



**SELF-ORGANIZATION THEORY OF GENTRIFICATION:
EXPLORING INDIVIDUAL BRANDING PRACTICES IN
THE EMERGENCE OF GASTRO-URLA**

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Master's Thesis

Graduate School

Izmir University of Economics

İzmir

2022

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A Thesis Submitted to
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Master Program in Marketing Communication and Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

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Master Program in Marketing Communication and Public Relations

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June, 2022

This research aims to investigate the role that newly flourishing gastronomical brands of fine-dining scale play in the ongoing transformation process in Urla, a suburban area within the city of İzmir, located in Turkey. The diverse communication activities of multiple brands were analyzed considering brands as agents affecting change, based on the fieldwork that conducted in Urla and the netnographic data that retrieved in line with practice theory. Data was collected by the means of focused ethnography, netnographic observation, and participatory observation, through utilizing visual methods. Followingly, data was analyzed using a novel approach based on assemblage theory, with an emphasis on the heterogeneous dynamics that the brands and agents of the area are in a relationship with. Findings on how the branding efforts affect

the repositioning of a local area, in particular, enabled a discussion of a new perspective on the changing agencement in the complex emergence of gentrification. Highlighting the interdependent influence of independent agents, this study aims to open up new paths for rhizomatic studies of gentrification by offering a theoretical approach of self-organizing gentrification.

Keywords: branding, assemblage theory, gentrification, repositioning, self-organization, Urla



ÖZET

KENDİ-KENDİNE ÖRGÜTLENEN MUTENALAŞMA KURAMI: BAĞIMSIZ MARKALAŞMALARIN GASTRO-URLA'NIN ORTAYA ÇIKIŞINDA İNCELENMESİ

Taştan, İrem

Pazarlama İletişimi ve Halkla İlişkiler Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Ebru Uzunoğlu

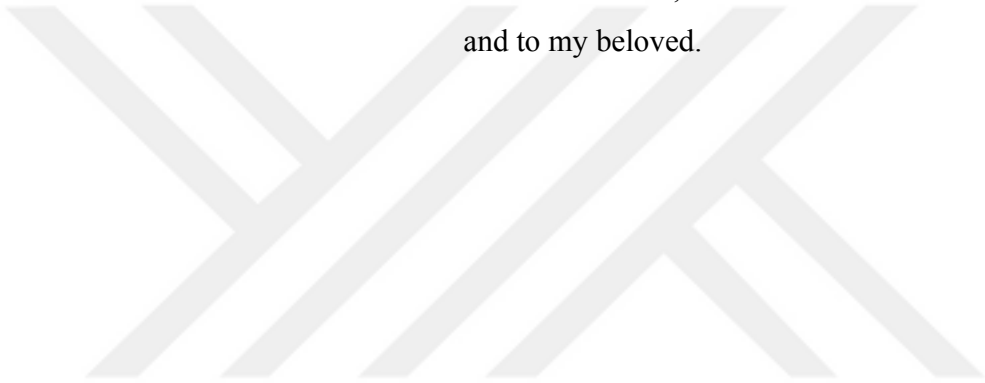
Haziran, 2022

Bu araştırma, Urla'da filizlenen fine-dining markalarının bölgede süregelen değişim sürecinde oynadığı rolü araştırmaktadır. Urla'da yapılan saha çalışması ve uygulama kuramı (practice theory) doğrultusunda sosyal medya üzerinden toplanan verilere dayalı olarak, bu çalışmada, birden fazla markanın markalaşma etkinlikleri bu markaların bölgedeki değişim sürecindeki aracılıkları açısından analiz edilmiştir. Veriler, görsel araçlar kullanılarak odaklanmış etnografi, netnografik gözlem ve katılımcı gözlem yollarıyla toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, belirlenen markaların ilişkide bulunduğu heterojen dinamiklere vurgu yapılarak, öbikleşme kuramına (assemblage theory) dayanan özgün bir yaklaşım ile değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular,

özellikle markalaşma çabalarının yerel bir alanın yeniden konumlandırılmasını nasıl etkilediğine dair yeni görüşler ortaya koyarken, genel olarak mutenalaşmanın (gentrification) ortaya çıkışındaki çetrefilli nedenselliğe de eğilmektedir. Bağımsız bileşenlerin doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak gelişen birbirine bağımlı etkisini vurgulayan bu araştırma, kendi-kendini organize eden mutenalaşmaya dair veriye dayalı bir kuram sunarak mutenalaşma üzerine köksap çalışmaları (rhizomatic studies) için yeni teorik açılımlar sağlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: pazarlama, öbekleşme kuramı, mutenalaşma, yeniden konumlandırma, kendi-kendine örgütlenme, Urla

To;
my father, my favourite person in the world,
my mother, the most beautiful,
my sisters ec-ir-me,
K.Y.K. forever,
and to my beloved.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a precious learning experience to take part in İzmir University of Economics as a graduate student. I would like to thank the following people I value dearly, without whom I would not have been able to complete this thesis satisfactorily. To begin with, I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ebru Uzunođlu for her guidance on the paths that I have never walked before, and for graciously providing me the advice of her experiences for realizing my own creative interests. I would like to show my admiration to my administrative advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selin Türkel, for her continuous positive energy which has been my fuel throughout this journey.

I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Derya Özkan, who has been motivating me toward non-conventional thinking and sharing her feedback in support of the discussions I aimed at situating. I would also like to thank Asst. Prof. Betül Öztürk for the invaluable insights she has given during the earlier phases of this research. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the influence of Asst. Prof. Zeynep Özdamar Ertekin on my interpretative approach, as she changed my line of sight in academia, and give her my gratitude. Nonetheless, I am honoured to mention the contributions of the respected jury members Prof. Deniz Atik and Prof. Gökçen Karanfil in further developing my work.

In addition, I would like to thank all my professors that have instructed and inspired me during my undergraduate years at ODTÜ/METU. Especially, I appreciate Eminegöl Karababa for once preparing the background that today help me advance in the academic field I am keen on, and Çađrı Topal for his sincere encouragement that made me take the first step into my graduate studies.

The heartfelt thanks are to my family and friends, for all the support they have shown me through the years. I would like to pay my special regards to my father Dr. Ahmet Taştan and my mother Dilek Erođlu Taştan, for their unconditional love and belief in me. I am thankful to my sisters Merve Nur Taştan Özgeniş and Ecem Taştan, to my spirit sisters, and to all whom I care for. Lastly, I want to make an honourable mention to coffee, which has been with me humbly, tirelessly supplying the caffeine substance into my system.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Mushrooming

Around the world, suburban areas are being transformed out of their status of being spaces idly located outside the city, into the new status of being places that potentially offer alternatives to the city. Since I, a person readily being local to the urban İzmir yet an outsider to the suburban Urla, during my occasional visits realized the speed in changes the area of Urla has been experiencing. While so, I have found myself frequently using the word "mushrooming" (*mantarlanma*) for mundanely discussing the happenings within my social circles. Interpretation already starts with signification. That was because, I have been signifying such a visible change, as it is influenced by the attribution of the rising numbers of newly emerging commercial agents within the local area of Urla, like a mushroom troops' occupation of a fertile substrate. These were especially the premium gastronomical brands, disrupting Urla by adding touristic flares onto its beforehand humble positioning, yet, ironically benefitting intensively from its perceived locality for their own branding efforts.

The ongoing change in Urla, as this study develops the discussions will gradually prove, to be an interesting case of gentrification that could be read from the initiation point of branding. With the new brands of cocktail bars, fine-dining restaurants, local wine tastings, gourmet olive oil producers, and all other gastro-tourism and cultural experiences the area offers for consumption; the mushrooming of the gentrifier brands is indeed making a quite interesting topic of inquiry.

1.2. Purpose

Recognizing the relationality and complexity of the social world, contemporary philosophy puts aside the traditional micro versus macro scaling of social phenomena and considers major beings as assemblages of many multi-directional minor parts (DeLanda, 2006). Urla henceforth is a promising site to conduct contextual research on

branding and its various unique associations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to larger contexts in form of micro-macro linkages.

The concept of locality relates to a past territorialization, as exists only relatively in face of the present de- and re-territorializations. Henceforth, it can be argued that the *local area* here refers to a rather idle site, in both its geographical and cultural sense, in comparison to the geographical and cultural connectedness of the *global world*. Therefore; this study has been proposed as, firstly, an approach to understanding the changes happening within a local area in relevance to the observed branding practices. Then, also taken as an initiative, to evaluate these changes in the light of the insights generated from the interpretation of the data, as the outcomes of this investigation is to work on the gaps within the existing gentrification literature.

This thesis aims at studying Urla's transformation process by the focus on relationality, with an emphasis on the co-emerging influences of various agents (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2019). The branding practices of individual brands are quite visible in shaping the gastronomical turn in Urla's positioning, so the affect of such efforts is to be investigated. Complementarily, the happenings in relation to gastronomical brands' influence in the area are to be discussed based on the relevant arguments of the rich literature on gentrification. Due to the aim of this study being an exploration and the research questions leaning on an interpretative approach, this research will rely on a qualitative lens (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Ger, 2014), while the core data is to be collected through observational netnography and inactive participation methods.

1.3. Flow

Assemblages, which will be adopted as one of the core concepts for this study, are not fixated entities (Feely, 2019), hence nor is this research. In name of providing the sense of an organically growing text for its readers; the flow of this study is left rather a flexible stream of consciousness in which thoughts are gradually formed, and, the structure is akin to a mosaic figure as parts meaningful in themselves yet together

signifying something else. Howbeit, the extent of such flexibility is deliberately limited, to avoid falling into the pit of disrespecting the structure of an official thesis paper that is required to be abided by the candidates for a master's degree.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will firstly clarify the novel perspective generated for this study which guides the entire research and reviews the relevant literature beforehand positioning the research questions. Then Chapter 3 will offer the interpretations of the qualitative approach parallel to the perspective of this study and outline the research design, emphasizing novel contributions to methodology along the way. Chapter 4 is the initial analysis, digging and dragging the data for giving the descriptive answers to the first research question, while, creating information regarding the practice of branding and its current implications. Chapter 5 is for levelling up the analysis in an integrated manner, demonstrating the findings towards the second research question, and supplying the overall discussions of the study.

Later on, Chapter 6 is supplied as an added discussion of the discussion, furthering on with a phantom research question, briefly opening up to a rhizomatic gateway that is to be an original reading of the study. Lastly, the concluding chapter will wrap up a summary and state the contributions to the branding and gentrification literature, yet, connect to not an end but a beginning.

“Everything is complex for those who think, and no doubt thought itself takes delight in making things yet more complex. But those who think need to justify their abdication with a vast programme of understanding, which they set forth - like liars their explanations - with heaps of exaggerated detail that eventually reveal, once the earth is swept away, the lying root.” Pessoa (2001).



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE

2.1. On Being, Knowing, and Exploring

Within the objects, into and out of the existence, of the real world, there are standpoints. These are not standpoints of the subjects as argued in classic relativism but as in discussions of Leibniz; a subject becomes the subject when it is situated within particular standpoints, such that from another standpoint it becomes another subject, carrying differing perspectives (Baker, 2014). Thus, standpoint is not a property of any subject, existence, being, or entity; things all carry multiple perspectives. Perspective is a concentration of transcendent perceptions that comes before the subject to be placed in it. It is a necessity for perspective to be produced, otherwise, the object cannot be composed as the subject of an inquiry. Hence, loosely depicting the perspective adopted for this research prior to framing the interpretative approach is found appropriate.

*“When I speak of time, it is not yet
When I speak of a place, it has disappeared
When I speak of a man, he's already dead
When I speak of time, it is already no more”*
(Baudrillard and Noailles, 2007)

Baudrillard spoke of a place whereas spoken of, ceases to be. This conceptualization of place is an essential being, ought to be as how it is perceived once by a human mind and that gives legitimacy to its existential essence. Considering the above verses, Baudrillard's words not only to be taken as a reproach, but more of a questioning; although he doesn't give an answer to it and leaves reality in a state of nothingness. Still, there lies an opportunity of criticizing the inadequacy of such static conception of place, or any other existence that is implied to be doomed with the inevitable annihilation of everything. Because the human mind has been conditioned to put the essence of being into a forced box of linear rigidities for a long time now, it is

falling behind grasping the complex being ceaselessly woven with threads of multiplicity that can be argued as the reality itself.

Answering the question of what an abstracted place fundamentally is in the face of perceptually evident constant changes may require a sharp mind in search of stability for its totalities, which is not a matter of interest for this study. The conceptualization of the nature of being understood here as not existing in the world destined to abide by the approval of the human mind, but equally co-operating with it during the generation of knowledge about it (Bhaskar, 2008).

There are things, that drift away, like the endless numbered days of a lifetime. On the other hand there are really no new things, there are to be only new perspectives (Baker, 2011). Polarities of the world may be apparent, yet within the universe can be found the deeper unity of plurality (Watts, 1963). That is because, for the nature of being, the merits of any process are an amalgamation, and there is no such thing as corruption or disintegration; only from the point of view of our understanding we speak of deterioration and dispersion. Due to coming to an understanding that ultimate truth can never be accomplished, contemporary philosophies are not created to manifest their own truths; but to give glances, offer perspectives, generate subjectivities towards that ultimate truth (Baker, 2011).

