


From Local Gems to Global Breakthrough: Crafting Destination Brand by Building Sustainable Brand Identity

Mehmet Cihan Yavuz¹,  [0000-0002-0229-4167](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0229-4167)
Cukurova University, Turkey

Canan Madran
Cukurova University, Turkey

Abstract

Destination branding is an essential marketing tool that enables countries, cities, or regions to differentiate themselves based on their unique values from competitors and supports their sustainable development. A destination brand has the potential to gain larger market shares in the ever-growing and competitive tourism sector. Consequently, destination branding has emerged as a popular topic in academia and practice in recent years. A prerequisite for successful destination branding is the development of a distinct destination brand identity. Brand identity plays a critical role as it serves as a foundational element of the brand and shapes its overall image. However, the process of developing destination brand identity is complex, involving multiple dimensions, interdisciplinary approaches, and the active engagement of numerous stakeholders. It necessitates a systematic, coordinated, and long-term effort. The challenges inherent in this process underscore the importance of methodological approaches that clarify how destination brand identity should be crafted. This study uses a dual (Delphi and Factor analyses) methodological approach for creating destination brand identities that effectively articulate a destination's unique value and facilitate meaningful communication with target audiences. The study aims to contribute original insights by presenting a model design for destination brand identity creation, addressing the multifaceted and intricate nature of destination branding. It also aims to pave the way for future research endeavours in this dynamic field. After the study, four prominent brand identities/themes/areas were identified for branding the Adana destination: "Planned City", "Health City", "Modern Agricultural City", and "Sociocultural Centre-Entertainment City".

Keywords: Destination branding, destination brand identity, sustainable development, Delphi method, factor analysis, interdisciplinary approach.

JEL codes: M31, O10, Z32

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1. Introduction

Destinations (countries, regions, cities, places, etc.) have long felt the need to differentiate themselves in the market for various marketing purposes. The conscious efforts by national, regional, or urban administrations to uniquely design the identity of places, thus differentiating themselves from competitors, have been as old as city-states when viewed globally (Confetto et al., 2023; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). Travel and tourism, being primary functions among the competitive roles of places, have existed since the dawn of humanity due to natural needs and desires for learning. Especially in the past century, the demand for tourism travel has

¹ Correspondance to Mehmet Cihan Yavuz, Email: mcyavuz@@cu.edu.tr

increased thanks to rising prosperity and leisure time. Consequently, many countries and cities around the world have started to engage in tourism marketing activities. Successful destinations like Barcelona, Amsterdam, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Singapore, Sydney, and Toronto have branded themselves by conducting systematic strategic marketing efforts with professional management. They have differentiated themselves by utilizing their unique tangible components and intangible qualities. From this perspective, it is evident that the unique components and qualities of a destination constitute the starting point for branding and differentiation. The tangible components and intangible qualities that enable the emergence of unique value, distinguishing the destination/product from its competitors, form the content of the "destination brand identity." In other words, destination brand identity is a unique combination of brand components that destination management aims to preserve or create. These components express the brand's purpose and the unique value it offers (Rainisto, 2003, 73). Therefore, the first step in creating a successful brand begins with developing a strong brand identity (Aaker, 1996, 35).

Given its importance as a determinant of brand image, the process of developing destination brand identity is recognized as a multidimensional, complex, interdisciplinary task involving multiple stakeholders (Saraniemi & Komppula, 2017). It requires systematic, coordinated, long-term efforts. The significance of developing destination brand identity underscores the need for the development of efficient and reliable methods.

The purpose of the research is to propose a method and present a model example for creating destination brand identities that differentiate themselves from others with unique tangible components and intangible qualities. The study encompasses concepts such as product, brand, branding, destination, and destination branding. It focuses on places and cities as fundamental products in tourism. Specifically, it centres on the concept of "destination" for places and cities, emphasizing the independent branding of destinations irrespective of the country.

The research utilizes the Delphi method to explore tangible components and intangible qualities for establishing destination brand identity and discovering unique value. Delphi, a consensus-building method, involves experts—designated as city managers in this case—to provide research data. The process of creating destination brand identity is demonstrated through the example of Adana City, and a prototype model design is proposed for future studies. This approach aims to contribute to the understanding and implementation of effective destination branding strategies that leverage both tangible and intangible elements to create distinctive brand identities.

As in many qualitative research studies, the research objectives in this study are expressed through research questions (RQs). Given the study's exploratory nature, it was considered that using RQs would yield richer results. The following RQs were suggested to identify the brand identity components of the sample destination (Adana, a city in Turkey):

- RQ 1: With what qualities does Adana stand out today?
- RQ 2: If Adana were a person, what kind of personality would she have?
- RQ 3: What should Adana be in the future?
- RQ 4: What can be said about the general personality characteristics of Adana people?
- RQ 5: What symbols and colors should be included in the "Adana Logo"?

The first RQ aims to reveal the past and present realities and current situation of the destination. The second question relates to the concept of brand personality. According to Aaker (1997), brands can develop personalities, just like individuals. Aaker (1996, 141) defines brand personality as "a set of human-like traits associated with a brand." The third question explores

the possible vision and future state of the destination. The fourth question examines general personality traits of the human factor living in the destination, including characteristics such as attitudes towards foreigners, behaviour, expectations, educational and cultural levels, and moral understandings. The fifth question aims to examine and appropriately develop the ingredients of "Logo," which serves as the visual identity representative of the brand. This is crucial because there is a significant relationship between logo design and the perception of positivity and quality conveyed by the brand (Henderson et al., 2003).

Kotler (2000) defines marketing, which is the most important reality of our economies today, largely as an "art of building a brand." Considering the tourism market, a destination brand attracts plenty of tourists to a country and generates a positive image and foreign currency. It is evident that branding based on destinations has garnered more attention over the past two decades; however, it has not fully capitalized on the benefits it can bring. One of the main reasons for this is the unclear and ineffective methodological approaches in handling destination branding. Dependence on short-term and palliative approaches and failure to create a destination brand identity that can clearly demonstrate its unique value and effectively communicate with target audiences have had a significant role. Yet, for a destination to have a strong brand identity that sets it apart from competitors and is noticed by tourists in the international market, it provides significant benefits to countries with high reliance on tourism for their economy and employment. These benefits include gaining a clear market position for the destination, increasing awareness of the destination, shifting competition beyond price, effective utilization of resources to generate higher added value, increased profitability, positive change in country image, contribution to international promotion, increased foreign currency inflow, increased employment, skill enhancement of the workforce, reduction of seasonality in tourism, improvement in domestic income distribution, improvement in infrastructure and quality of life in the destination, strengthening of the private sector, and increased foreign capital inflow, among others. Therefore, considering the benefits listed above, it is evaluated that the process of establishing destination brand identity appropriately is crucial for destination and country sustainable development (Escobar-Farfán et al., 2024; Zouganeli et al., 2012).

The current study is also important in exemplifying the process of developing an effective, consistent, and globally-oriented destination brand identity. Additionally, the study is important in that it exemplifies the use of the Delphi method in discovering unique brand identity components. There is a broad literature on the use of the Delphi method for "identifying important or priority components related to a specific topic" (Cohen et al., 2004, 1011; Linstone & Turoff, 2002, 3; Schopper et al., 2000, 336). Developed from a doctoral thesis (Yavuz, 2007), the current study is among the pioneering studies that use the Delphi method in the development of destination brand identity, and is the only study with a dual methodological approach that also uses factor analysis as a supporting tool. The current study remains relevant and important as a reference source due to its exploration of destination brand identity components, demonstration of the use of the Delphi method, and provision of an exemplary application model.

The theoretical boundaries of the study encompass product in marketing, branding, tourism, destination, destination marketing, destination branding, brand identity as a key component of brands, value, tourism-oriented cities as the selected product, and the city of Adana. The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we survey papers that relate scope of the research. Section 3 presents materials and method. Section 4 exposes and discusses the main findings and Section 5 concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Branding and Tourism Destination Marketing

Product is the main element of the marketing mix and lies at the heart of the marketing efforts. The product satisfies customers' functional needs that they seek (Jobber, 2004). The expected functional requirements from the product are fulfilled through these tangible and intangible components. In some products, tangible components are emphasized, while in others, intangible components take precedence. It is more challenging to create and sustain an advantage in products that are service-intensive and dominated by intangible aspects like tourism (Storey & Easingwood, 1998). This is because these products gain value through their intangible qualities, and even if their tangible features are excellent, they do not guarantee a positive consumer experience. For example, a brand-new aircraft with a delayed take-off could lead to a negative experience for consumers.

