Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	Female	233	3.9900	0.001
	Male	263	3.6844	
City Planning	Female	233	3.0215	0.408
	Male	263	2.9449	

A closer look at the Table 7 showed a statistically significant difference between the participants' gender and the dimensions of "Expectations from the Local Government" and "Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City." It was found that female participants had a positive perception about these dimensions. Furthermore, another statistically significant difference was found between the participants' gender and the dimensions of "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City" and "Locals." Here, it was found that male participants had a positive perception about these dimensions.

Table 8 shows the correlation between student's knowledge about the city and city brand dimensions.

Table 8. T-test Results Between Factors and City Information and Thoughts

Factors	Questions about City		n	Mean	p
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	2.9325	0.000
		No	276	2.6056	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.1162	0.000
		Negative	264	2.4231	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	3.1647	0.000
		Negative	185	2.0432	
Expectations from the Local Government	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	4.0026	0.888
		No	276	4.0138	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.9386	0.880
		Negative	264	4.0727	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	3.9837	0.404
		Negative	185	4.0519	

Factors	Questions about City		n	Mean	p
Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	2.5459	0.510
		No	276	2.3834	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	2.6762	0.000
		Negative	264	2.2570	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	2.6543	0.000
		Negative	185	2.1158	
Support in City Branding	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	3.5930	0.970
		No	276	3.5897	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.6830	0.046
		Negative	264	3.5074	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	3.7969	0.000
		Negative	185	3.2354	
Locals	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	3.0033	0.201
		No	276	2.8832	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.2853	0.000
		Negative	264	2.6203	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	3.2383	0.000
		Negative	185	2.4176	
Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	3.8646	0.404
		No	276	3.7899	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.9502	0.007
		Negative	264	3.7083	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	4.0177	0.000
		Negative	185	3.4883	
City Planning	About the city before their first visit to the city	Yes	229	3.0902	0.51
		No	276	2.9100	
	Their first impression about the city	Positive	241	3.2407	0.000
		Negative	264	2.7645	
	Their current opinion about the city	Positive	320	3.2062	0.000
		Negative	185	2.6207	

A closer look at the Table 8 showed a statistically significant difference between students' "knowledge about the city before visiting the city" and the dimension of "Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City." In this context, the participants whose response to this question was "Yes" are found to have a positive perception about this dimension. Statistically significant differences were found between "first impression about the city" and "current opinion about the city," and the dimensions of "Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City," "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City," "Support in City Branding," "Locals," "Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City," and "City Planning." In this context, it was found that the students who provided positive responses had a more positive perception about these dimensions.

Table 9 shows the correlation between student's demographics and city brand dimensions.

Table 9. One-way Analysis (ANOVA) of Variance Between Factors and Demographic Characteristics

Factors	Demographic questions	ANOVA	
		F	Sig.
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	Age	13.482	0.000
	Grade	5.425	0.000
	Income	1.855	0.117
	Settlement	1.100	0.334
	Geographical Region	3.079	0.006
Expectations from the Local Government	Age	19.833	0.000
	Grade	8.869	0.000
	Income	2.448	0.046
	Settlement	0.308	0.735
	Geographical Region	0.645	0.694
Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City	Age	2.980	0.052
	Grade	3.953	0.004
	Income	3.678	0.006
	Settlement	0.877	0.417
	Geographical Region	2.261	0.037
Support in City Branding	Age	28.370	0.000
	Grade	10.874	0.000
	Income	0.478	0.752
	Settlement	1.054	0.349
	Geographical Region	1.507	0.174
Locals	Age	0.056	0.946
	Grade	2.347	0.054
	Income	1.499	0.201
	Settlement	0.302	0.740
	Geographical Region	0.969	0.445
Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	Age	24.750	0.000
	Grade	8.882	0.000
	Income	1.098	0.357
	Settlement	2.580	0.077
	Geographical Region	0.877	0.512
City Planning	Age	0.308	0.735
	Grade	1.797	0.128
	Income	1.497	0.202
	Settlement	0.042	0.959
	Geographical Region	2.093	0.053

A closer look at the Table 9 showed statistically significant differences between demographics of the students and some of the city brand dimensions. Here, we performed Games-Howell test for the variables with variances less than 0.05, and Tukey test for those higher than 0.05.

