

Why And How Should Turkey Build The Nation Brand?

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ABSTRACT

To be esteemed and reliable, countries must build their own “nation values” in the 21st century. Therefore, countries gain many advantageous in the political, social and cultural fields as well as being an attraction center. This paper analyses underlines the necessary steps for building nation brand and makes offers for the future.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of nation brand becoming prominent in the 21st century has made contributions to the competition between countries in the fields of economy, politic, society and culture. Countries building brand value will lose power in competition if they fail to build their own brand and exhibit difference while becoming an “attraction center”. As Anholt underlines, world is a market area and each country must compete to share trade, policy and socio-cultural events of the world. Have a brand in such a market is crucially important for countries (2008: 31). Countries fail to build a brand could not draw the foreign invest and tourists, increase the exports and living standards (Gilboa, 2008: 67). It is observed that the image and reputation of country manage the strategic communication process properly and take the support of foreign public opinion, have developed positively in the international environment (İnan, 2012:66). This positive message enhances the nation values of countries.

Big brands and business always search new regions to produce goods more cheaply. On the other hand, underdeveloped and developing countries lean towards the foreign invest as new working opportunities will emerge and so employment will increase through the foreign investors. For big brands and producers the tax practices, transportation facilities and regulations of countries in which they make investment have great importance. Moreover, political and economic stability and smooth and free competition area are crucial for the foreign investors. These are among the obstacles that stop the foreign capital flow; unfair competition environment caused by changing practices according to people or terms, red-tapes, unrecorded economy, unequal and inconsistent practices. However, while the foreign investors are choosing the country for making investment, they have been influenced by the image and perception of countries in the world scene either positively or negatively. On the other hand, tourism- as a 4th great sector of the world- is an effective field to promote countries. It should be clearly said that only sea, sand and sun are not enough to draw satisfied number of tourists. Thus, countries should create a new branding strategy with different elements by using their present potential (Yıldırım, 2014: 157).

THE CONCEPT OF NATION BRANDING

In today’s world, countries fiercely compete with each other for the direct foreign investment, brand export and tourism. Countries are recalled by their brands and if these brands are demanded and used by big masses so the image of these countries gains advantageous (Olins, 2007: 172). With the studies of nation brand, image of countries is reshaped, through this image a new identity perception is gained and reflected on overseas. This process requires a long term, determined and patient study (Melissen, 2007: 21).

Countries, built the nation value and gained an esteemed, reputable and reliable identity have a key to open doors in many fields ranging from economy to policy. Anholt explains the importance and gains of nation brand that (Anholt, 2014: 296): settlements take the brands not from the marketer of government but the public opinion. In busy and crowded world, many of us have no time to learn how other places look like. Within the modern world complexity, even we could not confess to ourselves, we survive unconsciously by adopting some simple clichés. Thus, Paris means trend, Japan means technology, Sweden means richness and sensibility, Rio de Janeiro means carnival and football, Tuscany means good life and African countries mean poverty, corruption, war, famine and illness. Many of us are so deeply anxious about own country that we could not make much effort to have accurate, impartial and information based opinions about the rest 6 billion people and almost other 200 countries.

Either positive or negative, real or unreal, these clichés and stereotyped opinions influence our attitude towards other settlements, people or goods. National image is important. This importance will increase as long as the world becomes more connected, the globalization of society, communication, trade, education and policies continues. Governments or citizens of countries, regions or cities which are lucky or talented to have a good reputation could more easily take place in the global scene: their nation brand is like a business card which goes before them , opens the door, creates trust and respect while increasing the expectation about quality, competence and integrity.”

Many of countries communicate with foreign societies and create their image in other's mind. The image and perception in the mind are mostly supported by these 6 fields of activity (Anholt, 2014: 298):

-Tourism; Like tourism promotion, it is important that people as tourist or for business trips come and see the country. The positive impression of people coming and having chance to see the country is dramatically important. Tourism agencies have strategic importance for the promotion of countries and creating positive impression.

-Export of good and service; Goods and services exported to other countries could have role like embassies. Used and demanded goods and services make great contributions to the nation brand value.

-Government policy; commonsensical, pro-peace, ethical and legal policies implemented by governments in both national and international area are followed and watched by public opinions. This also makes great contributions that the media is interested in these policies; puts on the agenda.

-Foreign investment; this is dramatically important development that a country convinces the foreign capital to make investment and draws foreign talents to the country. If foreign capital and employees choose a country this shows economic, political and social indicators are in a good level. This positive perception leads that nation value of country is understood positively.