Intangible qualities, such as the unique values of service-intensive products, cannot be easily replicated and differentiate them from competitors. For instance, in the Mediterranean basin, countries predominantly offering tourism services with the trio of sea, sun, and sand like Turkey, Spain, Italy, and Greece, in recent years, it has become important for countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria to highlight their intangible differences that cannot be copied by others and to effectively communicate this through marketing. Destinations can differentiate themselves from competitors by branding themselves, even if their tangible components are in good condition, to avoid losing market share or engaging in price competition that inefficiently consumes resources.

Branding serves as the fundamental function of product differentiation in marketing, enabling the discovery and highlighting of components, values, and qualities that cannot be copied (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Additionally, in the branding process of a product, the function of marketing communication also takes shape. Marketers develop their products as brands with distinctions from competitor products in the minds of customers. Branding superiority allows for increased bargaining power with intermediaries in sales, profitability, and distribution channels (Jobber, 2004). Branding facilitates effective marketing communication with target audiences through price, tangible and intangible product features, promotion, distribution, physical attributes, processes, and the human factor involved throughout the entire process. Initially focused on tangible consumer goods, branding efforts have become widespread in service-intensive sectors like tourism in recent years (Douglas, 1990).

Tourism is a form of human mobility that involves moving from a permanent place of residence to a destination suitable for purposes such as recreation, health, education, work, and worship. One of the most striking results of globalization is the increase in international tourism movements (Chao et al., 2004). Tourism is a concept with economic, psychological, sociological, political, environmental, and other dimensions (Lundberg et al., 1995). However, in recent years, attention has primarily focused on the economic effects of tourism. This is because tourism serves as an ever-developing source of income for many developed and developing countries. This industry, with roots dating back to ancient times, has grown rapidly in the last 25 years, more than tripling the total international revenues worldwide (1995 - \$522.22 billion / 2019 - \$1.86 trillion) (World Bank Group, 2024a). In the same period, the total number of international tourists more than doubled (1995 - 1.08 billion / 2019 - 2.4 billion) (World Bank Group, 2024b). Tourism helps to alleviate balance of payments problems, creates employment by earning foreign currency, and contributes to savings, investment, and economic growth (Lim, 1997). Tourism revenues are crucial as a financing method for developing countries, also because they cannot be used as a political and economic pressure tool by foreign lending countries (Seddighi et al., 2001). Tourism is seen as a rapidly developing sector that

can be established and put into operation quickly and easily, and it is assumed to be environmentally friendly (Cai, 2002). Today, competition among tourism destinations is increasing due to the positive contributions of tourism to the country and destination (Pechlaner, 2000).

A destination is defined as the primary touristic product or place visited for tourism activities. It serves as a focal point for mobilizing tourism potential and contributing economically. A destination can range in size from a continent to a village and is a combination of many elements, conveying a complex meaning. The core tourism product comprises numerous elements that tourists encounter and experience until they return home. Many tourism researchers have sought to explain this fundamental tourist product (Nilsson, 2024; Murphy et al., 2000). According to Meethan (1996), a destination refers to places that transport people beyond their daily routines. Geographically, a destination is an area where services, facilities, various tourist attractions, and economic activities converge to cater to tourists traveling for purposes such as vacation, business, visiting friends, and sightseeing (Melian-Gonzalez and Garcia-Falcon, 2003). Buhalis (2000) describes a destination as the primary locus containing the foundational resources for tourism activities, where these activities occur, and where a cohesive presentation of tourist goods, services, and consumer experiences is provided. Murphy et al. (2000) assert that a destination is a synthesis of diverse tourist products and experiences. Fundamentally, a destination's internal components unite to form a meaningful whole and unique value. The relative competitiveness of a destination significantly impacts its success in global markets (Enright & Newton, 2004). Thus, destinations with distinctive values and strong attractions are better positioned for success through marketing efforts (Uysal et al., 2000). Enhancing international competitiveness requires highlighting a destination's original components and unique value proposition.

Destination marketing aims to make a destination's identity, created following the characteristics of a place, more attractive to selected target audiences through effective communication efforts (Rainisto, 2003). Conducted on a location-specific basis, destination marketing informs consumers about the essence of the product, its core and ancillary functions, and can significantly influence purchasing decisions. With this marketing strategy, the possibility of being affected by a negative situation occurring in other parts of the country can also be reduced. When managed by private and/or public entities familiar with the destination and invested in its future, destination marketing can offer flexible, rapid, and innovative solutions to differentiate the destination from competitors and minimize risks. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), which have the mission of performing destination marketing management globally, have begun to feel the need to develop new marketing strategies due to increasing competition (Lapierre et al., 1999; Zenker & Beckman, 2013). In fact, it is important for DMOs to use various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, and TripAdvisor as primary communication channels for their brand and marketing communication strategies (Lim et al., 2021). Destinations must continually rediscover their history, resources, and values to maintain their identity and vision (Asseraf & Shoham, 2017). Success lies in differentiating the value they offer; for instance, despite similar tourism qualities, Greece, situated near Turkey, can attract more tourists (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Destination branding efforts activate both tangible and intangible components of tourism destinations through systematic, coordinated, and strategic marketing management efforts that provide unique value.

2.2 Destination Branding and Destination Brand Identity

Destinations can enhance their competitiveness by establishing an emotional connection with their target audience, highlighting unique benefits or values. Destination branding plays a pivotal role in revealing these core values and differentiating the destination from competitors,

making it a strategic and essential marketing tool (Wilson, 2020; Lee et al., 2006 ; Park & Petrick, 2006). Similar to corporate or umbrella branding, destination branding integrates various product and service offerings under one cohesive identity (Gnoth et al., 2007; Gnoth, 2002; Flagestad & Hope, 2001). Efforts in destination branding ensure the focused utilization of resources, thereby enhancing economic dimensions, standards of living, and the overall image of the destination. Consequently, both academia and practitioners are increasingly interested in destination branding projects. The literature on destination branding has expanded significantly since the late 1990s and early 2000s, with seminal studies by Buhalis (2000), Hankinson (2001, 2004), Trueman et al. (2004), Killingbeck & Trueman (2002), Cai (2002), Iliachenko (2003), Rainisto (2003), Watkins & Herbert (2003), Avraham (2004), Paul (2004), Kohli, Harich & Leuthesser (2005), Kavartzis & Ashworth (2005), Cheng et al. (2005), Smith (2005), Yuen (2005), Hosanry, Ekinici & Uysal (2006), Lee, Cai & O'Leary (2006), and Woodside, Cruickshank & Dehuang (2007). Despite extensive research, significant gaps remain in understanding the destination branding process.

Destination branding presents unique challenges compared to product branding, primarily due to its interdisciplinary nature. It involves analysing tangible and intangible components, requiring bespoke project designs tailored to specific destinations (Cai, 2002). This complexity necessitates interdisciplinary research and innovative scientific methodologies (Gnoth, 1998). Successful destination branding requires systematic strategic marketing management akin to corporate strategies (Kotler et al., 1997), enabling optimal decision-making based on the destination's current context. It involves defining brand identity components that support tourism development and integrating them to create a cohesive brand identity that differentiates the destination and fosters a positive image. In essence, destination branding is about "creating a consistent brand identity for the destination and differentiating it through efforts to develop a positive image" (Cai, 2002).

Brand identity can be defined as the set of unique associations that a brand strategy creates and strives to maintain (Aaker, 1996). This set of associations represents the brand's quality, beliefs, or ideas and promises value to consumers (Karagiorgos et al., 2023). Brand identity helps establish an emotional connection between the brand and the customer based on these characteristics (Molinillo et al., 2022; Le, 2021; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Without strategically defining the content of a destination's identity, it is impossible to create any perception about that place (Cardoso et al., 2019; Rainisto, 2003). This is because a destination's image reflects visitors' perceptions of its identity. Indeed, people often may have distinct perceptions even about places they have never visited. Managing the image as desired is possible through effective and consistent development of brand identity.