“We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse.” (Barad, 2007)

Deriving from a standpoint of multiple perspectivism with relative constructivism, life is conceptualized as both the infinite oneness of the same thing and the countless multiplicity of finite things (Baker, 2009). Barad underlines in above quote that, for that relational reality perspective; the being of the researched, knowing of the researcher, and exploring of the researching are immersed as one in a unicity, which is

what is aspired to generate through this study. In a commentary on Barad and Deleuze, (Murriss and Bozalek, 2019) it has been stated that within this kind of a perspective, the space, therefore in a non-linear time, is a context of matters in motion. Accordingly, it would be ill-fitting to conceive a city, an area, a place, or a street as an unchanging unity that could be grasped through a single spectrum.

A place should be taken akin to a plurality mechanism, which consists of ongoing numerous movements, generating continuous multiple relations, interlocking diverse agents within a constant variability, all moving relative to each other and repeatedly expressing themselves to each other (Baker, 2014). So the being of a place, reminding it is a subjectivized space, is recognized for this study as a changing entity (Muminovic, 2019) that is always shaping, deepening, eroding, cohering, and never-ending emergent process that is externally linked to the observer within the same space that will be offering a window of seeing it; and interpreting the way in which it is coming to be.

2.1.1. Interpretative Lens

“So, when we read these three texts on top of each other, what will we encounter? I am going to ask this.” (Baker, 2014)

From the standpoint of this study, it has been clarified that drawing distinctions between the dimensions of onto-episto-methodo logics is irrelevant. However, following the footsteps of Baker (2014) as given above, briefly highlighting key concepts derived from the discussions in contemporary sciences that inspired the very perspective for this study can stimulate a mixed approach that informs the implementation of the research. Initiative of engaging different theories into one perspective can called to be a diffraction (Barad, 2014). As Smith and Monforte (2020) puts, diffraction is an attempt to embrace the foundations of the old to be re-used in name of thinking anew. This is hoped to help reduce the vagueness regarding the interpretative lens. Therefore, this part

comes up as an attempt to create a cohesive advance for the operationalization of the research and analysis for this study.

As the research questions that is to be revealed in the end of the literature review will formulate, what this study aims to create knowledge about is the agency (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Bowden, 2014) of collective influence coming from selected individual agents (gastronomical brands) on the process of change within a local area (suburban Urla). Moving further, concerning the relationality between things meanwhile seeing every being as a flock of relational ties is found possible through benefiting from the assemblage (DeLanda, 2006; DeLanda, 2016) thinking in shaping an understanding of the things regarded as brands and the place. At the point of asking in what way such an understanding can be achieved is answered by looking at the practice (Schatzki, Cetina, and Von Savigny, 2000; Hui, Schatzki, and Shove, 2017) level of happenings as it offers a way of grasping how branding and changing are enfolding within the phenomenon.

2.1.1.1. Agency

There are miscellaneous examinations of agency in recent theoretical disputes (Allana and Clark, 2018). Relevant for this study, as a Deleuzian concept, agency is understood as a rather extensive form of relationality. There, agency being the capacity of the agents to influence, involve, transform, affect both its internalities and externalities. These agents can be considered as individuals in a sense of assemblages, which will get to; nonetheless important to mention here that individual agents are indispensable to the assemblages they affect.

It has been articulated that reality is understood in this research as it is emerging through complex relationships between wholes and parts in varying qualities and scales. Drawing on that, agency offers a relationality in which agents with differing natures and capabilities co-creatively emerge influences in a never-ending happening they are all a part of (Deleuze, 1990). Capabilities are empowered through energizing the links between components in the unique existence of the thing regarded as the agent, and

capacities show themselves in the degrees of agencing that the thing has at a point in time (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; DeLanda, 2006).

Agency when in a given situation, takes the form of a "quasi-causal role" (Bowden, 2014); such that, it can be understood as the postmodernist replacement of the direct causation within the modernist thinking, a correction to it even, in recognition of the multifinality of the real world. It is necessary to see that at about no time in history one can draw a straight line from A to B, vitality resides in comprehending the manifoldness in the traces of causality (DeLanda, 1997; Baker, 2014); moreover, any line can still be drawn from A to B. Urry (2005) recites, within the sight of non-linearity, consistent relationship between causes and effects is nonexistent in its normative sense; but the specific circumstances do produce their own emergent influences. This refers to what is contended here in the notion of multifinality, as an aspect of quasi-causality. Parallel to the already mentioned conversations, Bowden (2014) cleans up the concept of agency in a nutshell as can be found in the below quote.

“While agents with their intentions can no longer be thought to be behind their actions in the traditional causal sense, they are certainly ‘out there’ in their actions such as these are interpreted or made sense of by others.” (Bowden, 2014)

Agency has been scrutinized in researches of cultural and marketing orientation for a while now, commonly in the sense that gives due to the agency of materiality in varying topics and considerations (Belk, 1988; Southerton, 2001; Borgerson, 2005; Martin and Schouten, 2014; Fernandez, 2015). Rather recently, the relationality aspect of Deleuzian agency is receiving attention in macromarketing studies (Scott, Martin, and Schouten, 2014). The particular form of agency that is of value for this thesis study is the agency of brands in the changing of a local area.

This agency, aimed to be grasped through discussing the relationality between branding and gentrification. That highlights a research in which relations receive the central attention (Sandıkcı and Kravets, 2019), and in this manner, entities are to make

up the context whereas relations among them will make up interpretations leveraging on the “context of context” (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

Such exploration falls in line with Lucarelli and Giovanardi (2019), as they are targeting at disclosing the reciprocal relationships among the marketing efforts and the surrounding society, which sets for the future research upon tracking the social complexity vein. In sum, it can be understood that, agency is the core concept to what this study is going after to explore. As so, the following parts will be the description of the analytical and methodological concepts derived together as a flexible approach in support of achieving the synthesis fulfilling the research purpose.

2.1.1.2. Assemblage

Bearing the motivation to deconstruct and better make use of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical advancements pioneering assemblage theory on the realm in-between new materialism and critical realisms (Dolphijn and Van Der Tuin, 2012) for social sciences, an assemblage theory has been discussed by DeLanda (2006) and reworked in DeLanda (2016). What Deleuzean agency makes possible is an understanding of things as assembled by internal and external links defined by capacities which are their degrees of affecting or being affected; from this very comprehension, DeLanda's assemblage came about.

However, “agencement” and “assemblage” here are not mere translations of words from French to English nor are they distinct due to mere meaning loss in translation (Phillips, 2006). Assembling things, or in critical realist terms composing entities as emerging out of other entities (Elder-Vass, 2007), and reaching the concept of assemblage in reference to DeLanda is endowing an analytical stance of flux in itself. It is, along the lines emphasized in the philosophical perspective encountered earlier, obtains facets of both a process and a structure (Rutzou and Elder-Vass, 2019).

The key argument propagated against the assemblage theory is denoted in its abundance of fluid notions, which make a standing quite imprecise, whereas making interpretations of the reality are hard to comprehend (Dovey et al., 2018). However,

others can find the prolificity of it just because of this borderless thinking. Assemblages of DeLanda, in alignment with Tsing (2015), truly are open-ended gatherings at their simplest explanation. Within a reflection about Spinozism, Baker (2009) says, according to the laws of motion, when the bodies are fixed relative to a certain speed and slowness ratios, what emerges is called an “individual” so an individual is thus always a more or less mixed combination of sub-individuals.

Drawing further, an “infinitely complex individual” that is, within an unlimited sequence of compositions from the infinitesimal to the gargantuan, could be possibly regarded as a level, or degree, a scale of being (Baker, 2014). The very idea of composing here, can be found in the assemblage thinking. Bowden (2015, p. 61) links concepts of agency and assemblages in articulating;

“agency is inseparable from the different ‘assemblages’ of heterogeneous affective bodies that a given body enters into, where every body is itself an assemblage of more elementary bodies, and so on”

The individual in consideration of an assemblage can literally be a human body in line with the metaphors as given in these two explanations. It symmetrically can be a group of human bodies inclusive to more-than-body notions regarding humans, as in society can be regarded as an assemblage.

What is more is, an assemblage being well above and beyond the dependency on humans. Social entities, beings, individuals, or assemblages they may be; have humans and non-human objects as their equally existing and agencing parts in reference to their differing capabilities (Elder-Vass, 2015; Elder-Vass, 2017), meanwhile their non-linear, non-direct, “quasi-causal” affectus do need to involve in exercising links to these diverse components.

A building can be an assemblage of many human and non-human components, varying agents with volatile properties, and hybrid capacities. A building, however, can also be considered as an assemblage without any role given to humans, focusing on the components made of cement, iron, glass, voltage, door knobs, sewage, and geographical

condition it sits on. United Nations can be taken as an assemblage of countries linked with certain diplomatic arrangements and commerce; making a pot of meal can be taken as an assemblage created by a bunch of non-human ingredients and a human practice called cooking, not to go without mention that the way of thinking here works itself out as a hodgepodge; a marble desk can be an assemblage of the shape, size, office culture, colour, position, and things on top of it; meanwhile formation of marble can be an assemblage of minerals and thousand years of natural forces of non-linear pressure (DeLanda, 1997). It is all a matter of analytical perspective, that of, assemblage theory enables boundlessly.

Before moving on, it is necessary to feature the distinction between the Latour's assemblages (Latour, 1996; Latour, 2005) in the actor-network theory (ANT) and the conceptualization of the assemblage theory (AT) in Delanda (DeLanda, 1997; DeLanda 2006; DeLanda 2016) here. First divergence is on the nature of being, which makes everything else dispart as well. According to ANT, things are emergent of relationships among the heterogeneous actors with assigned roles; meanwhile in AT, things are emerging through the relationship among heterogeneous agents with ephemeral capabilities. Although it seems to collide in the recognizing multiplicity in things, the difference is in AT's embracement of the notion of fluidity (Müller and Schurr, 2016). That is due to, as highlighted by the perspective spoken in Deleuzian, reality exists as a process, beyond a mind's stabilized understanding of it.

Secondly there is the issue of knowing. ANT works on multi-dimensional nodes, AT seems to do so; however there is the idea of versatile traces in AT. Again rooted in the principle of multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) but in relations, in AT there are connections inside and between things, indifferent of these traces to be tracked down or not. Despite the fact that very words of Latour (1996) explained the “actor” notion in the ANT as individual actors as actants inclusive more-than-humans, in the classic thought of ANT human-oriented ideology is never abandoned.

Such that, it is directly Latour (2005) who articulates that, for ANT, what is at hand is the only real; if another actor or possible other connections within the assemblage is to be taken into account it is to be deemed as mere conspiracy. Due to its

initiation as an actualist approach (Müller and Schurr, 2016), ANT rejects the reality that is not or cannot be connected by the human mind (Elder-Vass, 2015).

AT can on the other hand, look for the “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) with its rhizomatic thinking, for it exploring can be achieved to a scale, again creating an assemblage, of the reflections upon the connections which at no time are finite. The idea claiming there are links crossing the boundaries of the researcher's thinking is rooted in the emphasis of historicity, the core tenet of the Deleuzian assemblage. For DeLanda (1987), social science is no different than biology or geology, schools of science themselves synthetic categories (Dolphin and Van Der Tuin, 2012). Hence, if things are of things; there are the co-requisites of their pasts, presents, and futures, all are uniquely referring to the same flat reality and this perpetuity can be explored with assemblage thinking.

Third and last reason to appropriate the assemblage thinking in AT and not ANT for this study is about the purpose of such exploration which is again, on the surface can look similar. ANT seeks a resultant form, inquiry works on constructing networks to explain phenomena; divergently, AT parallel to the nature of reality focuses on a formation process while considering phenomena (Bajde, 2013), knowledge is a subjectivity offering another perspective to it among existing many, it is never an end result.

No process is finished, nor any being is complete; so possibilities are also content in subjectivities, a part of the real world. While paraphrasing Deleuze, DeLanda (2016, p. 165) is giving a hand to understand what this means:

“when you drill a hole in a pipe; there is no social system that does not leak from all directions”

When assemblage thinking is applied to the problems of the lived world under its de facto conditions, problems are no more dead ends, they are also vulnerable to change. Mapping problematic issues thus can offer solutions recognizing the complexity of the conditions. There appears a radical door for creating critical, transformative, activist

research asking how things could and hopefully can be. Although the aim of this study is not attentive to taking a critical attitude towards the phenomenon under research, with assemblage thinking the outcomes of a study are to be not a result but another start, another extension to the reality. Thus, suggestions for future driving from this study will be drawn from the components encountered that are calling societal sensibilities.

“At their most basic, assemblages could thus be thought of as a collection of relations between heterogeneous entities to work together for some time. But they are more than this. Terms such as ‘contagions’, ‘epidemics’ and ‘the wind’ hint at the fluidity and ephemerality of assemblages and at their unpredictability, while ‘sympathy’ and ‘symbiosis’ suggest that there is a vital, affective quality to them.” (Müller and Schurr, 2016)

As an accumulation of the ongoing discussions, although acknowledging that assemblages are hard to define due to their density and inter-textuality, Müller and Schurr (2016) characterized the assemblages as presented in the above quote. Regarding the purpose of this study, the analytical surround in conceptualizing things as assemblages in line with DeLanda's conceptualizations will be used as a scheme. Thus, the first step in the analysis will be identifying the diverse agents at play within the assemblage of Urla using assemblage analytics, surely the ones related to the research purpose, in the form of its pertinent components with relevant properties.