Table 10 shows the ANOVA distribution of student's demographics and city brand dimensions.

Table 10. One-Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA) Between Factors and Demographic Characteristics (Tukey-Games Howel)

Age		n	Mean	Homogeneity of Variances Sig.
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	18-20	189	2.685	e0.029
	21-23	240	2.651	
	24 and above	73	3.274	
Expectations from the Local Government	18-20	189	4.041	0.000
	21-23	240	3.815	
	24 and above	73	4.528	
Support in City Branding	18-20	189	3.564	0.401
	21-23	240	3.383	
	24 and above	73	4.326	
Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	18-20	189	3.850	0.000
	21-23	240	3.598	
	24 and above	73	4.497	
Grade		n	Mean	Homogeneity of Variances Sig.
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	1st grade	102	2.625	0.215
	2nd grade	149	2.748	
	3rd grade	111	2.600	
	4th grade	119	2.864	
	Graduate	24	3.493	
Expectations from the Local Government	1st grade	102	4.254	0.000
	2nd grade	149	3.750	
	3rd grade	111	3.962	
	4th grade	119	4.037	
	Graduate	24	4.008	
Support in City Branding	1st grade	102	3.578	0.003
	2nd grade	149	3.481	
	3rd grade	111	3.386	
	4th grade	119	3.697	
	Graduate	24	3.741	
Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City	1st grade	102	3.875	0.000
	2nd grade	149	3.671	
	3rd grade	111	3.672	
	4th grade	119	3.899	
	Graduate	24	4.875	

Income		n	Mean	Homogeneity of Variances Sig.
Expectations from the Local Government	1000 TL and under	128	3.835	0.105
	1001-1500 TL	111	4.081	
	1501-2000 TL	77	4.210	
	2001-2500TL	54	3.985	
	2501 TL and above	133	4.016	
Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City	1000 TL and under	128	2.600	0.576
	1001-1500 TL	111	2.535	
	1501-2000 TL	77	2.185	
	2001-2500TL	54	2.629	
	2501 TL and above	133	2.335	
Geographical Region		n	Mean	Homogeneity of Variances Sig.
Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City	Marmara Region	86	2.679	0.443
	Black Sea region	171	2.972	
	Central Anatolia Region	80	2.542	
	Aegean Region	52	2.674	
	Mediterranean Region	42	2.489	
	Eastern Anatolia Region	22	2.521	
	Southeastern Anatolia Region	21	2.692	

Table 10 showed statistically significant differences between the students' ages and the dimensions of "Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City," "Expectations from the Local Government," "Support in City Branding," and "Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City." In this context, we observed that the most positive perception associated with these dimensions was reported by students of ages 24 and above.

Statistically significant differences were found between the students' years of higher education and the dimensions of "Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City," "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City" "Expectations from the Local Government," "Support in City Branding," and "Natural Characteristic and Culture of the City." In this context, we observed that the most positive perception associated with years of higher education was reported by the 4th-year university students for the "Expectations from the Local Government" dimension and that graduate students reported more positive perceptions about the other dimensions.

Moreover, another statistically significant difference was found between the income level of the participants and the dimensions of "Expectations from the Local Government" and "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City." In this context, the most positive perception about the "Expectations from the Local Government" was reported by the income level of £2501 and above; while the most positive perception about the "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City" dimension was reported by the income level between £2001-£2500.

Finally, a statistically significant difference was found between students' region of origin and the dimension of "Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City." Accordingly, it was found that the students coming from the Black Sea Region had the most positive perception about this dimension.

Conclusion

Today's conditions make it important for any city to become a brand if it is to claim its share in the global marketplace. City branding is only possible if the characteristics of a city are valuable, and if such value is appreciated by the people. Moreover, university students play an important role in the creation of brand perception.

Making up a certain percent of the city population, university students contribute to the perceived city brand. Thanks to their familiarity with the city they study in, university students can offer unbiased opinions on the question if a city has a city brand or not. Nevertheless, the fact that the local population had all the time to build an emotional bond with the city they live in suggests that they are more likely to be biased about their reports about the perceived city brand when compared to the students. On the other hand, students contribute greatly to the perceived city brand as they can compare the city with their hometown, and it is safe to say that word to mouth advertising is a very effective marketing method which naturally occurs during and after the students' education.