-Culture; Cultural fields are important for the promotion of country and creation of sympathy and intimacy. Societies exporting their cultural values to other countries could build strong bonds. This bond creates common sense and increase the brand value.

-People; the human sources of a country, world-famous, artist, sportsman, scientist, culturist make important contributions to the positive perception of country and creates respect and reputation. These values reflect on brand value positively.

As it is seen, there are many instruments to use for nation branding. Naturally there have been differences between possibilities and potential of each country. Countries firstly should become aware of their present potential, emphasize on the strong points and enhance the weak ones. To sum up, they should understand to gain respect, reputation and reliability; strong and effective nation branding is a must.

TURKEY AND NATION BRAND

Turkey has an important potential to create brand value with the present historical, cultural values and human sources. However, this potential could not be utilized enough to build nation brand and there is no strategic plan or study for the future. This is a big problem that foreign public opinions misunderstand Turkey. Through various channels, wrong or incomplete information about Turkey has come out and consequently this wrong information has changed into "misperceptions". For countries, eliminating these misperceptions requires a long time. The present picture of Turkey shows us the fact that the image of Turkey is not managed with strategic and integrative perspective. The misperceptions and wrong information are could only be influenced positively through long term planning and opportunities emerged from strategic communication management. Especially in the EU membership process, eliminating the misperceptions and wrong information is primarily important (Özkan, 2015).

WHY SHOULD TURKEY BUILD THE NATION BRAND?

Unfortunately, Turkey is one of the countries which understand the importance of nation brand very late. In the new century countries has so much power with their brands. Thus, Turkey requires serious branding efforts and management in goods and services. "The Brand Council" is established to spread this need in society is an important step. To take part in the competition, this council aims to increase the brand accumulation of Turkey and enhancing the marketing eco-system and increase the contribution of branding to economy. These are among the goals of brand council which desires to have "Valuable Global Brands" in Turkey to lead business world and public institutions, creating a vision and encouraging.

Brand Council Chairman Güven Borça told that Turkey is ranked at 19th in the world and 9th in Europe with 251 billion dollar brand value according to the data of Brand Finance 2014. He also said about why Turkey needs to focus on branding much more: "Turkey is a country with 77.6 dynamic populations, 820 billion dollar national income and over 400 billion dollar foreign trade volume. However, the total value of the most valuable 100 brands is 30.8 billion dollar. The number is not as valuable as single Japanese auto brand. According to the Brand Finance list, there is no Turkish brand in first 500. The total export is not even equal to intermediate goods import and moreover the export dependent on import has been increasing. To eliminate the deficit, we should export the branded product. Without branding, we experience two losses. First, increasing export-import deficit and increasing import item. Second, selling our brands for little money we could not increase our brands' value ... (Sabah, 2015).

As Borça underlines, countries fail to build brand value have experienced a great economic loss. Besides this loss, this brings about political, social and cultural loss when the nation brand is considered. To prevent this, Turkey should build a strong, reputable and respectable nation brand.

Wally Olins, the Founding Chairman of Saffron Brand Consultants working on nation and city image/brand says

in his interview in ‘The Brand Age’ magazine “Turkey makes efforts to increase brand value but there is no meaningful frame for these efforts”. He also explains his strange determinations that: “You witness the political and economical development of Turkey. However there is no integrity or national branding policy. Tourism and policy are very different topics. Turkey seriously requires a coherent attitude and national branding policy. This should be underline that Turkey is a Muslim country that has shown tolerance towards religions and ethnic origins from past to present. We are talking about such a country that has connection both with Europe and the Middle East. There will emerge more clear and understandable perception if Turkey could explain itself successfully through tourism and economy policies. Turkey has an opportunity to change rapidly and manipulate the perceptions. The reality of Turkey is now changing but perceptions could not keep up this change. Turkey needs to build a clear brand policy” (The Brand Age, 2015).

Olins also interprets how Turkey’s image in overseas reflects on the brand value that: “from the view of tourism, Turkey has an important position as tourism country as it is very nice place for holiday. Thus, “as a tourism brand” Turkey is a reputable brand. Unfortunately, the brand perception about Turkish goods is not as effective as tourism. When considered the advanced technology and goods with high added value, people are not aware that Turkey is a brand or producer. For this reason, I could say that the reputation in overseas changes according to the field of activity. The level of brand perception in one field might be high while it might be low in the other field (The Brand Age, 2015). The points emphasized by Olins explain us why Turkey should immediately begin to work for building nation brand. Turkey should firstly create “a national branding policy” and so a basic road-map with strategic vision.