From there, the second step using an inductive thematic analysis will be focusing on in what ways the agency of individual brands that will be considered as nested assemblages within the assemblage of Urla collectively influence the process of change in Urla. Thereon, interpretation will work on understanding the interaction between the brands under lens and the meaning of Urla. It is in there what kind of an unintended capacity occurs within the phenomenon will be found. Lastly, the study will further on the complexion of the capacity that the relation between these brands and the area forges, and kick off a discussion upon this emergence.

2.1.1.3. Practice

From a Deleuzian standpoint, connection between the individual-local-phenomenon and the collective-global-phenomena requires each to repetitively reflect each other (Baker, 2009). Practice theories as well, track the macro-meso influences through the micro individual practices bespeaking the reflective production, reproduction, and innovation of reality (Schatzki, 2000). Such aspects of inter-scale relationality in practice theories can be read under the light of the idea underlying the paradigm of micro-history (Levi, 1992; Ginzburg, 1993); because similarly in practice methodologies, to understand macro scales it is meaningful to explore how things are enfolding in lived micro situations.

Practice theories are themselves being postmodern approaches, putting emphasis on how practices are performed incorporating diverse tools and skills, realizing a variety of human and non-human entanglements. On that note, assemblage theory and practice theories indeed complement each other. Suitable to mention here that practice theories are not to be presented as a unified paradigm, since there are distinctive standpoints in thinking in terms of practices.

Broadly, the “practice approach” can be taken as a theorization of practices as an arrays of activities sensitive to tools and skills utilized in their realizations. However, just alike the situation between assemblage theory and actor-network theory, philosophical backgrounds of theorists create alteration among practice theories. Firstly, there is an array of practice theories that are in line with the mainstream human-centric approach in social sciences. Whilst, according to Schatzki (2000, p.11), a practice theorist in this frontier;

“conceives of practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding”

There, a human mind is imperative for any practice, meanwhile research strives for understanding human's conception of value upon their practices; following a

phenomenological stance. On the other hand, there is the post-humanist frontier, challenging the asymmetry in the existences of humans and non-humans. Schatzki (2000) draws another two lines, now among the theorists within the post-humanist practice approach.

First is practice researches that are appropriating research giving due more-than-human, embellishing them with symmetrical agency with capabilities, however humans are still at the centre for creating knowledge about these practices. Second is centralizing not on humans, but on the practices in the research agenda. Much consistent to the aspects of this post-humanist frontier, humans are to be doers of the phenomenon yet their understanding of their practices are not at the core as a source of understanding of them.

This approach of practice theorists explained as an effort to force out the conceptual as well as the embodied “mind” from being the central phenomenon in human life. Such that, Schatzki (2000, p. 21) emphasized that this stance can help empirical research in the ways of becoming aware that the;

“practical understandings, ways of proceeding, and even setups of the material environment represent forms of knowledge (...). [Moreover, they show that the] propositional knowledge presupposes and depends on them”

This kind of focus can serve a need of grasping change, observing how practices unfold and interact within the process. If a consensus is to looked for among many stances in practice theories, overall, referrals can be made to a common "practice approach" that aims at developing research around practices and make practices the field of study, regardless of being human-centric, object-centric, or process-centric. Drawing from Reckwitz's (2002) take on Schatzki's (2000) theoretical procedure, Warde (2005) denoted that practice theories are indeed consistent with the variety of the core claims of contemporary social theories with critical standing. Drawing from Williams (2018, p. 33-34), assemblage theory puts emphasis:

“on flux, contingency and dynamism, and to uncovering the multiple movements that together constitute an effect (...) [where] the process of assembling, rather than the assemblage as resultant formation is therefore prioritised conceptually”

Soulier (2012) has discussed a resourceful coalition of Schatzki's notion of arrangements (2011) practice theory and the assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006). Recalling Schatzki's configurations of inquiry referring social and material things as they are hanging together, acting and reacting via nexuses, setting up the stage for human actions in a co-existence (Schatzki, 2010); proposing the flatness indicating neither individualist nor holistic but simultaneously working advance upon beings indicated with this practice approach (Schatzki, 2016) can agreed to be in line with assemblage thinking (Strengers et al., 2014; Antczak and Beaudr, 2019).

Thus, investigating practices involving both doings and sayings enabling human and non-human relations that are entangled in a process enabling emergent capacities, is appropriate for an assemblage analysis of a post-humanist practice theory methodology inputs.

This study directs its questioning not on what certain brands are according to a party, reach upon an agreement on how they are perceived by some other parties, or proving that there is a particular effect upon the *Urfa* coming from these brands. The need is to look at in situ happenings, to see directly how branding is done; not asking, not formulating, not a human-ration-centric but in-relation-process focus.

Moreover inspired by Reckwitz (2017), affect that will be looking forward to being understood within the scope of this study, is deliberated by practices that are motivated and attended, whence is emerging through relationships accompanied by both cultural and material elements.

“We thus find a quintessentially postmodernist move, (...) shifting the basal unit of the social world from individuals and their deeds to practices and their manifestations in routine doings. In essence, the aim is to re formulate every entity, quality, or state as such a doing: doing being old, doing value, doing a brand (...).” (Woermann, 2017)

Thereof, this study aims at developing a novel understanding of certain brands' affect towards the observed area. Assemblages are living arrangements so to initially contextualize how assemblage of Urla and assemblage of brands manifesting their existence mundanely, so first step is to examine the area meanwhile lurking on branding practices of the interested brands for some time. While branding practices energize the re-territorialization of the interacted area, this interaction between heterogeneous components of the brands and of the area can trigger emergent capacities. Therefore this study is aiming at retracting what these brands enact within their brand communication practices, incidentally brand communications will be conceptualized in detail as a branding practice that incorporates material and expressive properties as hinted in the above quote from Woermann (2017); and interpret how they influence the area through these practices.

2.2. On Branding, Brands, and Repositioning

This part is to first conceptualize branding in line with the perspective of this study, inspect the growth of literature considering brands and assemblage theory together, and clarify the concept of brand communication as the analyzed unit for this research; by further stressing the pertinent aspects of it that will channel together as the components emerging repositioning.

2.2.1. Defining Branding

Branding is traditionally regarded as a process, involving in the efforts of giving meanings to organizations and products, all come by as brands. Kompella (2014) in introducing *The Definitive Book of Branding*, developed for filling the literature gap to better explain generative topics from what brand meaning is today to how it is to be managed. There hinted that brand building is an effort to tie meaning inside of the fabric of a brand, foreshadowing Batey's (2014) chapter in which brand meaning is taken as accumulated properties of brands that connect the brand to the values found in external

culture. That cultural meaning creation has been a worthwhile inquiry, taken up for attention since the construction of foundations in the marketing school (Levy, 1959; Levy and Rook, 1999). Nothing comes out of nothingness, as meanings are transferred from cultures to the brands (Holt, 2006); nonetheless, reciprocally, from brands to the cultures they are transmitted (McCracken, 1986). This very note, later will be the key opening the door to the understanding of the findings achieved through observing the happenings in Urla.

Coming back to the definition of branding, thus, is settled as a process of giving and taking meanings back and forth between brands and their related contexts. However, it is critical to attest to the variables that have a part in this process.

Branding process involves tools (equipment, budget, context), skills (production, design, communication), ideas (product, advertising, logistics), people (producers, consumers, stake-seekers), places (factories, shops, shelves), tags (prices, quality, origin), channels (distribution, media, intranet), transactions (input, output, receipt), promotion (campaigns, festivals, activism), creativity (innovation, engagement, timeliness), and way much more that of the listed, together, need to be enacted towards an aspiration, which comes into being as a brand, again, in form of an ephemeral coming together of heterogeneous components. Branding as so can be a co-creative practice on many levels (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould, 2009; Tierney, Karpen, and Westberg, 2016).

As can be expected, in line with the perspective of this study, what is emerging out of messy practice of branding, is an assemblage called "brand", thereof in the next section of this part the literature around assembling of brands will be reviewed in detail. It is therefore apparent that branding is a processual practice connecting an array of activities, non-humans, humans, knowledge, and desires (Schatzki, 2000; Schatzki 2010). In support of this, Hawkins (2015, p. 118) brilliantly encapsulates:

“brands needs to be seen as a resources t hat does something - not is something - in overlapping systems of practices and performances”

Similarly, Pedeliento and Kavaratzis (2019) combined Schatzki's (1996) stream of practice theory to the branding upon the example of place branding and offered a fruitful conceptualization for further development. Drawing from this commentary it can be articulated that for this research, what it called branding is actually “doing a brand” (Woermann, 2017) which is a processual practice that will be observed in form of brand communications.

2.2.1.1. Assembling of Brands

The “brand” is, as discussed, a consideration of a state of the ever-shaping outcome of branding, as it initiates a brand that is also fluctuant in its nature. This brand can imply forms recognized as organizations and particular products in terms of goods and/or services. These forms of organizations can range from individual businesses to corporations, NGOs to governments, persons to countries.

On the other hand, these product forms can be of FMCGs to big-ticket items, festivals to higher education, cities to countries, even certain areas in cities to dining experiences; both of the latest two are extensively relevant for this study. Percy (2003) reminds that, just about anything can be branded. Needless to say, neither organizations nor products are suggesting forms of mutually exclusive entities within the market. An organization's brand is inclusive to particular products just like an activist group is linked to events it creates that are a form of public awareness services, meanwhile a hotel is usually an umbrella for a variety of consumer goods.

In the end, the brand here is a fuzzy form that in itself is made of tangible and intangible entities that are present within, and can be approached from multiple ends. Just like we can look at the brand of a shampoo territorialized in a hotel's assemblage, we can look at the hotel's brand in the assemblage of the global tourism sector, each can be equally considered as brands.

Although it is fundamental to understand what brand is from the lens of this study, it is critical to ask how any brand is a relational entity as well. Curious about the celebrations around internet of things, Novak and Hoffman (2018) looked at the

consumers' relations to brand through an object-oriented ontology framework of a smart product and offered a description of styles in which this relation is to be experienced. What is foremost in-between the lines was acknowledging that brands consisted of material and expressive parts that cannot be reduced to either, and do have meaning and agency extending well beyond the perception, purchasing, and consumption of its diverse forms. So that, brands are embedded in a socio-material network of interactions in a broader sense (Novak and Hoffman, 2018). Similarly, in a follow-up paper (Hoffman and Novak, 2018), it was stated that looking from a consumer's brand relation standpoint, assemblages of brands exist at micro levels and macro levels simultaneously. So it goes both ways.

To begin with; branding, the assembling of the brands, can imply an inside job of analyzing what are the components of the brand and how these are aggregated into something more than the sum of its parts, meaning a concept of "brands as assemblages". Further on; this approach also can illuminate a quest for tracing the bigger picture the brand is interplaying, meaning a cohesive concept of "brands as nested assemblages" within other assemblages. This research is aiming to answer its core questions by utilizing both of these viewpoints of assemblage thinking about the brands.

This part of the study is dedicated to pinpointing the significant literature that evolved around the assembling of brands; both literally as enabling mindfully observing branding practices, and as in coherently shaping the re-conceptualization of the observed brands through the newly adopted theoretical notions. The literature on the hybrid topic of branding and assembling is hard to separate into categories.

Thus, review will be conducted as an interlinked presentation of the highlighted contributions of the selected studies. Later, this part will be concluded with construing the components in brand assemblages to clarify the analytical lens in upcoming chapters and nonetheless frame the discussions of brands as assemblages that are internally and externally linked to other assemblages. Such that, the last part of the literature review will briefly initiate an understanding of how brands are interacting wider assemblages and branding is a relevant practice in certain processes seemingly independent to it, and

lend on the literature that worked on figuring out the connection between branding and gentrification, which will be looked at as the literature review topic with main influence.

Parmentier and Fischer (2015) utilized DeLanda's assemblage theory (2006) to first conceptualize that brands as assemblages of heterogeneous components, and, secondly to discuss a component's, in their case consumers', destabilizing influence over brand's identity. Parallel to the concept of brands being a collectivity of heterogonous components, human and non-human actors that is, another study examined if consumers' perceptions of a brand's equity has any effects on brand image and social media engagement (Schivinski et al., 2020).

Lucarelli and Hallin (2015) also used assemblage thinking, this time framed brands as loose performative assemblages to suggest the manifold and very much political process of brand regeneration, arguing against the traditional linear understanding of this complex re-making. In line with this performative sense of assemblages, Schöps, Kogler, and Hemetsberger (2019) defined Instagram as a digital-market assemblage with aspects of utmost ubiquity, fluidity, and interactivity that are making it open to the impact of varying actors and looked at how multi-media conversation among these actors, including brands, transform the understandings upon a market. After delivering the literature support on how brands are conceptualized through assemblage theory, now is to focus on how this approach prospered in marketing research as a relational framework.

One of the canonical pieces of branding, also very much of importance for this study, *The Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004), showed that marketers tell stories to make brands connected to the external socio-cultural contexts, for delivering the engagement among brands and consumers' lived culture. Targeting at the bodies of consumers, literally, became a focus of a study which marketing communication practitioners' usage of tattoo symbolism was researched giving due to materiality, a post-human sense of it that extents to human skin, within a consumer-brand assemblage (Bjerrisgaard, Kjeldgaard, and Bengtsson, 2013). There, cultural meanings discussed as travelling around the advertising mediums, meanwhile tattoos entangled such meanings into brands.