The process of developing brand identity begins with identifying the primary benefits the product will offer. These identified benefits are conveyed to the target audience through secondary benefits such as quality, convenience, style, design, history, philosophy, and stories associated with the product (Yavuz et al., 2016; Kotler & Armstrong, 2001). Destinations with diverse characteristics each require their own unique approaches. Therefore, for a destination brand to be effective, it is necessary to identify destination-specific components, measure them using appropriate tools, and develop the brand identity process based on these findings (Li & Zhang, 2023; Gnoth, 1998). Considering the hundreds of millions of potential tourists worldwide, accessing all these markets is impractical. Thus, it is crucial for destinations to differentiate themselves and provide effective services based on their attractions, resource inventory, and unique values.

The unique value proposition that distinguishes a destination brand from its competitors is a fundamental variable from the perspective of target audiences. Aaker (1996) indicates that almost every marketing activity, whether successful or unsuccessful, aims to build, manage,

and enhance value for the brand. According to Aaker (1996), brand equity enhances consumer trust in purchase decisions and increases satisfaction by explaining the content of the value and facilitating the processing of information. In shaping brand equity, both tangible product features and intangible qualities play significant roles (Chen et al., 2020; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2020; Liu, 2020; Önder & Marchiori, 2017).

2.3 Adana City

A city is a settlement system with unique characteristics that enable overcoming complex societal issues that cannot be resolved at an individual level (Hout et al., 2000). Cities, through their tourism function, form the foundation of many destinations. Developing a model that contributes to transforming cities with tourism orientation into successful destination brands will contribute to sustainable development (Adamus-Matuszyńska, 2021).

Adana, with a settlement history dating back to 8500 BC (Unal & Girginer, 2007), is situated in a fertile geography that has hosted many civilizations. The name 'Adana' first appears in tablets dating to the mid-2nd millennium BC (Girginer, 2000, 78). Like Aleppo and Tarsus, Adana/Adaniia is one of the few cities whose name has remained unchanged for approximately 3500 years, with archaeological evidence proving its existence even 5000 years before written history (Unal, 2000). Adana connects Europe to the Middle East. Its fertile lands, favourable climate conditions, the presence of the Gulek Pass linking Asia Minor to Anatolia, and its strategic location have made Adana an important city since ancient times, preferred for habitation.

Historically, Adana has always had close relations with cities in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt (Salman, 2006). As a result, tangible and intangible elements that make Adana attractive as a tourist destination, such as Tepebag Mound, Tatarli Mound, Sar Ancient City, Taskopru (Stone Bridge), and Varda Bridge, have emerged. Throughout history, Adana and its region, through active ports like Karatas and Yumurtalik, connected Cyprus, Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Aegean ports, with close relationships to nearby ports such as Isos, Iskenderun, Tarsus, Yumuktepe (Mersin), Soloi-Pompeiopolis, Lamas, Elaiussa-Sebaste, Corykos, Silifke-Holmoi-Tasucu, Aphrodisias, Nagidos, and Kelenderis. The areas where the Ceyhan and Seyhan rivers meet the sea have created extensive natural beauties. These areas, hosting many endemic plants and wildlife, are designated as the Cukurova Delta Biosphere Reserve, receiving special protection status. Stretching 110 km along the Mediterranean, the Cukurova Delta Biosphere Reserve is a natural habitat and breeding ground for 272 bird species, including endangered species like the 'Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia Mydas*)' and 'Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta Caretta*)' (Yavuz & Girginer, 2005).

Modern interest in the Adana region began with the onset of the American Civil War in 1861 and the consequent rise in cotton prices. Britain, the largest cotton buyer of the day, developed cotton policies towards Egypt and Cukurova (Yeni Adana, 2004 101). Today, Adana holds particular significance as an energy corridor with BOTAS and the BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline). In 2006, Adana was selected as the top region with the best economic potential globally (FDI Magazine, 2006). As of the end of 2023, Adana has a population of 2,270,298 (Turkish Statistical Institute - TUIK, 2024). Adana's demographic structure has been shaped by migration, resulting in a diverse population in terms of race and sect. Over thousands of years, the passage or settlement of many tribes through Adana has contributed to a rich cultural heritage. Turkmen settlers from Central Asia passing through Adana engaged in cultural exchanges, enriching Adana's culture with Central Asian and migration route influences, which, over centuries, have melded into what is now known as Adana culture (Artun, 2000). Having experienced significant civilizations from ancient times, including the Hittites, Romans, Byzantines, and finally Turkish-Islamic civilization, Adana is renowned for producing many artists such as Karacaoglan, Dadaloglu, Yasar Kemal, Abidin Dino, Yilmaz

Guney, and Suna Kan. This cultural richness is also reflected in Adana cuisine, which carries characteristics of the Mediterranean region's culinary culture.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Data

The research is exploratory as it aims to better understand how to develop destination brand identity. The Delphi Method, one of the group decision-making methods based on consensus, was the main method used for collecting and analysing research data. Factor analysis was also used as a supportive method.

In this study, "City Managers" are considered as "Delphi Experts", considering their power to influence urban decision-making mechanisms. The Delphi experts included in the sample are urban stakeholders who possess the highest level of knowledge on issues related to Adana. In this context, city managers who have detailed knowledge of the city's past and present, and who are in a position to make or influence decisions regarding the city's future, are considered "city experts." The term "city manager" refers to individuals typically in senior positions within official, semi-official, private, and civil society organizations involved in the decision-making and influence mechanisms of the city. These individuals are experts and decision-makers who have comprehensive knowledge of the city's current identity and the power to determine its future.

The research project aimed to reach the most relevant and largest possible sample related to the research topic within the constraints of budget, time, and human resources. The research universe list consisting of Delphi experts was created using protocol lists, association and professional organization lists, and the snowball sampling method, totalling 283 individuals. The aim was to reach all individuals listed. During the five-month data collection process, 179 Delphi experts were included in the research, with 103 participants in Delphi Round-I and 168 in Delphi Round-II.

In the study, three data collection tools were used appropriately for their respective purposes. The first of these was an "in-depth interview form" used to gather initial data on the topic during the pilot study. In addition, two rounds of consecutive Delphi surveys were conducted. The first data collection tool was an "in-depth interview form" that was used in the pilot study (Madran & Yavuz, 2005) comprised of open-ended questions. This data collection tool was employed by faculty members from Cukurova University to explore significant identity components of the destination. The sample for this exploratory study included 62 faculty members from all academic units. When selecting participants from each academic unit, a judgmental sampling method was preferred. Faculty members from departments most closely related to the research topic or those with studies related to the current research had been focused. In the pilot study, faculty members were asked to articulate the significant identity components of Adana related to their areas of expertise within the framework of the RQs. The preliminary data obtained from the pilot study were used to construct the Delphi Round-I form, which would be administered to Delphi experts.

In the Delphi Round-I form, the identity components derived from the pilot study were presented for ranking as closed-ended propositions. The form also included open-ended questions, allowing Delphi experts to contribute new ideas concerning the city's identity components. Delphi experts were given the opportunity to suggest up to five new identity components for each open-ended question. The data collected from the closed-ended propositions and open-ended questions in the survey were transformed into closed-ended propositions using qualitative methods such as "word counting" and "bundling/thematic analysis" (Mayring, 2000, 82). These propositions were subsequently utilized in the Delphi

Round-II form to identify the prominent identity components of the city and determine their importance levels.

The third data collection tool utilized in the research was the Delphi Round-II form, consisting entirely of closed-ended propositions ready for ranking. This survey form contained a list of propositions generated as a result of Delphi Round-I form. All these propositions had achieved at least 80% consensus in the previous round. Delphi experts were expected to re-evaluate each proposition related to the city's identity components included in this survey. A 10-point "interval (equal-interval)" scale was employed to rank the propositions. The meanings of the numerical values on the scale were as follows:

1 = Strongly Disagree,

10 = Strongly Agree.