This study aimed to explore the city brand of Kastamonu as perceived by the students of Kastamonu University and their perceptions were categorized under 7 factors identified for the city brand scale consisting of 40 statements. Among these factors are, as follows:

Factor 1: plans, recommendations and awareness about the city consists of a total number of 12 statements and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.937; factor 2: expectations from the local government consists of a total number of 5 statements and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.812; factor 3: event organizations and shopping options in the city consists of a total number of 7 statements including the following, and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.861; factor 4: support in city branding consists of a total number of 5 statements and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.873; factor 5: locals consists of a total number of 4 statements and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.866; factor 6: natural characteristic and culture of the city consists of a total number of 3 statements and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.826 and factor 7: city planning consists of a total number of 3 statements including the following, and its Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.788.

As a result of our analysis, we found statistically significant differences between parameters such as age and gender of the students, years of academic study, income, place of origin, previous knowledge about the city, first impression about the city and current opinion about the city with respect to these city branding dimensions.

According to the findings of this study, approximately half of the participants were knowledgeable about the city before their first visit. This finding suggests that the students who are currently studying or who had studied in this city share information about this city with others. Furthermore, it was found that more than half of the participants had a negative first impression about the city, but the majority (63.4%) reported that they had a positive opinion about the city at the moment. This finding suggests that the students grew fond of the city as the time past, recognizing the valuable assets of Kastamonu. In this context, it would be fair to say that the city of Kastamonu moves on to build its own brand.

Comparative analysis based on students' gender showed that female participants perceived the nature and culture of the city more positively when compared to the male participants. Accordingly, it was concluded that female participants were more willing to support the city branding efforts, and that they expected the local government to show the same type of willingness in this respect. Among the dimensions which were perceived more positively by the male participants are, as follows: "Event Organizations and Shopping Options in the City" and

“Locals.” This finding suggests that male participants’ expectation form a city brand is rather focused on shopping and entertainment and communication with the locals.

Research results showed that students had a positive perception of “Plans, Recommendations and Awareness about the City” if they were knowledgeable about the city before their first visit. In this context, it would be safe to conclude that students are likely to work and live in Kastamonu after graduation and they are likely to recommend this city to others, as they perceive it as a city brand. In parallel with this finding, we believe that the authorities should do their best to improve the city brand of Kastamonu as perceived by current students in order to ensure that newly enrolled students will have a positive perception about its city brand.

Statistically significant differences were found between positive reports on the statements of “first impression about the city” and “current opinion about the city” and all the dimensions but “Expectations from the Local Government.” The fact that students had very positive perceptions about the city suggests that their expectations from the local government with regards to social and cultural facilities, transportation and promotion were not vital, and that they believe Kastamonu has a good standing in city branding as it is today.

We observed that 4th year students, graduates and students of ages 24 and above had a relatively positive perception about the nature and culture of the city, therefore these students had higher expectations from the local government with respect to branding. On the other hand, the fact that students positively perceived the “Plans, Recommendations and Awareness About the City” dimension indicates that they already recognize Kastamonu as a city brand and it is likely that they could live and work in this city and recommended to the others. Moreover, we concluded that 4th year students and graduates believe that shopping and entertainment centers of the city play an important role in the perceived city brand of Kastamonu.

The results showed that students with an income level of £2501 and above have higher expectations from the local government with respect to improved social and cultural facilities, cleanliness, public transportation and promotion efforts when compared to other income brackets. It was further found that students with an income level between £2001-£2501 deemed with a relatively higher percentage that the shopping and entertainment facilities in the city were sufficient.

The results showed that the students coming from the Black Sea Region were more likely to consider Kastamonu as a city brand, to recommend this city to others, and to be willing to live in this city after they get their degree when compared to the students from other regions. The most likely explanation of this finding is the regional and ethnic similarities of the Black Sea Region and Kastamonu.

In conclusion, it would be safe to say that city branding is an important effort if it is for a city to claim its share in the global tourism market. In this respect, the contribution of university students to the branding of a city shouldn’t be overlooked. According to the findings of our study, the Turkish city of Kastamonu moves on to become a city brand with the brand values it has to offer. In order to be successful in this process and to expedite it, improving the city brand as perceived by the students, asking for their advice, and appreciating their opinions will be of utmost importance.

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