Recently, Price, and Coulter (2019) set out to uncover the underlying mechanisms in the ways in which culture; considering expressions, materiality, and ideologies, transmitted in-between brand assemblages and the consumer assemblages. Offering a mixed commentary benefitting psychology and interpretivism, they conclude with the prevalence of brands in the making of the culture as they still in the postmodern world, play fascinating roles in consumers' lives, ruling as malleable, ambiguous, and powerful actors.

Long it has been since marketing argued the homogenizing power of globalization, the semi-legitimate cultural spouse of the global economy that emerged the archetype of standardized global brands (Ritzer, 1993; Wagnleitner, 1994). However, Heley, Welsh, and Saville (2019) incorporated the assemblage theory into their research to grasp something they called the differentiated ubiquity, through a soft-drink product, an iconic materiality of today's world as we know it.

They discussed a quite novel perspective to look at globalization, starting off with the brand that is creating these products and starring in widespread globalization phenomena, lending on the locality due to the in situ entanglements that are territorializing the brand come into being uniquely in each place its products interacts. And so, this called out the attention to drive far from the corporate strategies to the intersections within individual places as a way of understanding extents of globalizations. Here the idea of generating knowledge is parallel to the rhizomatic thinking, which will be integrated within the following parts of this study.

Another recent literature questioned how, after the achievement of the cultural creation of brands in line with the teachings of the canons, the brand can be made relevant to the ever-changing culture that it was once rooted from. Regarding the assemblage thinking, new components can add to an existing being while others can retract, thus new internal and external links can be established. It is for sure that this understanding inspired the idea of considering brands as nested assemblages in the work of Preece, Kerrigan, and O'Reilly (2019), in which researchers set out to theorize brand longevity; micro-meso-macro levels of a brand was analyzed to its meaningful components, benefitting the divertible scales of the assemblage thinking.

Therefore, the process of a brand's maintained social salience was demonstrated through its evolution in accordance to the related culture's evolution. Leveraging from there, current studies on brands highlight the prevailing power of brands as agents with ambiguous yet ever-relevant influence over the consumer society (Price and Coulter, 2019). As mentioned previously, Lucarelli and Giovanardi (2019) outlined the agenda of the future research for the school of macro-marketing, underlining the advances of understanding social phenomena in light with the assemblage theory as it enables interpreting occurrences due to the coming together of the many varying types of connectors.

So, micro applications of marketing can be tracked down to its macro effects, and vice versa. Drawing from the literature so far that contributed to the adoption of assemblage theory on the studies of branding and thus postmodern making of brands; it can be stated that brands can be conceptualized as assemblages, meanwhile research focusing on the relationality between the branding and its linked assemblages in shape of surrounding contexts, are welcomed within contemporary marketing paradigm.

2.2.2. Brand Communications

Just a while ago, a study (Batra, 2019) endeavoured an extensive review on the creation of brand meanings and dismantled concreted cultural dimensions of value for the brands to generate future points of examination. While doing this, among the many useful insights, Batra (2019, p. 538) rendered a question that is particularly of relevance for this study which was directed to the McCracken's (1986) cultural meaning creation model, through asking that, within the process of a creation of meaning:

“what is the nature of the rhetorical and visual devices by which these meanings are transferred from the stimulus (...) to the brand”

In other words the question goes as, with what variables can marketers, branding practitioners, advertisers produce for brands the specific kinds of meanings that has been desired. Then multiple cues with varying natures listed for further expansion.

Visual cues attentive to aesthetic and rhetorical styles, designs, shapes, and labels are recognized as critical elements of branding. Sensory cues like music, names, and way of speech underlined as well. Human cues mentioned as people such as brand endorsers, but also the clothing and body language as embodied cues are separately mentioned. What this influences is taking brand communications as a materially and expressively entangled practice of branding, with the capacity to affect the context it is interacting. That means; a quest to freshly redress the concept of brand communications.

Brand positioning is called for creating the “supercommunication” effect that gives consumer information about what the brand is, who it is for, and what it offers (Percy, 2003). This fractal of information is tied to the idea that branding is preparing a special spot for the brand among the consumer's perceptions. Moreover, not only the consumer perception is the matter of conquest. With material and expressive properties embodied in branding practices, brands are making themselves up, come together as an assemblage, with the energy created by brand communications. Importantly, it is the brand communications that engages with the cultural context, the related assemblage that the brand nests in.

By the same token, brand communications does it so by triggering inter-links among brands and the interacted assemblage to manifest itself externally. That is, brand communication is the component linking the properties of far-reaching range throughout each elements of the brand, generating the agency of territorializing the brand assemblage through the positioning efforts. These links always occur in two-way arrows, meaning while the brand territorializes itself within the context by positioning efforts, drawing meanings of the context into itself; symmetrically it is also can de-territorialize the context with the disruptions the brand imposes upon the existing meanings. Context changes through the doings and sayings of the brands, as in the discussions of the

numerous literature in marketing that worked on explaining how brands are influencing the wider contexts.

Therefore, with the particular agency brands are capable of, they can re-territorialize the context to the extents that context is to be desirably compatible to brands' own territorialization of itself. Meaning, cultural context can both help the positioning of the brands, simultaneously it can be re-positioned through the branding of the individual brands that can be seen as the practices in form of brand communications (Holt, 2006; McCracken, 1986).

2.2.2.1. Brand Elements

For positioning the brand, in other words territorializing the brand assemblage, brand communications initiates intra-links among brands' material and expressive properties to both prompt a brand image and also materially create the brand as a wholesome entity for its own rights. These properties are the brand elements, in sharp marketing terms. Brand elements often divided into two according to their associated works that they perceived to be providing for the brand, as the functional and the symbolic brand elements (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Orth and De Marchi, 2007).

Functional brand elements are what consumers basically get out of consuming that brand's utilities, all equitable qualities of the good or service. Symbolic brand elements are aggregation of the marginal values consumers are to get out of the experience of the brand. Despite the fact that being informative for practicing brand communication as a marketer, this conceptualization of brand elements falls short for the needs of this study due to being extremely constructive to be able to create an idealized toolkit for branding. Such that, there needs to be the conceptualization of the brand elements de-stressed of the concerns of marketing use.

That is, the concept of elements should reflect the property's existence within the brand assemblage closest as possible to the reality they occupy, as they become tools only when they are delivering their contributions to the branding practices. Hence, irrelevant to how marketers use them to connect to the consumers' mind; for the analysis

of this study, brand elements will be conceptualized as tangible and intangible elements to underline the reference given to their materialistic nature.

As a continuum of the idea that brands are assemblages of components having material and expressive properties and capacities of agency, brand communications can be accounted as a component of the brand that is consisted of tangible and intangible elements. The tangible brand elements are the ones can be observed visually, such as doings and things; products, place, employees, consumers, buildings, equipments, suppliers, decorative items, raw materials, promotion activities, branding artefacts, production chain, etc.

The intangible brand elements cannot be directly observed yet the ones with perceptible aspects, such as sayings and images; positioning, price, logo, name, mantra, purpose, vision, rhetorics, aesthetics, cultural meanings, experiential value, distinctive aspects, etc. These elements can be though as the tangible and intangible assets in cultural heritage; for example for the research in cultural anthropology, pieces of traditional clothing is a tangible information source meanwhile rituals mimicking the stories of olden times are intangible pieces of knowledge transmission.

Consequently for this study, the material and expressive properties of brands will be detected through the social media data collection, in which visual and discursive data will offer fertile exposure to the doings and sayings of the observed brands, nonetheless the things and imagery immersed into them as the heterogeneous elements of the processual practice of branding.

2.3. On Gentrification, Relationality, and Rhizomes

This part is to first review the developments of gentrification literature and evolvement of the definition in line with the transforming parameters of the phenomena, and show how recent approaches used for investigating gentrification are connecting to the philosophical background informing the perspective of this study. Lastly, recent researches that are close in focus to the interests of this study are to be highlighted with special focus on gastro-gentrification.

2.3.1. Defining Gentrification

By its classical definition coined by Ruth Glass (1964), gentrification is a process characterized as the transformation of an area through an influx of more affluent residents and businesses than the existing ones (Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2010). Smith (1979) delivered the idea to this definition that it is not necessarily the influx of people but the flooding of capital into certain areas in cities with purpose of upbringing the properties to excel their rent-paying ability, and this theory is referred as the “production-side” of gentrification. The precedent works on gentrification were closer to a critical perspective, in which research benefited from the theories of class struggle. That is because, for decades the social movements due to the inequality experienced by the displaced dwellers of gentrifying neighbourhoods in Western cities losing living and working spaces increased the attention to the phenomena.

More decades later, Ley (1994) and Ley (1996) identified “cultural creative” making a liberal segment of commonly white-collared people that are playing the major part in ubiquitous gentrification processes in line with their consumption patterns, demanding improved services and businesses appropriate to their lifestyles within the areas they took residence. It was Zukin (1995) who made the case in which culture of living in cities were becoming intertwined with the commercialization of the public spaces, meanwhile drawing attention to the concept of hip and authenticity-seeking consumers. This approach to gentrification is referred to as the “consumption-side” and will be closely related to the interpretations of findings for this study.

Again it was Smith (2002) who brought up another fertile discussion, and pointed out that gentrification is being promoted as a global urban strategy for capitalist development. From there, the “globalization-side” stream in gentrification grew.

During the later decades of the very coining of the term, as the facets of gentrification changed, the research and the definitions changed followingly. Detaching the notion from being solely related to the residential usage and expanding it to the utilization of the space and the pitfalls of what kind of a place the affluent classes make

out of an area for the non-affluent classes who are also sharing these spaces, Hackworth (2002, p. 815), innovatively expanded gentrification as:

“production of urban space for progressively more affluent users”

However, as the popularization of the debates on gentrification rise, against it the neo-liberal economies expanding through making the best capital out of the urban spaces also became a central progress plan for public authorities, thereof the critical research on gentrification have been evicted (Slater, 2006). By that date Hackworth and Rekers (2005) have already redefined the process as the reinvestment influx into the urban space for targeting the use of the comparably affluent clientele. So coming from 1960s the very coining of the notion to the early 2000s, in about forty years, gentrification gained a definition directing a focus on the utilization of urban space that has been historically occupied by the underprivileged dwellers and mundane businesses, for satisfying habitual and/or commercial purposes of privileged prospects.

Gentrification studies are rapidly growing thus definition continue to evolve in name of making sense of current transformations within the lived world, without mitigating its core tenets. Thereupon at the same time research has been growing in streams of critical, conformist, and binary stances towards the upbringings of the phenomena, it was acknowledged that the character of emergence of gentrification was not restrained to the form of demographical changes in residence but also in land use (Lees et al., 2008). Thus, Nedučín, Carić, and Kubet (2009) noted that gentrification can happen way beyond housing and it is surely to be deemed as a highly complex and contextually inclusive phenomena.

Hochstenbach and Van Gent (2015) investigated the material causes of gentrification and how varying causes are actively shaping the arguable upgrading of the urban contexts. Their study advanced the understanding of gentrification by showing that it is not a strictly city-born phenomena but a process that can occur in areas that are outside of the cities, and they signalled more research about the transformations in smaller centres, towns, villages, areas that are called rural or suburban; atypical to

classical field of gentrification studies, on possibly the local areas experiencing gentrification akin to bursting metropolitan spaces.

Similarly, situating an outstanding conceptualization for contemporary gentrification, Billingham (2015) put light on the varying scales and degrees of gentrification and offered valuable directions for future research. Firstly, the geographic scope of gentrification called out to be broadened, due to the fact that the majority of the literature worked on the Western in-city areas for discussing ups and downs of gentrification. Second call was on diversifying the approaches towards gentrification with a widened view, going beyond the macro theories positioning into an upper-handed side in seeing gentrification from the top. Thirdly the call was on expanding the understanding of life-course characteristics of gentrifies, as in the cases of families choosing to move into certain areas for assuring children's better education; however with a different take this changing character of gentrification can comply to many cases. Fourth call underlined other institutions, organizations, in terms of this study the heterogeneous agents, that are beyond the housing market as vital in looking at how gentrification occurs. The fifth and last call is also relevant for this study, pointing out that political drawbacks of gentrification may not always be displacement of underprivileged habitants of gentrifying areas but it can come in intricate ways that further studies should work on.

Now it is useful to look at the recent literature accumulating around the contemporary approaches upon gentrification issue with the elevations of theories that are relevant to the perspective of this study built on.

2.3.1.1. Contemporary Approaches

Lagenjdijk et al. (2014) provided the relationality of assemblage theory approach into researching gentrification comparatively within a set of alternating geographies. In their framework they accredited gentrification as an open-concept, looking at it from different angles and investigating it in diverse contexts they came to the conclusion that it surely is a nested event. Meaning, as in theories of practice and complexity,

gentrification itself should be understood in multiple layers tailored within its local contexts. Up to date, many studies of gentrification which are rooted from divergent schools of research have been utilizing assemblage theory as their main framework or a supplementary tool for critical discussions (Grossmann and Haase, 2015; Linz, 2017; Hill, 2018; Bürkner and Totelecan, 2018; Little, 2018; Wideman and Masuda, 2018; Yetiskul and Demirel, 2018; Jayne and Hall, 2019; Durose et al., 2021).