The scale used in the research was an "interval (equal-interval)" scale with a defined starting point and a consistent measurement unit. Such scales symbolize different items (classification), rank the measured items according to a specific criterion (ordering), and maintain equal intervals across the scale. This scale aimed to quantify differences between objects, individuals, and situations. Additionally, the numerical values between the intervals on this scale were consistent throughout (Guney, 2000, 317). Data measured on an interval scale could be used to calculate mean (AM), standard deviation (SD), skewness, and kurtosis. Furthermore, correlation and regression analyses, t-tests, and F-tests could be applied to such data (Kurtulus, 1998, 342). The starting point on interval scales does not express a meaning of "absence". It is a "relative" starting point that facilitated quantification, rather than an absolute zero point (Guney, 2000). Moreover, the 10-point scale was more sensitive than 2-point, 3-point, 5-point, or 7-point scales, allowing for highly precise measurements.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 The Delphi Method

The Delphi method is a highly functional method used when experimental knowledge of social processes is lacking (Fry & Burr, 2001, 236). The Delphi method was first developed in 1953 by Olaf Helmer and Norman Dalkey, who worked at a company called Rand, and it was used as a forecasting tool (Cohen et al., 2004, 1011). Since its initial development, the method has been used to predict time and future events, particularly technological developments (Rabiega, 1982, 71). Traditionally, the Delphi method is used to gather expert opinions (Schopper et al., 2000, 340-341). It differs from other group decision-making methods, such as "Brainstorming," "Nominal Group Technique," and "Consensus Method" (Fry & Burr, 2001; Hasson et al., 2000, 1008), in four key aspects (Broomfield & Humphris, 2001, 930):

1. Anonymity of participants,
2. Iterative rounds and controlled feedback,
3. Statistical analysis of group responses,
4. Involvement of experts.

The main stage of the Delphi method involves forming a group of experts who agree to participate in iterative surveys used as the data collection tool on a specific topic (Hasson et al., 2000). In other words, participants are not randomly selected from the general population but are chosen from knowledgeable and suitable experts related to the research topic (Rabiega, 1982). The term "expert" here refers to participants who are not only "knowledgeable" about the research topic but also have the "competence and position" to speak on it (Hasson et al., 2000; McKenna, 1994, 1221; Rabiega, 1982; Schopper et al., 2000). In the Delphi method, it is essential for respondents to express their own opinions without contacting other experts.

Ensuring the confidentiality of individual responses throughout the study is crucial (Schopper et al., 2000). However, the research manager is free to provide a list of participants' names and titles as part of the study. The purpose of using iterative surveys in the method is to uncover changing opinions to reach a consensus, allowing views to be easily altered and clarified. Typically, two to four rounds of iterative surveys are used to achieve this (Rabiega, 1982; Schopper et al., 2000). According to recent literature on the Delphi method, the Two-Round Delphi method, consisting of two iterative surveys, has become the preferred practice (Avery et al., 2005; Cusick, McIntosh & Santiago, 2004, 178; Fry & Burr, 2001; Hasson et al., 2000). Participants in the first round write their ideas, which will form the propositions included in the second-round survey. Propositions for the Delphi Round-II survey can be generated by participants, researchers, or both (Avery et al., 2005; Iniyani et al., 2001, 658; Rabiega, 1982). Utilizing past similar studies to determine and derive propositions for the survey is a commonly preferred approach by researchers. One crucial aspect of conducting Delphi surveys is to ensure that in at least one of the iterative surveys, participants have the opportunity to view and evaluate the statistical averages of all participants' responses and receive feedback on their ideas (Schopper et al., 2000). Therefore, the Delphi Round-I survey allows participants to add new ideas in addition to rating prepared propositions (Hasson et al., 2000). The Delphi Round-II survey is then sent back to Delphi experts, incorporating responses to open-ended variables from Delphi Round-I and listing variables with high consensus. At this stage, participants are not asked to propose new ideas. The purpose of Delphi Round-II is to clarify the most prominent ideas from all participants. To reach clearer results, the number of survey rounds in the Delphi method can be increased (Rabiega, 1982; Hasson et al., 2000).

3.2.2 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is applied to investigate the origins of mutual dependencies between variables. Variables that exhibit significant correlations among them can be considered as factors, which are linear combinations of relevant variables (Kurtulus, 1998). Through factor analysis, a large number of components are reduced to a smaller set. To apply factor analysis, each group must have at least 5 variables, the number of observations should not be less than 50, and the minimum number of observations should be more than five times the number of variables (Hair et al., 1995). In this study, each group considered has 9 variables. The variable-to-observation ratios for the five groups are 1/11, 1/15, 1/13, 1/19, and 1/19, respectively.

Considering the sample size in the study ($n=168$), for achieving a significant result at the 0.05 significance level, factor weights or factor loadings coefficients should not be less than 0.4 (Hair et al., 1995). Therefore, propositions with an absolute value of factor loading less than 0.4 were not included in the analysis. Moreover, propositions loading on two factors simultaneously were not considered. The alpha (α) value, based on the assumption that similar responses should be obtained under similar conditions, is a reliability or consistency coefficient. A high alpha (α) value is considered an indicator of the appropriateness of variables within the group subjected to factor analysis for the research purpose. In the Social Sciences field, an alpha value of at least "0.70" is preferred (UCLA, 2006). In the current analysis, the reliability analysis of the scale resulted in alpha values calculated as $\alpha_1= 0.8317$, $\alpha_2= 0.8850$, $\alpha_3= 0.8866$, $\alpha_4= 0.8694$, $\alpha_5= 0.8912$ for each RQ group, respectively. High correlation relationships between variables are sought in factor analysis. As the correlation between variables decreases, confidence in the results of factor analysis decreases accordingly (Nakip, 2003, 408). From this perspective, variables with strong correlation relationships among them are generally grouped under the same factor. The Bartlett test of sphericity, developed by Bartlett to test the integrity of the main mass, is used to test the integrity of the main mass. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which measures sample adequacy, is concerned with sample size. The result of this test is a ratio and it is desirable for it to be above 60.0% (Nakip, 2003). In the principal component method, emphasis is placed on the total (cumulative) variance. Factors are included in the model

until the cumulative variance reaches a satisfactory level. In the social sciences field, this level is recommended to be more than 60%. In addition, "Eigenvalue" indicates the total variance explained by each factor. However, only eigenvalues greater than one (1) are considered (Nakip, 2003).

Within the scope of the study, an exploratory factor analysis was also conducted to determine which factors the identity components indicate. The research model related to this is shown in Figure 1.

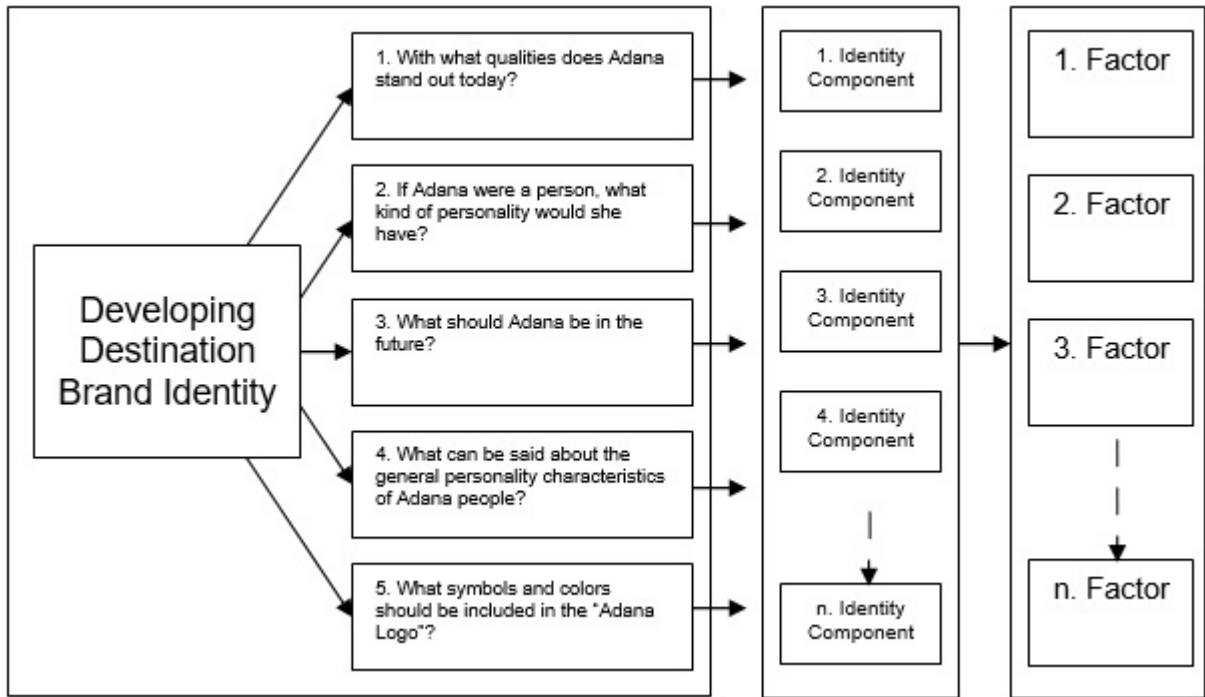


Figure 1 Factor Analysis Model

Within the framework of the above research model, five RQs were utilized to develop the brand identity of the city of Adana. These questions aimed to reveal data related to the city's history, potential, people, present, and future, as well as the prominent identity components of the city. The consensus level analyses (Delphi) were conducted based on the arithmetic mean (AM) and standard deviation (SD) values of the responses to these identity component questions. Subsequently, factor analyses were performed using the prominent identity components to model the distinct sub-factors of the destination's brand identity.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The examination and analysis of data based on Arithmetic Mean (AM) and Standard Deviation (SD) values enabled the identification of prominent identity components of the Adana brand and determining future branding areas, themes, and sectors. Factor analysis was also employed to reinforce and detail the results of the Delphi analysis, facilitating the identification of distinct sub-factors related to the Adana brand identity through the prominent identity components.