HOW SHOULD TURKEY BUILD THE NATION BRAND?

To build the nation brand and enhance the image, Turkey should primarily initiate an exclusive study to determine the mistakes, needs and perception in the world public opinion. In other words, Turkey should assess the extent of the damage. Turkey should do this honestly and sincerely and all mistakes and needs should be revealed. Not only the needs and mistakes but also the successful studies and right efforts should be determined. “Assessing the extent of the damage” is important to “diagnose”. After finding the problem with multi-dimensional and exclusive study, a vision including all class of the society should be created. Before, this should be understood that building the nation brand is not only the responsibility of “the government or government agencies”. The artist, academicians, sportsman and NGOs make great contributions to build an effective and strong nation brand. Turkey should create a frame to be understood correctly by using the present human source potential (Özkan, 2015).

With opportunities of the strategic communication management, Turkey should determine properly the target audience and message as well as the instruments for reaching to the target audiences successfully. Turkey should focus on the distinctive conditions of each society or country. This means Turkey should have a sophisticated approach rather than wholesale one. Turkey needs a “strategic communication plan” as a road-map in the globalizing world. This plan, having a guiding role, should be drawn up considering the potential, facilities and priorities of Turkey and it should also enable the society to protect the goals and strategic plan. To have a success from the practice of goals, the social support is essential (Özkan, 2015).

The founding Chairman of Saffron Brand Consultants Wally Olins explains what Turkey primarily needs while building the nation brand: “You have to be aware of your target audience for place building. You have to know distinctive characteristics differing you from others and making you attractive. If a topic is mentioned before, you have to prevent the misunderstandings about it in another time or place. Unfortunately, in Turkey sample, there is no understandable or clear ‘brand communication’. The communications used in the field of tourism or culture and the commodity export are different. Turkey, basically, needs this. Turkey needs a view and determination. Turkey could draw the attention of the whole world if views making it attractive are explained (The Brand Age, 2015). “Big and attractive idea”, underlined by Olins, and skill of conveying this idea clearly and apprehensibly give clues about how Turkey should build the nation brand.

Turkey needs to build the nation brand on his own basic story. “Big and attractive idea” will be included in this story. This story should be based on history, civilization values, culture, literature, poem, belief, tolerance and international values, enriching the humanity. All these values should create the big and attractive idea. This story should include the whole Turkey and different views, ethnics, belief and cultures that could freely express themselves. This story should have peace, brotherhood, freedom, love, tolerance, fair, equality and mercy and sincerity as well as being inclusive. Turkey should also manage to tell this story to other societies/countries properly, effectively, decisively and convincingly. Thus, the effective strategic communication methods, techniques and opportunities of advanced technology should be utilized and Turkey should be understandable and convincing as far as possible. If a good story could be told audiences with a proper communication strategy and effective instruments Turkey will have certainly successful results. Turkey should follow such a way while

building the nation brand. Working so much and being patient and decisive should always be in minds.

CONCLUSION

Turkey, aiming to be a reputable and reliable in the region and to establish permanent relations with foreign societies by using soft power effectively and willing to focus on the fields of economic, policy, society and culture should primarily build the nation brand in the new century. It should be understood that a valuable and strong nation brand is like a magic key that could open all the doors easily and a strategic vision to mobilize the present potential of Turkey should be created. Turkey should build “the nation brand” with the conscious of mass mobilization and create awareness in every segment of society. In addition, a policy including the whole country should be followed. Every segment of society should also contribute to the national brand and communication strategy of Turkey as well as adopting the road-map. This road-map, not changing according to the government and being created by a supra political perception, will be milestone for building a strong, reputable, reliable and prestigious Turkey.

Turkey should adopt a holistic approach and build a structure which enable to control strategic communication management centrally, as the base of nation building. This structure might be “ministry of communication”. Focusing on communication management in the ministry level will make the strategic efforts more planned, systematical, effective and permanent. Today, many institutions and agencies are responsible for the communication activities of Turkey. However, sometimes these institutions fail to communicate and they could face to different views. To prevent this trouble, ambiguity and different discourses, ministry of communication as a high authority could be established and so the whole communication activities could be followed with other partners (NGOs, universities, political parties, media, experts, opinion leaders and etc.) in the frame of determined strategic plan. Turkey should always prioritize the policies based on fair, peace, brotherhood and equality, protect the belief on the international values and the rule of law, underline the goodness, welfare and happiness of humanity and defend the human rights and freedom.

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