Driving from the assemblage theory that has been put at the heart of their study, Bürkner and Totelecan (2018) aimed at exploring how the heterogeneous elements come together into the making of an assemblage considering the leisure consumption occurring within a developing area. Distinctive to this study, they aspired to get a sense about the underlying power relations in the urban area they looked at in search of indications of cosmopolitanism.

What is especially illuminating about their work is the steps they showed in which they generated the description of the phenomenon they researched. In the beginning they offered a close-up description of the context, followed by diving the highlights of obvious events happening during the process. Then they reflected on what is not obvious, meaning benefitted from the literature in describing how things come by. Lastly, they concluded with a description that is rich with perspectives interpreting the phenomenon of consideration.

Hence, a gentrification take on the phenomenon that this study is oriented upon will be appropriating such a multi-layered qualitative analysis that has been adopted by Bürkner and Totelecan (2018). On the other hand, it is an ongoing fact that gentrification topic is still politically loaded with polarized debates (Luzbetak, 2020) between the pro-gentrification side polishing it as urban rejuvenation, rural development, or boosterism towards local economy with storytelling and the anti-gentrification side set out to rationalize their agenda of unveiling the negative face of the inevitable changes (Avdikos, 2015; Langegger, 2015; Gainza, 2016; Villanueva et al., 2017; Wincott, Ravenscroft, and Gilchrist, 2019; Killick, 2019; Schmiz and Hernandez, 2019; Brahinsky, 2020; Moreno, 2020).

Meanwhile, due to the increasing agents with gentrifying capacities organizing in the field, the process today is also ambiguous in its suspects; thus Schlichtman, Patch, and Hill (2017) adopted an individualistic focus and set out to redress the categories of gentrifies without taking solid sides in the debate. The book's contribution that is relevant to this study lies in its presentation of how gentrifies are attempting to justify their doings that are affecting the changes within the areas they interact, and how micro agents' actions are being propagated through the macro influences.

Drawing from the abundance of literature from classical to current on the matter, gentrification can be simply defined as widespread phenomena of distinctively enfolding ways of embourgeoisement of the space. In line with the commonalities in debates around gentrification it can be regarded as the transformation of an area, that can occur in diverse scales and forms all around the world. Hence, gentrification with Deleuzian phrases can be regarded as a relational process, a “constant variation” (Baker, 2011). As Coffin (2019) suggested, Deleuzian conceptualization of place can help grasping how it is a process of “becoming” in a complex sorts. For such a process; the extent, agents, and direction of the flow is always open for unexpected volatilities.

One of the key concepts of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) gets handy here; "rhizomes" are philosophical re-imagination of rhizomes in biology to correspond to a metaphor of a free-entry and hybrid interpretative thinking. Deleuzian rhizomes have the specialty of connecting one point to another, regardless of the existence or the lack of commonalities between these points. These “points” are things in a “point in time” like the individuals as assemblages, and could be completely divergent in their nature as in the assembling of components or other assemblages. The concept of rhizomes and how it is implemented into this study will be amplified within the analysis part in more detail.

Since the founding literature and the relevant reflections have been made clear, contemporary understanding of gentrification can be merged with the postmodern complexity theories as it is the purpose of this study. In other words, contemporary research on gentrification is motivated to shoulder the responsibility of crossing the boundaries of top-down structural thinking about gentrification. Studies today are capable of immersing different sides of explaining gentrification by exploring the

unconventional agents affecting the change by benefiting paradigms of thought that are able to grasp such intrinsic relationality links within the emerging phenomenon.

On that account, brands accordingly can be investigated as the influencers of gentrification, and the change process can take the shape of a gastronomical turn mixing the individual brands' desires of making names for themselves as well as collective desires of uplifting the located area, while these are happening simultaneously with the global hype on gastro-tourism and the government support delivered to the area for succeeding economic progress plans.

2.3.2. Branding and Gentrification

The main literature searches have been conducted using the core “branding and gentrification” and “marketing and gentrification” phrases. These broad searches provided accession to a bountiful collection of studies around the topic of this research. Overlaps in terminology are also given due in the follow-up systematic literature review searches. As so; when the combinations of storytelling, brand communication, cultural clusters, urban transformation, local regeneration, over-tourism, etc. notions searched additionally, results landed on the same titles that the core searches have already catered. Benefitting distant reading of the central stages of numerous studies, identification of literature that are closely relevant to the relationality aspect between branding and gentrification that this study set out to understand has become possible. Among those, investigations that are referring to the specialized notions of “place branding”, “touristification”, and “commercial gentrification” were found as the most significant ones. Before getting into the review, these will be briefly explained and examples can be found within the mentioned literature.

Additionally, considering the nature of the brands that are observed for this study due to their popularization in the area of Urla, within this core part of the literature review, the highlights from the literature search directed on the phrase "gastronomy and gentrification" are also included.

The notion of place branding refers to the efforts of strategically positioning a place, city, or an neighbourhood akin to a product to be marketed; towards the economical and cultural growth aspirations (Gotham, 2007; Johansson and Cornebise, 2010; Allon, 2013; August, 2014; Neuts, Devos, and Dirckx, 2014; Hoyng, 2014; August, 2016; Keil and Addie, 2016; Markley and Sharma, 2016; Masuda and Bookman, 2016; Wilkinson, 2016; Chan, 2017; Cleave et al., 2017; Waldman, Silk, and Andrews, 2017; Nathan, Vandore, and Voss, 2018; Andron, 2019; Bonakdar and Audirac, 2019; Garcia-Lamarca et al., 2019; Tubridy, 2020). These efforts are usually seen as practised in a top-down manner, as the agents being the municipalities, governmental bodies, or regional authorities. Thus critical studies regarding "place branding" roots into the struggle between the state power and the local communities in the capitalist state's goals of growth.

The notion of touristification means the popularization of an area that is normally of a slow living, attracting a wide-ranging crowd to the area; generally due to the desirable leisure and service potential of it (Ren, 2009; Al Rabady, 2013; Chang, 2014; Mercer and Mayfield, 2015; Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; Belk et al., 2018a; Andron, 2019; Bouchon and Rauscer, 2019; McDermott, 2019; Trujillo-Pagan, 2019; Katahenggam and Wee, 2020). The marketing of an area for touristic prospects can occur again in a top-down manner as an economical growth model targeting at improving the tourism industry. Yet, it can simultaneously happen in an organic manner, as in the cases of social media buzz in which marketing is practised by the consumers themselves who are hyping tourism within certain areas that somehow remained "unexplored". The critical studies for this focus generally work on the conflicts between the served and the servants, meaning the visiting consumers using the sources of the area for their pleasure meanwhile locals are left with the so-called opportunities of taking the jobs that the tourism sector opens up.

The commercial gentrification can be understood as businesses, starting operating in the areas that have been not the mainstream location for such enterprises; carrying differing motivations varying from plans of connecting to the local communities to the rent benefits in areas that were previously not commercialized

towards apprehending the tastes of the creative class (Kohn, 2010; Bookman, 2013; Lederman, 2014; Keatinge and Martin, 2015; Ryan, 2015; Gainza, 2016; Gvion, 2016; McCarthy and Wang, 2016; Mermet, 2016; Romão, 2017; Andersson, 2018; Rodríguez-Barcón, Calo, and Otero-Enríquez, 2018; Donner and Loh, 2019; Gregory, 2019; González, 2019; Lam-Knott, 2019; Schmiz, 2019; Stock and Schmiz, 2019; Lapiņa, 2020). The commercial gentrification can have varying agents with active roles they carry on, for sure the policy-maker state can be present for delivering the performance. More crucially, from the franchises of large corporations or retails to the small locally owned concept stores, which have ranging offerings from services to premium products; brands that are trying to craft a position for themselves as well as the area are affecting the transformation process. Again, studies adopting critical lenses look at the power imbalances, for this case additional to the ones faced earlier, between the new businesses and the old ones in a skirmish of survival.

Interestingly, the three notions of place branding, touristification, and commercial gentrification that condensed here have been seen as commonly coming together in the given studies, thus they are being used not in mutually exclusive ways. That is because in reality the implications of these notions come in circles. For instance; an objective of place branding towards amplifying an area through generating tourism revenues, requires the creation of cultural clusters that lead to commercial gentrification, which end up emerging both the profits and drawbacks of touristification of the very area. Therefore, the up-close reviewing of the highly useful literature will proceed in a chronological manner in line with the growth of the accumulated knowledge on the issue, without grouping into segregated bodies.

Bookman (2013) has drawn inspiration from the still ongoing attention towards investigating the relationality between place branding and gentrification, then investigated how neo-liberal policies commodify an area by making it a commercial district in which classic theories of class distinction are observed through the middle-class consumption patterns. The group of creatives who intertwine the area, repeatedly cause the destabilization of the intended brand image, as Bookman (2013, p. 339) argued with the findings;

“by performing a version of creativity that exceeds brand intentions, yet is embedded in its social roots”

Although the context is an urban area within a metropolitan city, the questioning of ways in which branding of the district encounters multiple agents and how their tensions unfold is quite relevant to this study. Taking a political theory lens upon the attempts of regional development, Willet (2016) how the narratives of place branding of yet another area complies to the popular perceptions of desirability, carrying aspirations to position the area in the world where possibilities of creative industries flourish. Underlining the power of expressive representations in the making of a place, Willet (2016) situated discussions about lifestyle symbolism as communicated in the offerings package of the marketed place.

Keatinge and Martin (2015) showed how the entanglement of place branding and commercial gentrification enfolds within an inner suburban area, akin to the empirical focus of this study. They identified residential gentrifiers as both cultural and economic agents who have active roles in shaping the commercial districts by transforming the areas around their lived locations as consumption hubs of middle-class tastes, and dislocating the production activities.

Intensification of gentrification due to the influence coming from other sectors besides the housing, was the mover for Mermet (2016) who set out to evaluate the creative destruction of the retail sector for that matter. What is interesting here is a commentary of consumption-side studies, drawing from Zukin (2008), it has been suggested by Mermet (2016, p. 5), that:

“gentrification is characterized by the progressive replacement of small local independent stores by small entrepreneurial capital, which are themselves progressively replaced by corporate retail with the installation of new international brands”

This projection can be opt-in for understanding the chaotic aspects of gentrification phenomena that is organized by individual commercial agents, as these agents may end up causing their own annihilation similar to what they often do to the existing commercial and non-commercial agents within the areas when they first came into play. The concept of creative destruction is seen also in the statements of Gainza (2016), who examined the culture-led gentrification within an otherwise diverse city. The changes that the commercial activities which were opportunistically promoted for the advantages of all, yet actually come at a premium make, were posited through the tangible transformation in the built environment.

Belk et al. (2018a) contributed the contemporary studies of gentrification by offering another valuable research of visual ethnography nonetheless incorporated with the distinctive style of lyricism, as well as immersing the hints of place branding, commercial gentrification, and touristification in the study's content usefully. They told a story that collided with the diverse agents and clashing implications of what is going on, in a manner oriented on the multifaceted products of different levels of branding within the researched area.

Gregory (2019) highlighted that brands are both concrete and abstract, material and expressive, tangible and intangible, as their makings are so. Therefore it was articulated that to explore the relationality between the luxury brands and the renewing landscape of the area, the heterogeneous print and digital advertising materials that the selected brands put out were taken as the artefacts of gentrification in the researched area. Drawing from Bernard (2011), interpretative approach of Gregory (2019, p. 192) that was searching for meaning and connections, worked through analysing;

“each of (...) materials closely, looking for patterns across graphic design, photographic imagery, video, and written copy (...) [also studying the] design elements like layout, color choice, font, and graphic illustration style”

Scoring on the conjunction of place branding and commercial gentrification; it was found that individual brands aim at marketing the products, services, or experiences

they sell by aligning their narratives to the emerging perceptions of the area, although components of such relationship may result in conflicting sceneries. This study owes to the significant additions of Gregory (2019) both focus-wise as can be seen in the research questions, and method-wise which can be seen in the design of the research in especially the data collection and analysis sections.

Recently put forward, which accentuates the future promise of the branding and gentrification topic, the extensive scan of literature by Chapain and Sagot-Duvaouroux (2020) is beneficial to go over to tie up the insights so far. They reviewed a vast number of sources concentrating on the cultural and creative clusters, which gentrification literature has many references to. There are three points that Chapain and Sagot-Duvaouroux (2020) brought light upon, within the bottomless pool of gentrification and branding literature, which are closely linked to this study.

First, they show that more than half of the reviewed studies worked on examining how and to what degree the creative clusters were related to the concepts of cultural consumption and branding. Second point is about how earlier studies mostly located their investigations upon a particular region with a smaller scale, with the aim of highlighting the local dynamics in the making of gentrification via cultural creative clusters. Third and last point to be made by Chapain and Sagot-Duvaouroux (2020, p. 319) is the importance of acknowledgement of the vibrant mix of diversity filling up the gentrifying contexts, underlining how the;

“variety of cultural activities and public and private actors as well as other related activities such as entertainment and leisure and can be associated with (...) branding and tourism strategies”

2.3.2.1. Gastro-Gentrification

“[F]ood is so often a central way that cities brand themselves as ripe for redevelopment, including large-scale capital investment and the luring of elite residents and tourists” (Alkon and Cadji, 2018)

Gentrification and food are two intimately associated words, as many researchers mixed the two in both their empirical observations and conceptual arguments. However there is a lack of consistency in the literature due to earlier research issued on the phenomena involving in the inquiry on gastronomy and gentrification, thus studies use custom entitlements like “foodification” (Bourlessas, Cenere, and Vanolo, 2021) or “gastrofication” (Lütke and Jäger, 2021). Additionally, following the worldwide hype on the “gastro-tourism” (Williams, Williams Jr., and Omar, 2014; Kurt and Dłużewska, 2018; Roy and Gretzel, 2022; Balderas-Cejudo, Gavilan, and Fernandez-Lores, 2022) the very word gentrification may be purposefully excluded in the agendas because of its historically critical stance.