4.1.1 Delphi Round-I: Revealing Identity Components

The Delphi Round-I aimed to identify Adana's prominent identity components, involving interviews with 103 Delphi experts. Some demographic information of the experts contributing

to Delphi Round-I is provided in Table 1. Based on the results of Delphi Round-I, a draft of the Delphi Round-II form was developed.

Table 1 Delphi Round-I Experts Demographics (n=103)

| Duration lived in Adana | | Duration on the Duty | | Age | | Education | |
|-------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------|-------|---------------|------|
| Groups | % | Groups | % | Groups | % | Level | % |
| Less than 5 years | 7,9 | Less than 5 years | 17,3 | Under 25 | 1,0 | Secondary | 1,0 |
| 6-10 years | 6,9 | 6-10 years | 15,3 | 26-35 | 14,6 | High School | 15,5 |
| 11-15 years | 10,9 | 11-15 years | 19,4 | 36-45 | 31,1 | Undergraduate | 55,3 |
| 16-20 years | 6,9 | 16-20 years | 10,2 | 46-55 | 28,2 | Graduate | 7,8 |
| 21-25 years | 8,9 | 21-25 years | 11,2 | 56+ | 25,2 | Doctorate | 20,4 |
| 26-30 years | 10,9 | 26-30 years | 12,2 | AM | 47,27 | | |
| 31+ | 47,5 | 31+ | 14,3 | SD | 10,91 | | |
| AM | 31,51 | AM | 18,19 | | | | |
| SD | 17,55 | SD | 12,27 | | | | |

4.1.2 Delphi Round-II: Pre-test

The draft Delphi Round-II form was pretested on 37 people from the main sample group from different professions and education levels. The pre-test is to determine whether the propositions produced according to the Delphi Round-I results are understood by the participants as desired and also whether the 10-point scale works in accordance with the research purposes. The pre-test results showed that, except for a few propositions, the propositions were generally understood correctly, and the survey was answered in line with the research purposes. Necessary arrangements were made regarding the sentence structure and language used in the problematic propositions. In addition, it was understood that the 10-point interval scale used in the research worked appropriately. After the post-test corrections, the Delphi Round-II form was introduced and applied.

4.1.3 Delphi Round-II: Determining the Importance Levels of Identity Components

The parameters based on the analysis of the data obtained as a result of Delphi Round-II are AM and SD values. The AM and SD values, give the relative importance and level of agreement of the identity components, respectively. AM value being important as it shows the severity of importance attributed to a particular proposition. The SD value, which is the square root of the variance, can also be considered as an indicator of the consistency of the AM value obtained for a particular proposition. SD value is especially important in revealing the level of agreement because it shows the intensity of agreement. All propositions in the Delphi Round-II form were analyzed collectively to answer the relevant RQ.

The propositions under each RQ are listed according to their SD values (from smallest to largest - from highest level of agreement to lowest). In addition, the intensity of participants' agreement with the relevant proposition was interpreted by looking at the AM value. At this point, the critical decision issue is the threshold intensity level of agreement with the proposition. In this study, the threshold intensity was taken as 8.0 (80% of the 10-point scale), representing the lower limit of 80% agreement with the relevant proposition. In the table, propositions with AM below 8.0 were not evaluated, and the consensus ranking was made by looking at SD values among propositions with AM above 8.0. Frequency percentages, AM and SD values for the propositions related to each RQ are given in Table 2.

Table 2 The Importance Levels of Identity Components

| With what qualities does Adana stand out today? | | | |
|---|------|------|------|
| | Rank | AM | SD |
| The climate is suitable for living and production | 1 | 8,80 | 1,56 |
| Living is cheap | 2 | 8,70 | 1,56 |
| The region is at the key point of transportation routes | 3 | 8,28 | 1,64 |
| It is culturally cosmopolitan | 4 | 8,51 | 1,69 |
| Urbanization is distorted | 5 | 8,65 | 1,96 |
| Tourism potential cannot be utilized | 6 | 8,28 | 1,96 |
| Known for courthouse incidents | 7 | 8,14 | 2,08 |
| If Adana were a person, what kind of personality would she have? | | | |
| | Rank | AM | SD |
| Love of food | 1 | 8,69 | 1,64 |
| Friendly | 2 | 8,39 | 1,77 |
| Self-indulgent | 3 | 8,16 | 1,88 |
| What should Adana be in the future? | | | |
| | Rank | AM | SD |
| A planned city | 1 | 9,35 | 1,34 |
| An exemplary business centre in the Middle East | 2 | 8,82 | 1,51 |
| The leading health centre of the region | 3 | 8,85 | 1,61 |
| Modern agricultural centre | 4 | 8,86 | 1,63 |
| University, education and student city | 5 | 8,71 | 1,69 |
| The transportation and logistics base of the region | 6 | 8,52 | 1,70 |
| Meeting, congress, fair and festival centre | 7 | 8,63 | 1,75 |
| Agro-industrial centre | 8 | 8,57 | 1,81 |
| A centre specializing in greenhouse cultivation | 9 | 8,48 | 1,83 |
| R&D and technology development centre | 10 | 8,15 | 1,90 |
| City of culture, art and artists | 11 | 8,12 | 2,02 |
| A city that uses the sea effectively | 12 | 8,53 | 2,07 |
| What can be said about the general personality characteristics of Adana people? | | | |
| | Rank | AM | SD |
| Love of food | 1 | 8,80 | 1,27 |
| Self-indulgent | 2 | 8,59 | 1,52 |
| Friendly | 3 | 8,50 | 1,63 |
| Hospitable | 4 | 8,36 | 1,63 |
| What symbols and colours should be included in the "Adana Logo"? | | | |
| | Rank | AM | SD |
| Taskopru (Stone bridge) | 1 | 8,03 | 2,60 |
| Citrus fruits (orange colour etc.) | 2 | 8,01 | 2,35 |

* "1 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Strongly Agree".

4.1.4 Factor Analysis

In this study, the goal was to determine the distinct sub-factors of the Adana brand identity using the prominent identity components of the city. For this purpose, all identity components retrieved by Delphi technique were subjected to Factor Analysis. Since the purpose of factor analysis is to reduce a large number of variables to fewer factors, the factors identified in the analysis are named based on the combination of variables they contain. The names assigned to each factor and the results of factor analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Factor Analysis Results

