Chapter 8
Sustainable City Branding:
Cittaslow – The Case of Turkey

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ABSTRACT

As marketing strategies are utilized for city management, entrepreneurial modes of urban governance started to be applied. In this chapter, an emerging city branding trend, Slow City branding will be analyzed in the light of sustainability. As the cities start to resemble each other, the identity of the cities which is defined by the local authenticity diminishes. The philosophy of slowness inspired other social and economic movements like slow food, slow tourism and slow city. Slow movement first in the form of Slow Food then Slow City/Cittaslow enables sustainable urban development. "Cittaslow" empowers cities to differentiate from other cities and form their identity by supporting local crafts, tastes, producers and promoting healthy and sustainable life. In this study, a comprehensive literature review about slow city movement is covered. Moreover, Seferihisar, the first slow city in Turkey is analyzed in terms of Cittaslow principles. At the last part of the study, a model is proposed summarizing the principles of slow city branding.

1. INTRODUCTION

The awareness of the importance of marketing strategies and branding has been increasing among urban governance administration. It has become obvious that investing in marketing strategies and branding cities create economic, social and political value. In other words, cities need to be customer focused, strategic, open minded and imaginative to generate positive feelings, respect and loyalty which enhances well-being and reputation through tourism and economic development.

In literature place, destination or city marketing or branding terms are used interchangeably. In general place marketing can be defined as the practice of applying branding and marketing strategies to the economic, social, political and cultural developments of places. As a result of fierce competition,

globalization and nationalization; places also started to struggle and compete with each other to attract tourists, visitors, investors and residents after 1990s. Although the first attempts in place marketing were at nation's level, today cities of all sizes in the world feel the need to embrace branding techniques. Thus, place marketing in general, city branding in particular can be interpreted as a continuation of the broadening the concept of marketing.

City branding comprises a strategic approach which includes a holistic, integrative, interactive ongoing and wide scale process in order to alter or improve a favorable and distinctive image. Hence it is challenge to utilize branding techniques originally used for commercial products and services. First of all, it is difficult to manage the gap between externally held perceptions and the reality. The second challenge is about the difficulty in controlling identity and reputation which has been unmanaged for a long time.

One of the cornerstones of brand management is to find a core differentiation asset or unique selling proposition (USP) and sustain a dominant image in the stakeholders' minds. For the past two decades, there have been different USP's employed for city branding strategies in the world. There are lots of cities trying to utilize creative and effective marketing and branding techniques to deliver distinctive and superior value for the actual and potential residents, visitors, students, investors and the public.

Among all different approaches of city branding, 'CittaSlow,' the slow movement is an emerging and popular alternative. In general, slow movement which is closely related to the emergence of sustainability enables to preserve the peculiarities of each individual and prevent them from melting in the majority. Around the world there are many different occurrences related to slow philosophy like slow food, slow cities, slow tourists and even slow parenting.

In recent years, the slow city movement which incorporates a philosophy and commitment to preserve the cultural, natural, historical heritage and aims to improve the quality of life of residents has been one of the most popular topics in place marketing.

The Cittaslow network is a cities association aiming to protect the local attributes of the cities and prevent standardization of composition, life style of cities. Consequently, the environment, local craft, local culture and lifestyles are preserved, which leads to sustainable urban development of the cities in the network.

The slow movement is based on the idea that people view life quality not based on material possessions but on enjoying their interactions with people, places and things. Slowness is not viewed as negative but as a "credible metaphor for stepping off the treadmill, seeking work-life balance or refusing the dominant logic of speed" (Fullagar, Wilson, & Markwell, 2012). Slow movement is described as a "socially and ecologically transformative process" (Carp, 2012) Cittaslow movement support "sustainable farming; artisanal production; fresh, local, seasonal produce; recipes handed through generations and leisurely dining with family and friends" (Mayer & Knox, 2010).

There are 60 common goals and policies of Cittaslow. The towns must complete at least 50% of these policies, of which 25 are obligatory, before getting acceptance to the network of Cittaslow. The policies are grouped under six themes; environment, infrastructure, technologies and facilities for urban quality, safeguarding autochthonous production, hospitality and raising awareness. The principles lead cities to find their own soul and identity. The main goals of CittaSlow are; increasing the life quality by using the latest technology; enabling sustainable development while considering the local values, supporting local economy, protecting the nature and historical places. As the cities try to realize the Cittaslow principles, cities develop in a sustainable way.

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