It is only recently that the studies on gentrification and gastronomy began to reach out roots into the theoretical foundations into academia in face of the boosterism efforts of unveiling the practical and managerial implications of this partnership towards generating advances in behalf of tourism growth. Therefore, taking the same liberty that has been going on, the title used in this specialized section is gastro-gentrification. This is also for paying tribute to the repeated discourses that the researcher exposed during the observations, in which the happenings within the area under examination for this study were said to create a New Urla that is to be “gastro-Urla”.

Ilkucan and Sandikci (2005) in a study that offer a glance upon an earlier sites of gentrification in Turkey, gave due to the drastic changes in the commercial scenery of an inner-city neighbourhood within a metropolitan city which they considered for their research. They spotted the newly established groceries, convenience stores, butchers, cafes, restaurants, and gourmet food sellers among other stores and services.

Later Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007) accommodated a prescient scope upon how particularly the gastronomical qualities attributed to a local context represented the homogenizing effects of globalization in itself. They argued in the making of the place within the global tourism arena, authentic gastro-glocalization can provide advantages for sustainability such as avoiding dangers of superficial touristification. They offered valuable discussions yielding far-reaching implications, which were enlightening for this

study. On the other hand, the work of Zukin (2008, p. 724) is imperative to remark here since it not so later laid bare the middle-class's;

“desire for alternative foods, both gourmet and organic encourages a dynamic of urban redevelopment that displaces working-class and ethnic minority consumers”

With this articulation, the connection has been made; between the exquisite experiences of gastronomical products and services aka the affluent class' tastes in food, and the emergence of deterritorialization within the material and expressive aspects of areas that are being the ground of such occurrences. The consumers' role has been put forwards further as it is influential in gastro-gentrification, within a research conducted on the restaurant reviews of foodies upon their impact on a changing area (Hyde, 2014).

Alkon and Cadji (2018) suggested through a sourceful case study, that the food businesses and their branding practices can indeed accumulate towards the manifold process of gentrification. Since, there are contested matters regarding efforts to satisfy high-pitched desires of the gastro-community all around the world, these can be argue as resulting in driving the challenges upon the power balances within the related areas; for example, by eroding the social cohesion (Schmiz, 2019). As the sophisticated food with ethnic, cultural, regional authenticates are demanded more and more (Stock and Schmiz, 2019), branding and gastro-gentrification will remain an intriguing niche amongst the social complexity topics.

2.4. Research Questions

In line with the purpose statement, this study set out to explore the relationship between brands in an area that is subjected to change. Due to the manifoldness of the phenomenon under investigation, multiple research questions are formulated in differentiated scales as the perspective of the study supplies necessary background to do so. Firstly, how this relationship is enacted, and how brands are situated within a certain area requires questioning the practices of branding that make up such links.

Consequently, the entry level question is of a comparatively micro-scale, focusing on the observed brands and aimed at understanding how the branding practices in relation to the existent cultural meanings of the area. Rokka (2021) shared the directions for upcoming studies, advising the questioning of the kinds of cultural competences that go into the branding process.

Therefore, the first research question posited as; How do the new gastronomical brands incorporate components of the local area into their branding, and how does this affect the assemblage of the area in return? These compact questions will be answered with the understanding that initial analysis will supply.

Followingly, appreciating the valuable contributions in macromarketing (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007; Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2019) as well as contemporary gentrification advances (Lagendijk et al., 2014; Billingham, 2015; Rodríguez-Barcón, Calo, and Otero-Enríquez, 2018) for attracting interest upon the fruitful gaps in both theory and practice, critical question of this study situated in a meso-scale, bearing the motivation of exploring the underlying implications of the agency enacted between the observed brands and the area, by the initiation of the branding practices under a mixed lens.

Drawing from the illuminating advances in literature, a second yet even more vital that the prior one, the following research question emerged as; In what ways are these brands' branding efforts intertwined with the ongoing transformation process in the area? In other words, how do the affect of the brands' agency work in the area. This rather intricate question will be answered with the interpretations of the findings that analysis benefitting interlocking conversations will enable.

Lastly, a rather reflective discussion inspired by the questionings attributed to the future of marketing studies by Fırat and Dholakia (2017) will be generated, through asking a theoretical question of why does this contemporary phenomenon of gentrification explored for this study enfold in the way it does, as suggestive answer will be grounded on the insights that this research supplies.

+ Is the matter that is weighty, or the meaning?

- All is weighty.

(+ Madde mi ağır, mana mi?

- Hepsi ağır.)” Altıoklar (1996).



CHAPTER 3: INTERPHASE

3.1. *Qualitative Methodology*

“The truth is not revealed, it is betrayed; it is not communicated, it is interpreted; it is not willed, it is involuntary.” (Deleuze, 1972)

It surely is tricky to build empirical research upon muddy swamplands of a never-stiffening reality. Here, research is to reside far away from targeting at propagating a narrative of an ultimate truth. As Coleman and Ringrose (2013) put, it has argued earlier that Deleuzian thinking is viewed as high-theory, since the ideas working upon such an abstract level are to have no proper use for doing real-life research. On top of this, countering these arguments, they open a path for developing authentic methodology for research utilizing this perspective.

For different fields of studies calls were issued for contributions in engaging concepts of Deleuze from its abstract forms into practical implications for the research methodology (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010). Koro-Ljungberg and Barko (2012) have pondered upon the applicability of research through a Deleuzian understanding of the world, and criticized approaches that are carrying illusions of grandeur by giving out concrete answers in face of fluid reality.

The “rhizoanalysis concept” (Masny, 2013) which will be of relevance for this study later, is also an initiative towards fostering a researching cohesive to the complexity paradigm of post-humanist becoming-with-the-world grounds. Driving on these paths, qualitative turn in social sciences (Alasuutari, 2010) can be taken into consideration also due to its growth parallel to the diverse postmodernist and even post-postmodernist (Firat and Dholakia, 2017) aka meta-modernist thinking of the contemporary era.

Qualitative approach spawns a broad spectrum for researching, ranging from the extremes of being blended into existing forms to being extremely nuanced to any known form (Holloway and Tordes, 2003). According to Creswell (2013), scientific methods be

it qualitative or quantitative; include the main research problems, operationalise valid data collection, implement reliable analysis, and cultivate fruitful discussions.

However, qualitative research differs from quantitative, to begin with, in its use of theories. Earlier literature or theoretical advances in explaining certain phenomena, for qualitative studies, are not to be a priori knowledge, but to be voices interacted dialogically during the analysis. Additionally, theories that are guiding qualitative research are always redressed, subjectivized, according to the very unique approach of each study.

Moreover, the divergences occurring in the analysis of the data are quite valuable and can make even greater contributions in synthesis part than the data enfolding complementarity to the existing literature. That is because, value in qualitative research lies in the discrepancy, be it the theoretical approach or the rare species in data encountered as tangled into the net of analysis, and the way in which study links an original interpretation upon those relations.

To comparatively position the qualitative researcher versus quantitative researcher, it can be said that; quantitative researcher is much like a police officer, whereas qualitative researcher is rather like a detective. That is because qualitative researchers aspires to reach an understanding of the process by which the investigated events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996).

So, without settling on an end result, they partner with the research as it shapes itself as an emergent process, meanwhile interpretation links come by organically with the growth of data. So, the qualitative approach to research can be said to be compatible with the multiple perspectivism with relative constructivism of this study.

This research is not aiming at settling on an explanatory statement to the extents that Urla is changing how much by agents of how many due to causes of what, rather, aiming at offering an exploratory path to offer a glimpse upon the ways in which Urla is changing in accordance to the enactment of particular agents through the integrated processes they emerge. Therefore, to develop a subjectivity that working towards the research questions can generate, the qualitative approach to inquiry is vital for this study. Withal, deeper emphasis on how the perspective of the study integrated authentically

into the each phases of the research will be given in between the lines of the sections on adoption of specific methods, novel sensibilities in data collection, and accomplishing a cohesive data analysis plan (Fox and Alldred, 2021).

On the grounds of fuzzy phenomenon, thereon a plateau for the research can be reached. Furthermore to the compatibility of qualitative stance to the very interpretative approach to this study; the literature on studies of gentrification and branding with an exploratory stance, either as separate topics of inquiry or topics that include the two, dominantly benefit qualitative research methodology in varying forms of methods (Ren, 2009; Bookman, 2013; Hoyng, 2014; Keatinge and Martin, 2015; Markley and Sharma, 2016; Belk et al., 2018a; Bouchon and Rauscher, 2019; Gregory, 2019; Lam-Knott, 2019; McDermott, 2019; Schmiz, 2019; Chakrabati, 2020).

For fulfilling the promise of a good qualitative research, it is agreed that understanding methodology and followingly the appropriate methods for the study's purposes are the “nuts and bolts” of research (Carter and Little, 2007). Hence, prominent qualitative research guidelines (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Flick, 2013; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014; Lune and Berg 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017) have been reviewed and incorporated into this research's operationalization.

Among the widely thought and referred guides of many, Creswell's (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* book was found to be best suitable informant of methodology for this research due to its comprehensiveness and compatibility to up-to-date topics. As articulated in the book, qualitative inquiry launches with the philosophical lens parallel interpretive approach which informs the very research questions.

To work on these research questions, it should be of importance that the data collection is conducted in the natural setting of phenomenon, and analysis should be able to utilize both deductive and inductive dimensions in establishing patterns. Finally when the research evolves into a knowledge-creation product, the outcome must be able to offer a sophisticated description and interpretation highlighting the data.

3.2. Research Design

Designing a research means outlining the plan for conducting the empirical research. Briefly, this study aims at conducting qualitative research as it is appropriate for both the embraced approach and thus the research questions. In this part, presented within the specialized method sections, research will be strategized with the practice theory understanding of the social world (Schatzki, Cetina, and Von Savigny, 2000) in support of the adoption of the assemblage theory for studying complex phenomena (DeLanda, 2016). Data that are relevant to this approach of research should be retrieved through looking directly at the practices that are happening within the context during the research and researchers should be going after the strings of complementary information that data unfold during the process.

For this particular research topic, to grasp the lived practices, ethnographic observation of the field, observation of the online data created by the brands, and participatory observation in relevant public events are the three critical methods of data collection. Additionally, complementary interviews will be on the table for bringing texture into the study. It is important here to clarify that gaining entrance into phenomenon, data collection, recording, and analysis throughout the research project aims at fulfilling the guidelines that ensure an ethical qualitative research process as a social practice (Roth, 2005).

So, abiding the common ethical guidelines reference to *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017) and to *Qualitative Marketing Research* (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006) will be main consideration, while at each level all the actions will be justified as ethical compensations will be sought when necessary (Carter and Little, 2007). Such transparency in name of ensuring ethical research will also be sought from the beginning of the study through a core originality of this research, being the double-reflexivity (O'Gorman, MacLaran, and Bryce, 2012), placing the researcher who is to be interacting with the assemblage as an external part of the map whereas the internal part in the assemblage of knowledge creation through tracing.

During the data collection and the analysis, traces of visit as well as traces of thought process will be openly reflected onto the map. That is because, merging practice theory data collection to an assemblage theory analysis may raise questions about how to separately collect and record material, nonmaterial, human, and non-human data while a “human mind” is observing, engaging with all these components. Recalling the differences from the actor-network theory hierarchy which claims that, in the words of Elder-Vass (2014) insists nonhuman purely exists and insofar as it is readily bounded up with a human reference; distinctively, here, the human mind is not privileged per se nor disgraced against the non-human (Bashkar, 1975; Elder-Vass, 2014) as emphasized in the assemblage approach (DeLanda, 2006).

Instead, especially when looking at a complex social phenomenon, the human mind inevitably has to be given due. It is because; complex phenomena can be comprehended as existing independently from human's perception, also humans have the ability of performing actions according to the idea of positing the concepts that humans use to make sense of such phenomena are products of our own initiative (Elder-Vass, 2014).

3.2.1. Field Observation

Previous research using assemblage theory in looking at the changes in an area have centralized their research design around ethnography (Bürkner and Totelecan, 2018). Woermann (2018) highlights that it is an undeniable fact that the present studies using ethnography do not need a big bulk of entrance work before diving into researching the unknown. Instead, they are to utilize knowledge from a thick web of prior research studies and projects. As a result of obtaining basic-level guidance from the available collective knowledge before initiating any on-hand research, for today's ethnographies, focusing on the purposefully selected issues and looking at the already familiarized phenomenon are often the norm (Woermann, 2018).