| | Factor Loadings | Eigenvalue | Total Variance Explained(%) | Cumulative Variance (%) |
|---|--|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| With what qualities does Adana stand out today? | | | | |
| Factor 1: Urbanization and Municipality | | 4,125 | 31,727 | 31,727 |
| | Municipality is bad | ,885 | | |
| | The city is losing its identity | ,856 | | |
| | Urbanization is distorted | ,703 | | |
| Factor 2: Urban Development | | 2,028 | 15,597 | 47,323 |
| | Adana was left behind in trade and business life | ,769 | | |
| | Adana cannot accommodate artists | ,768 | | |
| | City is neglected by central authority | ,748 | | |
| Factor 3: Urban Wealth | | 1,376 | 10,583 | 57,906 |
| | Adana has rich historical, cultural, archaeological and artistic resources | ,850 | | |
| | Adana has rich geographical and natural resources | ,778 | | |
| | Many artists have produced | ,681 | | |
| Factor 4: City Image | | 1,102 | 8,478 | 66,385 |
| | Known for courthouse incidents | ,768 | | |
| | Living is cheap | ,692 | | |
| | The image of the city is bad | ,559 | | |
| | Agricultural production potential has been neglected | ,545 | | |
| If Adana were a person, what kind of personality would she have? | | | | |
| Factor 1: Emotional Dimension | | 4,277 | 42,766 | 42,766 |
| | Friendly | ,796 | | |
| | Generous | ,792 | | |
| | Respectful of differences at peace with himself | ,667 | | |
| Factor 2: Artistic Dimension | | 1,232 | 12,315 | 55,081 |
| | Gentle soul | ,854 | | |
| | Artistic soul | ,615 | | |
| | Full of life | ,597 | | |
| | Physically attractive | ,591 | | |
| Factor 3: Material Dimension | | 1,005 | 10,050 | 65,131 |
| | Rich | ,889 | | |
| | Efficient (productive) | ,566 | | |
| What should Adana be in the future? | | | | |
| Factor 1: Sociocultural Centre | | 5,479 | 45,658 | 45,658 |
| | Meeting, congress, fair and festival centre | ,820 | | |
| | City of culture, art and artists | ,810 | | |
| | University, education and student city | ,764 | | |
| | Fashion, ready-made clothing and textile production centre | ,578 | | |
| | City of sports and Olympics | ,514 | | |
| Factor 2: Technological Centre | | 1,207 | 10,058 | 55,716 |
| | R&D and technology development centre | ,749 | | |
| | Ecological tourism centre | ,738 | | |
| | Software development centre | ,635 | | |
| | Shopping and entertainment centre | ,631 | | |
| Factor 3: Commercial Centre | | 1,148 | 9,566 | 65,282 |
| | Energy distribution and production centre | ,830 | | |
| | The transportation and logistics base of the region | ,677 | | |
| | The leading health centre of the region | ,512 | | |

Inference Method: Principal Components Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax Based on Kaiser Normalization; Iteration: 6

The Bartlett Test of Sphericity Value: 693.759 (Sig.=0.00); Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin: 78.2% (0.782)

Table 3 Factor Analysis Results (Continuing)

| What can be said about the general personality characteristics of Adana people? | Factor Loadings | Eigenvalue | Total Variance Explained(%) | Cumulative Variance (%) |
|---|---|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Factor 1: Humanist | | 5,294 | 27,862 | 27,862 |
| | Friendly | ,795 | | |
| | Hospitable | ,791 | | |
| | One in essence | ,713 | | |
| | Non bigoted | ,635 | | |
| | Respectful of differences | ,627 | | |
| | Creative | ,486 | | |
| Factor 2: Selfish | | 3,440 | 18,105 | 45,967 |
| | Lacks a sense of solidarity | ,811 | | |
| | Sordid | ,773 | | |
| | Loves gossip | ,758 | | |
| | Unpretentious | ,718 | | |
| | Likes to show off | ,525 | | |
| Factor 3: Lazy | | 1,445 | 7,607 | 53,575 |
| | Is entrepreneurial under favourable conditions | ,893 | | |
| | Is productive under favourable conditions | ,878 | | |
| Factor 4: Self-indulgent | | 1,177 | 6,195 | 59,769 |
| | Self-indulgent | ,851 | | |
| | Fond of food | ,820 | | |
| Factor 5: Countryman | | 1,136 | 5,978 | 65,747 |
| | Lacks urban culture | ,838 | | |
| | Noisy | ,678 | | |
| Factor 6: Conservative | | 1,030 | 5,421 | 71,169 |
| | Both eastern and western | ,721 | | |
| | Depends on feudal relations | ,601 | | |
| What symbols and colours should be included in the “Adana Logo”? | | | | |
| Factor 1: Icons | | 4,482 | 56,025 | 56,025 |
| | Transportation icon (transportation, distribution lines etc.) | ,882 | | |
| | Trade symbols (money, gold, silk, fair, etc.) | ,861 | | |
| | Industry icons | ,823 | | |
| | Sports icons | ,771 | | |
| | Science icons (university, education, technology, etc.) | ,742 | | |
| | Geographical symbols (Taurus Mountains, plateau, etc.) | ,525 | | |
| Factor 2: Colours | | 1,143 | 14,284 | 70,309 |
| | Blue colour (sea, water, lake, river, etc.) | ,880 | | |
| | Green colour (biodiversity, forest, etc.) | ,824 | | |

Inference Method: Principal Components Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax Based on Kaiser Normalization; Iteration: 6

The Bartlett Test of Sphericity Value: 693.759 (Sig.=0.00); Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin: 78.2% (0.782)

The correlation value in 'The Factor Transformation Matrix', showing the correlation between the values before and after rotation of each factor loading, being greater than '0.80', indicates it is 'outstanding'; however, values above 0.25 are considered significant (Garson, 2007). According to Table 4, the factor results exhibit high coefficients.

Table 4 The Factor Transformation Matrix

| With what qualities does Adana stand out today? | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Factor 1 | ,633 | ,545 | ,280 | ,472 | | |
| Factor 2 | -,501 | -,1103 | ,790 | ,335 | | |
| Factor 3 | ,557 | -,489 | ,681 | -,468 | | |
| Factor 4 | -,193 | ,671 | ,257 | -,668 | | |

| If Adana were a person, what kind of personality would she have? | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|--|----------|----------|----------|
| Factor 1 | ,639 | ,582 | ,502 |
| Factor 2 | -,728 | ,449 | ,638 |
| Factor 3 | ,246 | -,774 | ,583 |

| What should Adana be in the future? | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Factor 1 | ,681 | ,556 | ,476 |
| Factor 2 | -,731 | ,478 | ,487 |
| Factor 3 | ,043 | -,680 | ,732 |

| What can be said about the general personality characteristics of Adana people? | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 | Factor 6 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Factor 1 | ,670 | -,494 | ,446 | ,062 | -,113 | ,302 |
| Factor 2 | ,284 | ,619 | ,140 | ,529 | ,430 | ,227 |
| Factor 3 | -,324 | ,323 | ,700 | -,464 | -,059 | ,287 |
| Factor 4 | ,222 | ,426 | -,135 | ,088 | -,860 | ,064 |
| Factor 5 | ,537 | ,276 | -,288 | -,698 | ,244 | -,080 |
| Factor 6 | ,166 | ,103 | ,437 | ,077 | -,032 | -,874 |

| What symbols and colours should be included in the "Adana Logo"? | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|--|----------|----------|
| Factor 1 | ,874 | ,486 |
| Factor 2 | -,486 | ,874 |

Inference Method: Principal Components Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax Based on Kaiser Normalization