So, it can be fairly stated that a focused ethnography method is relevant for the specific and time-bound nature of this project and so that the operation will be concise

yet detailed. Kelett (2011) underlines that for fieldwork the relationships between the researched and the context have always been at the core of the observational methods. Accordingly, this research design operationalise two major steps; first being the short field observation conducted in Urla and participatory observations in community gatherings that are referring to the research topic. Meanwhile, the second but defining step is the close netnographic observation of the selected brands' brand communications for a longer period of time. Each two steps are in their nature ethnographic works, although ethno- here being equally interested in more than anthrop- elements, due to data generated carrying special attention to the context. It is thus the goal to observe what is being done and said, what are the heterogeneous elements making the context up, both within the physical and digital fields as well as in contersecting touch points.

Parallel to the focused ethnography's course of action being retrieving data in a short-termed yet concentrated manner, and literature on the from the perspective of assembling the context put value on first-hand experience of the field (Diaz Ruiz, Penaloza, and Holmqvis, 2019; Belk et al., 2018a); conducting field observation as a start was crucial. There is a reason why the field observation and participant observations are separated in the design of this study. In some way, in its practical implementation, it can be said that field observation was also a participant observation since researcher took part in a quite popular activity of consuming Urla for the weekend to experience the components of the area. Asides from that, data collection for the field and participant observations were also similar in their nature, being field notes and visual methods, which will be explained in detail.

However, field observation is dedicated to Urla, at its geographical sense, and systematically grasping the inspiration that implies the relevancy of branding to the changing of the area's landscape due to the material structure of the central area manifesting as the majority of commercial lots owned by new brands. Then, participant observations were conducted opportunistically on two upcoming events while the process of researching was ongoing, actually unplanned during preliminary design of the research, and became of use for especially manifesting the expressive aspects of Urla as well as creating instrumental touch points with the netnographically observed brands.

Thus, the encounter with the “field” here is conducted for enabling a very limited yet condensed, aka focused, piece of understanding about the physical context that researched phenomenon roots into. Whereas, this field observation is also meaningful for showing the tangible and built-in connections of the physical-verse to the digitally connected context of the Urla's multi-dimensional assemblage (Figure 1). So that, an emphasis on why netnographic observation is extremely relevant and important as the core analyzed unit for the whole study can be reached.

3.2.1.1. The Brief Visit

During the first phase of the study's operationalization, it is imperative to capture the change that research project aims to understand (Thévenot, 2000). Hence, a small scaled and focused ethnographic fieldwork was picked up in Urla in the form of observation. Since it is mostly the case that a spatial area's center is consisted of rich sources of material and expressive components for the area's assemblage (DeLanda, 2006), according to assemblage approach the beginning place to look at for a resourceful data collection for a research topic that has spatial attachments is the most characteristic and central place within the relevant space.

For the case of Urla, the characteristic centre is the Arts Street (*Sanat Sokağı*) thus, the observation of human and non-human agents of the area kicked off at this particular place. Therefore, on an end-summer Sunday that is perfect for witnessing the representative usage of the area, exactly at the date 05.09.2021, the researcher visited central Urla. Spent the day starting from early morning until afternoon, collecting data in varying forms which will be tackled in the data collection section.

Being an “a person that is living in İzmir city” (*İzmirli*) who visits Urla occasionally, the researcher was already familiar with the traditional landscape of the centre. On the other hand, being not “a local dweller of Urla” (*Urlalı*), the researcher is also an outsider to the implications of current changes. Thus, this insider-outsider balance during the field observation enabled a relaxed operationalization however maintained an attentive eye on what is new.

The observation of materiality focused on non-human silhouette of the street, the climate, architectural style of the buildings, functions of the buildings, etc., recognizing the forms of the content. The non-human materiality merged with the human silhouette of the street through looking at the vendors, visitors, business owners, employees, tourists, etc., replying to the question of human materiality in what is being done in the Arts Street. Detection of these material agents led to the further identification of expressive components in the assemblage of Urla. Field observation at the first phase helped the realization of the new businesses and these businesses' buildings as agents in communicating the dominant aesthetics of the contemporary brands in which buildings are conceptually designed for the branding purposes not only logos or the products. New and old brands of Urla are dominantly restaurants and wineries, which are noted as individual business brands and thus independent agents that are nested within the assemblage of Urla.

According to new theory of the society, DeLanda (2006) points out that “a change” does not occur to “a thing” due to “a reason” but instead; simultaneous processes among multiple actors that are in an interactive relationship which regarded as assemblages, co-create the energy that stimulate the phases that contribute to the ever-changing being of the assemblage. Building onto this thinking, according to the observations in the Arts Street, changes emerging within the assemblage of Urla can be taken as influenced by the agencement of the aggregation of many individual new businesses. These are dominating the materiality of the assemblage, thus, raising the focused questions about their linkages with the expressiveness of Urla. Expressive components give the clues on how changes are presented and therefore can be perceived.

At this level of field observation, it was not applicable nor meaningful to manifest the researcher identity since the observation took place on a “public sphere” (Spicker, 2011). Still, only non-human data were visually recorded and since some unintentionally recorded human silhouettes exist in the data, those raw data will never be shared with a third party without the sensitivity of fair use. No photographic/audiographic/videographic documentation of any personal data were attempted to be recorded, such data recorded in the field notes through anonymization.

3.2.1.2. Meshing the Physical and Digital Spaces

The flight from the physical to digital dimension of Urla will be described in the storyline of the assemblage analysis of the data, still, it is important here to explain the development of the idea for the research design. The world of tangible materiality, our physical surroundings, when compared to the digital platforms, cannot be more or less meaningful to the reality in face of the universe.

In other words, digital-verse is real as the physical-verse; although the newness of the prior compared to the latter trigger kind of perceptions of it as if digital is a disruption to the world, not an equally existing part of it. Yet, digital is also material not mythical of some futuristic sorts. Let's consider Instagram as an example; computers, technological equipments, human and AI incorporated programming are the obvious materiality in the making of this social media platform. Moreover; codes, buttons and widgets, interface, algorithms, filters, worldwide wires, electricity, internet, infrastructure and superstructure, etc. are few of the materiality that are equipping the production of it. Hence, according to the perspective of this study, discussion is not to what extent the digital dimension is real, but it is on how physical and digital dimensions merge and complement each other in the research design.

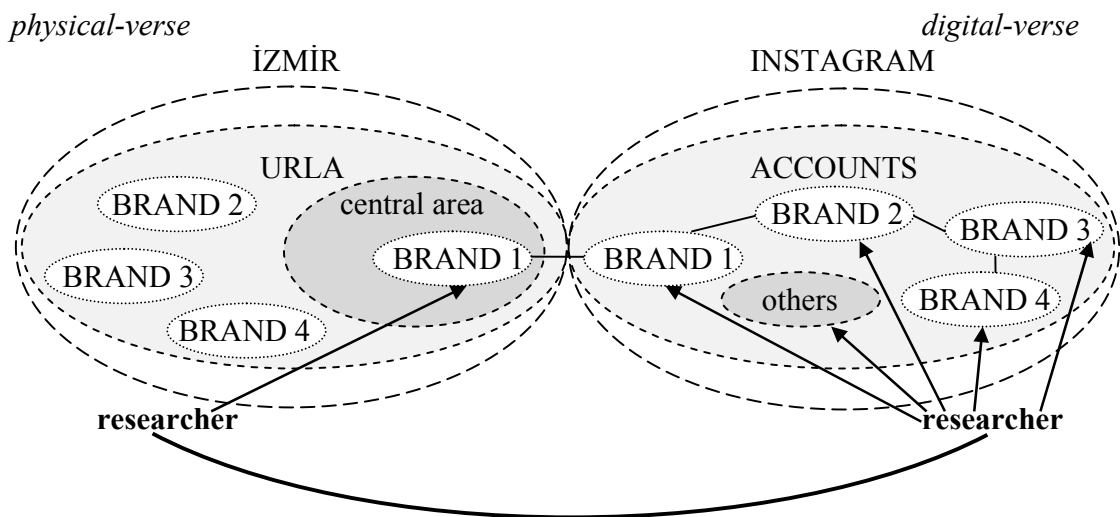


Figure 1. Physical and digital dimensions of Urla's assemblage.

It has been a while since internet admitted to be a social space (Knudsen and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Besides, smartphones are quite routine parts of life today (Middleton, Scheepers, and Tuunainen, 2014), with social media platforms in form of smartphone apps like Instagram cement the interest in socialization through them (Marchant and O'Donohoe, 2019). Brand communications is an effort towards the socialization between the brands and the consumers, thus, social media is, quite unsurprisingly, a relevant medium for it.

When field observation was initiated on Urla's centre, researcher began to walk from the Central Park spot, taking the paths made by superstructure. This is the direction which many visitors take to land on the popular Arts Street area. While researcher kept walking and recording visual data for the research, a rather distinctive building compared to the surrounding structure caught onto the camera. Researcher approached to this unknown materiality, that was later to be the tagged as the building of the Brand 1. On the front door of the brands' building, brands' social media accounts were put on display right next to an Instagram logo.

That logo, connected to a known expression in the mind of the researcher. That was the point of initiation for the meshing of the physical and digital spaces. Linking to Brand 1 on this digital platform also prompted links to others; Brand 2, Brand 3, Brand 4 and more related accounts were encountered. Therefore, experience of Urla can be understood as not bound with the physical structures nor brands' geographical locations, but as linked to their positioning in Urla's multi-dimensional assemblage (Figure 1).

3.2.2. Netnography

Mainstream incorporation of observations into research as a method is supplementary, meaning it is used for the triangulation of a core method (Adler and Adler, 1994) which is generally interviewing. That is because, interviewing offers the revealing of a truth that is constructed by the minds of the humans deemed to be experiencing the thing that research is interested in. This human experience, be it relatively distinct or shared consensus, is what the normative phenomenological studies

resides their value in; interpreting the interpretations, within a researcher-directed flow, and ending up with an idea of reality that is strictly socially constructed by and for human beings. On the other hand, it can be discussed that observation enables researcher to gain a sovereign, engaged, ultimately first-hand view upon the phenomena.

Distinctively to the nature of data that interviewing could supply, this research was interested in, at its core, what the brands are doing and saying as independent interrelated agents, how their brand communications are practiced; not what people involved in the making of this practice ideally think it is. Thus the analyzed unit of this research itself is the practices of the brands that are earlier conceptualized as involving human and non-human components working together. The interpretations drawn upon these practices of branding surely will be human-generated, human here being the researcher, however created knowledge will be acknowledged as a subjectivity adding to the reality happening out of the human mind.

Hence, data itself is of practices not of perceptions. This is such an important aspect for the research design in this study that illuminates the reason for research being centralizing on the observation methods; in the first phase field work is for mapping the context that is triggering the preliminary research question, and thereupon in the second phase working is directly on branding practices in form of brand communications on digital field that endow further questions upon the phenomenon.

Due to employment of social media communication being substantial for the branding practices of the new brands that flourished in Urla, the research, as stressed earlier, benefits a sourceful observation conducted through adopting netnography method (Addeo et al., 2019). Brands that direct their branding efforts towards repositioning Urla under a desirable light in line with their own individual goals are doing so by mainly using Instagram.

Social media is a rather new stage of the interactive media while Instagram is one of the recent platforms of the social media branch, thus the research methodologies that are composed of adequacy to grasp the data from the Instagram ecosystem are far from mature. Acknowledging the critics about the ethical dilemmas of netnographic research (Roy et al., 2015; Tuikka, Nguyen, and Kimppa, 2017), the issue is put onto the

agenda of this research design. Taking the responsibility of the ethical considerations, both during the netnographic data collection, an updated interpretation of netnography (Kozinets, Dolbec, and Earley, 2014; Kozinets, 2015; Kozinets, Scaraboto, and Parmentier, 2018) which combined with the recent media studies (Cotter, 2019; Bianotti, Caliandro, and Gandini, 2020) constructed the foundation for developing appropriate and ethical data collection method for observing changes within Urla.

Researcher personally has been actively on Instagram for couple years at the time of the study, thus can be considered as an insider to the platform being aware of the standard usage. However, researcher has never been engaged with the brands that are selected to be observed on the platform before. This implicates that researcher is an outsider of the branding practices of these brands.

Therefore, again sustaining an insider-outsider balance, researcher had no problems navigating on Instagram and was able to take into account the intriguing aspects of the observed branding practices (Figure 2). Only publicly shared branding practices were observed through netnography, meanwhile anonymity of the brands are protected by not sharing raw data including identifications like brand names, special designs, exclusive signifiers, locations, etc., to the third parties. So, data collection in the first phase was completed with paying respect to the ethical considerations regarding the digital observation methods.

3.2.2.1. The 7/24 Visit

Just like the data collected in the physical field observation, adopting the netnography for data analysis utilize the assemblage approach similarly (DeLanda, 2006; DeLanda, 2016) to map the components for motivating the linkages and negotiations with deterritorialized Urla and the new-Urla that these brands try to re-territorialize with the same brand communication elements that are also consisted of both material and expressive tools in itself. Combining the general ethnographic and netnographic observations that enable lurking at the assemblage of Urla, it was possible to detect new

brands that are materially and expressively ones that are the distinctively energizing agents towards the re-territorialization of Urla.

Driving from an ethical path mentioned earlier, social media observation started on right where the physical field observation conducted, at 05.09.2021, and lasted around 5 months until 16.01.2022. To quantify; 4, 3, 2, and 2 accounts on Instagram observed related to the branding practices of respectively Brand 1, Brand 2, Brand 3, and Brand 4. In total with the others, 16 accounts were researched. Brands were communicating everyday through *posts* and extensively *stories*, thus retrieved contents were so condensed in their nature as data; these revealed tangible and intangible brand elements such as consumers of the brands, collaborators, events that take place regarding Urla's gastronomical turn through these upper-segment gastronomical brands, and much more.