Table 4 Delphi and Factor Analysis Results

| Delphi Analysis Results | Factor Analysis Results |
|--|---|
| <p>RQ 1 aims to highlight Adana's strengths and weaknesses while shedding light on the region's social, economic, and cultural dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Living Conditions: Adana's climate is highly suitable and pleasant for living, with mild winters reducing clothing and fuel costs. • Natural Resources and Agricultural Production: Adana's abundant water resources and advanced agricultural production culture ensure plentiful and affordable food. • Transportation and Terminal Function: Adana serves as a significant junction point via highways and railways, facilitating north-south and east-west connections. • Cultural Richness: Adana boasts a rich cultural composition influenced by ethnic, religious, and other factors. • Urbanization and Migration: Continuous migration has hindered the desired level of urbanization. | <p>Four key factors have been identified that provide important insights into Adana's current situation regarding its brand identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanization and Municipality: This factor is perceived as a negative issue requiring solutions for the destination's brand identity. Elevating urban management quality is a prerequisite for enhancing tourism development. • Urban Development: Issues include inefficient use of resources in trade, industry, tourism, arts, and management sectors, stagnation, and strategic management deficiencies. • Urban Wealth: Abundant resources supportive of tourism, with natural and cultural riches enhancing tourism potential. • City Image: The destination's image is adversely affected by migration, reducing its brand value and attractiveness. |
| <p>RQ 2 reflects perceptions of Adana's human-like personality related to the destination and highlights prominent features.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fond of Eating and Gastronomic Richness: Adana is characterized by its love for food and diverse gastronomic culture. • Warm-hearted: This trait signifies Adana's hospitality and warmth. • Pleasure and Comfort Orientation: Traits such as pleasure and comfort orientation, sometimes perceived as indifference, require attention for the city's brand identity and development potential. | <p>Three independent factors identified that describe the destination's personality, crucial for establishing a consistent destination brand identity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Dimension: Highlighting Adana's warm and generous character, promoting it as a hospitable destination. • Artistic Dimension: Emphasizing Adana's artistic and cultural aspects, branding it as a cultural and artistic destination. • Material Dimension: Highlighting Adana's rich natural and economic resources, presenting it as an efficient and developed business destination. |
| <p>RQ 3 emphasizes key themes for Adana's future branding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Urban Planning: There is a need for significant improvements in urban planning to enhance quality of life and ensure sustainable development. • Potential as a Business Centre: Strategic location at the junction of three continents suggests its potential as a hub for international trade and business. • Medical and Treatment Infrastructure: Historical and current medical infrastructure presents significant potential for growth in health and medical tourism. • Modern and Scientific Agricultural Practices: Adopting modern agricultural techniques and scientific methods can better utilize its highly fertile lands. • Science and Art: Scientific research, technological innovations, and artistic activities in the future. | <p>Three significant visions are emerging to shape the brand's future, leveraging current potential to become a recognized and preferred destination internationally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociocultural Centre: A vision to become a hub for intense human movements through education, sports, culture, arts, meetings, and fashion, indicating a destination's attractiveness for international events. • Technological Centre: Leveraging research and development (R&D), software, and technological advancements, investing in innovative areas to attract young talent in technology and entertainment sectors, aiming for branding. • Energy, Logistics, and Health Technology Centre: Strong visions in energy, logistics, and health technology sectors suggest Adana can attract global attention and stand out by fostering innovative projects and advanced research. |
| <p>RQ 4 outlines the general personality profile of Adana residents and its impact on the destination's cultural and social dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of Food: Adana residents are described as having a hearty appetite, closely associated with Adana kebab and its rich cuisine. • Enjoyment Orientation: Residents of Adana prefer enjoyment and tend to avoid actions that require rigorous and consistent effort. • Warm and Hospitable: They exhibit sincere and warm behaviour in their relationships. • Warm-heartedness and Quick Temper: Warm-heartedness can sometimes lead to intense emotional reactions and conflicts. • Hospitality: Hospitality is a significant trait among Adana residents, characterized by their warm welcome and hosting skills. | <p>Adana residents' general personality profile is summarized with six factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanist: Warm, hospitable, sincere, tolerant of differences, respectful, creative and tolerant profile. • Selfish: In contrast to the above, traits like lack of solidarity, opportunism, gossip, modesty, and ostentation emphasize prioritizing individual interests. • Lazy: Generally preferring comfort, residents may not be sufficiently active in entrepreneurship and productivity. • Pleasure-Seeking: Pleasure-seeking affects Adana residents' lifestyle and work habits significantly. • Provincial: Reflecting demographic and socio-cultural dynamics, traits such as urban culture deficiency and noisy behaviour symbolize a "provincial" identity. • Conservative: Migration influences, feudal cultural origins, and adherence to beliefs and traditions contribute to Adana residents' "conservative" tendencies. |

Table 4 Delphi and Factor Analysis Results

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>RQ 5 indicates that while there is no complete consensus on visual identity elements, two aspects stand out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stone Bridge (Taskopru): A historic and cultural symbol representing Adana's heritage and its role as a cross-continental link. It is one of the oldest bridges still in use worldwide, enhancing its tourism significance. • Citrus (Sun, Orange Colour): The "warm orange" colour represents citrus and the sun, reflecting the agricultural richness and warm climate. Orange symbolizes energy, vibrancy, and abundance, highlighting Adana's dynamic and fertile nature. | <p>Two primary factors stand out for Adana's visual identity, non-overlapping with Delphi analysis results, with blue and green colours highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbols: Symbolic themes for potential inclusion in Adana's logo include "Transport (Taskopru and roads)", "Trade and Industry (Factories, trade routes, or symbolic industrial icons)", "Sports (Sports facilities or activities)", "Science (Symbols representing education, research, science, and technology)", and "Geographical Symbols (natural beauties and strategic location)". • Colours: For Adana's logo, "Blue (Representing sky, sea, water, comfort, peace, and good life)" and "Green (Representing harmony with nature, fertile lands, agricultural richness, peace, and comfort)" colours are highlighted as harmonious with warm climate and natural beauties. |
|--|--|

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Results

This section presents the results of both the Delphi analysis, which identifies prominent identity components and future branding areas/themes/sectors and the factor analysis aimed at reinforcing and detailing the Delphi results by identifying distinct sub-factors related to the Adana brand identity through the prominent identity components. The results of both analyses are presented together in Table 4, grouped according to each RQ, enabling comparisons.

5.2 Discussion

Based on the analyses, it is understood that the components that can be used to enhance Adana's brand identity are generally positive (e.g., rich, warm-hearted, vibrant, liveable, comfortable, fun-loving, humanist, pleasure-seeking, food-loving; science, art, commerce, energy, technology, health, sports, nature, tourism). Evaluations regarding the components/focus areas for branding/marketing strategies revealed through factor analysis and brand identity components for the future destination of Adana with a high degree of consensus according to the Delphi analysis results are summarized below.

According to Delphi experts, the most agreed-upon and desired identity component for Adana's future brand is the vision of a 'planned city'. In order for the cosmopolitan cultural structure created by various social groups in the destination to live comfortably, in prosperity and peace, and for the city's geography, coasts, agricultural, commercial, touristic, and industrial resources to be effectively and efficiently utilized, emphasis should be placed on the theme of a 'planned city' to become an effective destination brand. Favourable climate conditions and affordable living have historically led to unskilled migration. However, unavoidable migration requires strategic planning, sustainable management practices, and a long-term perspective for its solution and management, which should be an important component of the branding project. Regardless of the theme with which the destination will brand itself, the vision of being a planned city emerges as a vital necessity. Particularly for a projected Adana structured as a technological, commercial, and sociocultural hub, the planned city vision holds significant importance. Moreover, the concept of a planned city could potentially help break the laziness prevalent among Adana's inhabitants by providing a systematic, orderly environment that addresses Adana's extreme temperatures. In addition, the planned city vision would enable Adana to assume missions such as becoming a 'global city' and 'important regional centre' in the future. In contrast, unplanned and haphazard urbanization has negative implications that do not align with the vision of a tourism destination, such as 'loss of identity', 'negative image', and 'visual pollution'. Improving municipal governance based on

successful global examples, developing a 'user-centred' planning culture, and enhancing urban consciousness and city culture among Adana's inhabitants are among the recommended priorities for identity construction. Furthermore, there is a need for wide boulevards, modern urban furniture that responds to evolving user needs, technological solutions, pedestrian and bicycle lanes, parks, parking lots, themed/tropical gardens, green spaces, and culturally, aesthetically, and landmark-quality structures planned and produced for the benefit of all city residents. Organizing rail systems between important centres and high-traffic areas, and effectively operating public transport vehicles equipped with technological capabilities (such as artificial intelligence, machine learning) can support overcoming bottlenecks. Artistically, measures to produce and sustain resources that currently make the city dependent on external sources in Adana can revitalize art in the destination and reduce the qualified human migration to major centres like Istanbul, and abroad. In addition to art, realistically and systematically addressing the city's comfort, taste, and entertainment aspects will contribute to branding. Active participation of universities in Adana and its region will also positively contribute to the branding process. There is a need for a 'destination management organization' that stands out with coordination and monitoring functions in order to transform the destination into a planned and organized living and tourism centre.

One of the most agreed-upon identity elements is the view that the city could be an "exemplary business centre in the Middle East." Adana has many supporting factors - geographical, historical, archaeological, communicative, transportation, infrastructural, and socio-cultural- that could bolster this view. However, there is a need to enhance Adana's people's global perspective on business, entrepreneurship, trade, and industry through experiences and good examples. Historical agricultural employment opportunities, the unskilled nature of the population that came with migration, locals' historical engagement in civil service and military since the Ottoman era, avoidance of craftsmanship, the culture of "half-share" (look after my field/garden, you take half of the produce), and the mismatch of trade and industry with nomadic culture all suggest that the mission of becoming a "business hub" requires more effort. Additionally, adverse traits attributed to Adana residents such as laziness, indifference, and short-term thinking are expected to lead to inefficiency, discord, and mistrust, which will not positively impact success in business. The mission to become a centre for technology, software, and service sectors aligned with evolving global needs and preferences of the new generation can be supported. In summary, while the identity element of being an "exemplary business centre in the Middle East" has garnered sufficient agreement, it appears to have a weak foundation. However, when considered as a theme for the Adana brand, it is a fact that there are many resources and potentials today that physically support this.

Another identity element most agreed upon by Delphi experts is the city's mission to be "the leading healthcare centre in the region." It is a known fact that Adana has many resources and potentials historically and today to become a "healthcare destination." Adana's universities with medical faculties, city hospital, various specialty centres related to health and cosmetics operated by many private chain hospitals already demonstrate an existing sector and potential. Adana's warm, hospitable, compassionate, generous, and friendly people, suitable climate conditions, rich cuisine, natural attractions on the coast and in the Taurus Mountains, and tourism infrastructure support this brand theme. In addition to these qualities, the mild winters in Adana also indicate the potential for winter sports-based investments in the city. In summary, it can comfortably be said that one of the most prominent identity components and brand themes of Adana is "health," with a strong infrastructure and components that will continue to make a name for itself in the future.

One of the vision proposals most agreed upon by Delphi experts for Adana is to become a "modern agricultural production centre." When looking at the city's current resources, there are many geographical, climatic, geological, hydrological, human, and cultural identity

elements and resources that support agriculture and agricultural production. Adana and its hinterland have been an important agricultural production centre since ancient times, particularly recognized as one of the world's foremost cotton production centres alongside Egypt from the early 19th century onwards. Especially with the increasing demand for industrial production worldwide, thousands of people, primarily from Egypt and Syria, came to Cukurova to engage in agricultural activities. These movements, where agricultural production became a motif, shaped the region with an "agriculture" theme. However, it is observed that Adana seems to have lost its agricultural importance today. Reasons include land fragmentation, illegal construction on fertile agricultural land due to various migration flows to the region, improper zoning practices, the continued use of "traditional" rather than technology-intensive agricultural methods, and the lack of efforts and initiatives to evaluate agricultural production as high-value-added products. Additionally, influenced by the hot climate, the region's people being characterized as "relaxed, not fond of work, even inclined towards leisure and enjoyment" can also be added. In summary, while Adana possesses very strong identity components in terms of agriculture and agricultural production, adopting modern agricultural practices, increasing added value, developing strong strategies for agricultural production, and developing projects that include agricultural tourism are necessary for it to emerge as a brand prominently associated with the agriculture theme. Furthermore, there is a need for collaborative initiatives among new generation landowners and the development of collective consciousness.

When the theme of original cuisine culture is considered in conjunction with the "entertainment theme," it is a candidate identity component to become a much more prominent brand theme with synergistic power. Moreover, this component is one of the most supportive elements for the "tourism" phenomenon. If a decision is made to create a brand identity heavily focused on tourism themes for Adana, much progress can be made in a short time with simpler adjustments and planning requirements. Regarding the people of Adana, the most important identity components that can support the trio of "entertainment, gastronomy, and tourism" are listed as "fond of pleasure, enjoys entertainment and dining, hospitable, warm-hearted, open-minded, productive and entrepreneurial under appropriate conditions, respectful of ethnic, religious, and other differences, and creative." This listing encompasses nearly all of the personality traits attributed to the city's residents. It is evaluated that these characteristics attributed to the people of Adana may also support the "slow city" concept. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that Adana has ample opportunity and strength, especially in terms of human resources, to be recognized with a brand based on entertainment-gastronomy-tourism sectors and themes. Adana, which has been an important market in the Middle East for centuries, is one of the rare places where shopping can be integrated with entertainment. In this sense, it should also be considered as a centre for pleasure and luxury shopping. The findings related to the identification of "visual identity" elements in this study also contain evidence supporting the entertainment theme. Accordingly, the elements desired to be included in a logo developed for the Adana destination are water sources symbolizing relaxation and peace, such as lakes or seas. These elements signify a brand theme centred around entertainment and tourism.

6. Conclusions

One of the most significant outcomes of globalization is the mobility of people driven by tourism. Tourism, due to its substantial economic impact on destinations, is of interest to both practitioners and academics alike. For destinations to maximize the positive economic impacts of tourism, they must differentiate themselves with unique identity characteristics, effectively communicate with their target audiences, and efficiently and sustainably utilize all available resources.

At this point, the importance of identifying and strategically managing unique identity components that differentiate themselves as a product and in communication efforts becomes

evident. It is evaluated that a destination can achieve effective and sustainable success by sharing its developed positive brand identity based on its real identity components through an integrated marketing communication process with its target audiences. Therefore, brand development should start with revealing the brand identity. This article reports on the "brand identity development" studies conducted towards making Adana city a tourism-impactful destination brand.

Given Adana's numerous identity components and resources that could support various fields and brand themes, it may not be appropriate to develop an "Adana Brand" where only one dominant theme is emphasized, as agreed upon by Delphi experts. However, it is recommended to create product and service brands based on each strong theme and to increase their number. It is believed that a city with as many well-known and preferred sub-brands as possible will become a recognized and prominent brand. Over time, the majority of brands a city produces and their ranking will signify a more natural process compared to an imposed understanding. However, it seems necessary for this natural process to be "managed" within the framework of science, reason, professionalism, and sustainability principles. It is now a well-known fact that an unmanaged image will form on its own due to external environmental factors, and this image usually may not be the desired image.

At the end of the current study, it was possible to detect the most prominent four brand identity/brand themes for an "Adana Destination Brand" that can be developed with the analysis of Adana's brand identity components. These brand identity/brand themes can be listed as "Planned City," "Health City," "Modern Agricultural City," and "Sociocultural Centre-Entertainment City." All of these brand identities/themes are interconnected. It is inconceivable to think of an unplanned health or entertainment-tourism city, and a health city or sociocultural centre with weak entertainment-recreational service support is also inconceivable. It should not be overlooked that the use of components and themes such as sports, R&D, technology, universities, greenhouse farming, Mediterranean coasts, and energy will yield beneficial results in enriching the above main brand identities/themes.

Contribution of the study: In a globalizing world, branding has become a mandatory condition for distinguishing oneself from competitors for tourism destinations, regions, areas, and cities. Statesmen, mayors, managers, consultants, and academics aware of the importance of the subject have focused on branding. Few scientific studies on branding destinations have focused on the in-depth analysis and creation of brand identity. With a different methods composition and a sample model proposal, the current study contributes to the literature and application world regarding destination branding, city branding, and the creation of destination/city brand identity.

In a complex topic like brand identity development, there are certainly many methods that can serve to identify important components. However, the Delphi method, used inherently for such research purposes, is seen to be highly suitable for uncovering important or priority components related to a specific subject and has also yielded productive results in the analysis of interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and complex issues, as evidenced in the current study focusing on the creation of destination brand identity. The current study also contributes to the literature as one of the first examples showing the use of the Delphi method with factor analysis in branding destination studies.

Recommendations for Practitioners: Practitioners can conduct further studies on shaping the potential and vision of the cities or destinations they work on using the methods and composition used in this study. This research serves as a comprehensive "picture" showing many aspects, potentials, weaknesses, and opportunities of the city/destination. By looking at this picture, it is possible to gain general insights into various dimensions of the problem or solution. However, it seems necessary for practitioners to elaborate on the general overview of

the city/destination provided by this and similar research through advanced studies, planning projects based on stakeholder collaboration. The current study is one of the few consensus studies involving broad participation from Adana city managers (private, public, and NGOs), based on cooperation and a collective approach.

Recommendations for Future Research: Generally, this study, which can be examined under the subject of branding tourism-oriented destinations, emphasizes a "city." The city has been primarily examined in many aspects, especially tourism, as it is a concept connected to many subjects. In future research, detailed independent studies are required and recommended for each concept that must be examined in connection with tourism. It is crucial to conduct interactive studies on topics such as the impact of decisions related to the destination/city on city resources and stakeholders, multiculturalism, international issues, entrepreneurship, and demographics.

Limitations of the Study: The current study was conducted with limitations concerning method, sample, and project opportunities. It should be noted that changes in these could affect the results. Identity and image are often confused but are two fundamental components of a brand. This study only focused on brand identity and did not examine the dimension of brand image. Due to the requirements of the Delphi method, only Adana city managers were included as Delphi experts in the study. The constraints of accessing the sample due to the necessity of senior city executives as sample individuals have also been challenging. The study included only residents of Adana in its scope. The interviews were conducted directly by the researcher, which created constraints in terms of human resources and time and minimized interpretation differences between interviews.

Funding

This research was funded by Cukurova University Research Fund within the scope of project number IIBF2004D2.

Declaration of interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by Cukurova University' Research Fund within the scope of project number IIBF2004D2. We would like to thank Cukurova University for providing support for the research, and all institutions and individuals, especially the Governorship, Municipalities and non-governmental organizations, for providing the necessary data.

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