Being a digital observer focusing on the social media accounts of a set of identified gastronomical brands benefitted the research in analyzing the brand communication contents that act as components of the nested brand assemblages in the larger assemblage map of Urla. In the end, using netnography as the core method of research generated unexpectedly rich and satisfying data that is convenient for the research purpose. The analysis therefore for the most part will draw from the social media data of the brand communication practices collected on the selected gastronomical brands.

It is necessary to clear that data was generated by following and observing the accounts of the selected brands, as well as the accounts of the "cultural creatives" that have founded these brands. The "cultural creative" referred to in this study is an up-to-date conceptualization of the creative class of Ley (1980) and McCracken's (1986) creatives influencing the contemporary culture. Such that, these are middle-upper to upper-class people who are white-collar professionals like in Ley's (1980) description; but specifically these are the chefs or the gastro-entrepreneurs who earlier worked for renowned restaurants abroad or for high-paying jobs and now moved to the suburban area to build their brands, in opposition to Ley's (1980) creatives who occupy the city. Moreover, although their titles may be owners or chefs, unlike the advertisers or

marketing professionals that McCracken (1986) talked about; their practical statuses are full managers of their brands, implementing their visions within every aspect of the branding practices, some of them even create contents for the social media accounts personally let alone managing the flow. This is line with the discussion of Lin and Baum (2016) that highlight chefs themselves are the active cultural creatives. Hence, it can be noted that all of the observed brands were operating the brand communications in-house, if not directly on-hand.

3.2.2.2. Taking the Paths Made by Algorithm

The data collection part will be explaining how Instagram contents were retrieved as data for the research purposes but it is also meaningful to understand here how certain brands were selected for observation during the research design. It is no secret that social media algorithms are decisive in the behaviours of the humans who are the users of these platforms (Van Dijck, 2013). What is more, algorithms can also co-operate with the researcher that is doing a netnographical study. Williams, Burnap, and Sloan (2017) in a study aiming to start a discussion on developing contemporary ethical guides applicable to social media research, although not directly mentioning, have lighted up an interest on the ways that algorithms of social platforms are having an active role in research design.

Meaning, for example, the links between the accounts that are generated by the algorithm which are prompted as “suggested for you” options on Instagram, act as a second-researcher who is aiding the researcher in sampling the relevant accounts that are selected for data collection. Therefore, it has been found valuable for this study's research design to clarify how the links provided by Instagram generated the set of brands and relevant accounts that were observed for the research purposes.

At the point of coming across Brand 1 in the central area and then connecting to this brand's Instagram account, besides the unfamiliar materiality of the brand, the expressions encountered were also unknown to the researcher. Brand 1 at the first glance seemed to communicate ideas that are rooted deeply in the existing meanings of Urla, there were apparent tones of a renewed positioning for the area with the involvement of

the brands' branding practices. This created the very attention to the brands in the changing of Urla, as researcher followed the suggested accounts; just like taking turns in the streets of central Urla, by taking the paths made by algorithm.

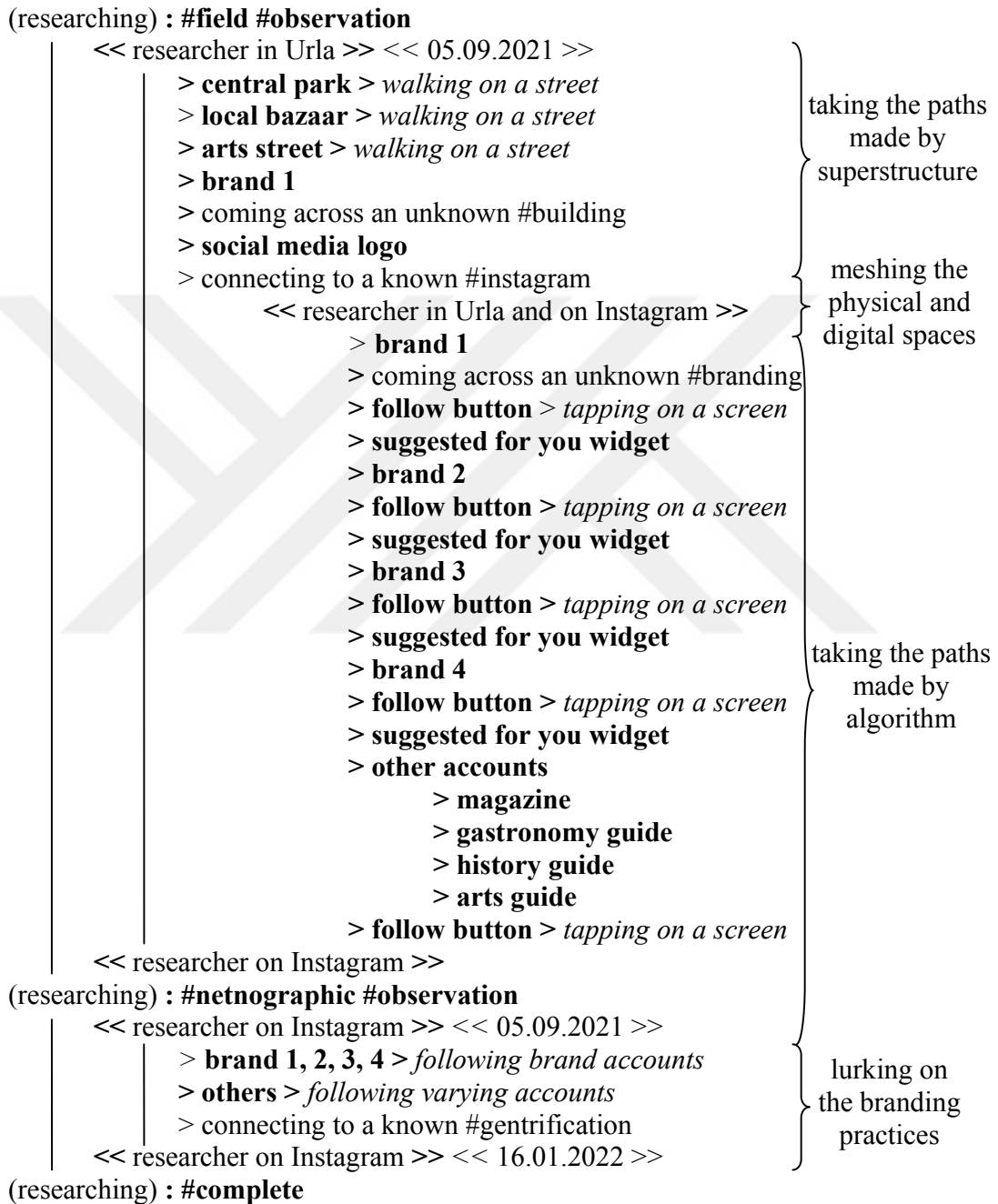


Figure 2. Operationalization program of the core research design.

The brands “purposefully selected” (Creswell, 2013) as a set for observation were offering similar interaction with Urla's meanings; rooting from it meanwhile attempting to change it, yet doing it in their all authentic ways. Thus, the four brands were selected and research operationalized mainly through lurking on brand communication practices of them until satisfactory data was accumulated. Additionally, a couple of cultural accounts that were suggested by the algorithm after following the accounts of brands were included in the observation to have an in-depth understanding of the context regarding these brands' interlocking meanings.

Henceforth, when the program of research design was to cracked down into steps of doings and thinking (Figure 2); it can be tracked how the research that questioned the ways that selected brands utilize Urla's meaning in their branding and how they affect these meanings, evolved into the interpretation of in what way the observed branding efforts change Urla. Such connection points are the Deleuzian "lines of flight" in the process of this research, which will be conceptualized further in detail during the framing of the data analysis.

3.2.3. Participant Observation

Through utilizing participant observation methods, the researcher can gather information in varying forms, but the fundamental goal is to closely observe what is happening and be able to actively engage in the cultural setting of the research's interest (Creswell, 2013). Participant observation conducted in the specific events like concerts, annual gatherings, cultural rituals, etc. is a strong method in its ability to offer thick description of the human and non-human context be if fan groups, organizational culture, ethnic minorities, etc. in terms of what is done and what is said that is linked to the research phenomenon, since these events are rich sites of value creation for the interested contexts.

When the context is a suburban area's change regarding the agency of certain brands, the events thus can generate meanings that brands are creating during these events as well as manifestations of meanings that are already embedded in the

phenomenon. Branding that is observed for this study was mainly of the brand communication practices that take place in social media, however during the data collection conducted on Instagram, certain events that came by in odd dates were found valuable to the research purpose thus added into research design.

Brands or the human elements of the brands representing the brand in these events, are actually practicing brand communication in diverging forms. Meaning, branding observed in the two events is of potential to contribute to the research. Sensitivity to ethical considerations maintained during the participant observations, therefore just like the field observation photographic/audiographic/videographic documenting personal or commercially data is to be protected and not to be shared by the third parties if the research actions carry any risk of spoiling the anonymization or any identification of the brands or other agents in these events are to be harmed.

In the event that chronologically came first, the gathering of the gastronomical community, the Gastronomy Festival was an event that is open for the participation to anyone who purchased a ticket. It was a physical gathering lasting a day long with quite a rich program that will be given in the analysis parts. Even though the event was a causal one and research is not leaning on collecting data on any sensitive subject; researcher talked to the organizers of the event and disclosed the researcher identity, and asked for permission to collect visual data. During the festival, researcher informally interact with other people as naturally expectable, thus beforehand wearing a tag indicating the researcher identity throughout the day.

The second event, the Regional Forum, was a panel-like organization yet was open to the public without any participation fees since it was a digital gathering in which sessions lasted only few hours. There, discussion topics were similar to the festival, intensifying on the gastronomy-tourism-Urla triangle. Researcher was openly among the viewers of the live-streaming through the video-sharing platform of Youtube. During this online event, researcher took notes of the expressions of the panellists, like earlier in the field notes taken during the participation in the physical event. Hence, data collection in the participant observation method was ensured to be in line with the ethical considerations.

3.2.3.1. Gatherings

Researcher was a total outsider of the cultural community that were encountered in the attended events. The community consisted of gastronomy enthusiasts, tourism industry players, fine-dining brands like the observed brands in this research, academics to journalists, domestic to international upper-class consumers, and aspiring students of culinary arts, media, and tourism, etc. to be briefly listed. Therefore, it was quite valuable to be directly exposed to the narratives of the agents that will later be referred as cultural creatives regarding the change emerging in Urla by the parts of the gastronomical community as these are naturally unfolding during the events. Moreover, at the time of the Gastronomy Festival that held in 24.10.2021 during the netnographic observation began to offer preliminary codes, the researcher had the chance to interact with the Brand 2, 3, and 4 in this physical gathering since these brands were invited by the organization as the participators. The opportunity also enabled a consumer experience for the research upon the mentioned brands.

Tasting the servings from their stands, observing the potential consumer segment that are attracted to these brands' stands, how the brand is displaying their products in sense of using what kind of objects or what kind of communication approach they initiate to people, what are the designs of the stands and what are the topics that brought up by the cultural creatives of these brands' during the panel and workshop sessions, etc. were all beneficial for scratching deeper into understanding the brand communications practices of these brands.

At the time of the second event, the Regional Forum dated on 12.11.2021, absorbing the discussions in the light of the growing research data was extremely useful. In the process of the research design, thus, inception upon the field built the descriptive pattern in the observation, then focused observation on the brand communications generated the core data, and later merging all this with the selective participant observations helped further texturing the analysis (Spradley, 1980).

3.3. Data Collection

Table 1. Collected Data.

date of collection	method of collection	tool of collection	form of data	mass of data
05.09.2021	<i>filed observation</i>	visual conventional	photos videos field notes	25 pictures 53 recordings 5 pages
05.09.2021 - 26.12.2021	<i>netnography</i>	visual	posts (p) stories (s)	Brand 1 93 (p) and 1,597 (s)
				Brand 2 75 (p) and 431 (s)
				Brand 3 112 (p) and 1,261 (s)
				Brand 4 24 (p) and 352 (s)
				Others 125 (p) and 584 (s)
24.10.2021	<i>participant observation</i>	visual conventional	photos videos field notes	204 pictures 10 recordings 7 pages
12.11.2021	<i>participant observation</i>	conventional	field notes	6 pages

3.3.1. Visual Tools

The paradigm of visual methods is a growing amount of diverse avenues of collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in interlocking fields of social sciences. For this study, visual methods will be given due primarily as a useful tool for collecting data, yet the influence gained from the recent advancements regarding this methodological paradigm of visual methods can be seen in the data analysis as well.

Nonetheless its antecedents ironically trailed back to the early schools of dominantly euro-centric anthropology, recalling here the black and white photos of the “primitive tribes” taken by the Western researchers, visual methods of today are

experimented especially in critical, transformative, and participatory action research, and being innovated in reflective queries (Rabikowska, 2010).

These methods deemed as new since the technology incorporated in current visual methods are developing immensely thus receive scepticism about their structuration. Meanwhile, stance on the side of the paradigm appreciating the vagueness strengthens in the post-disciplinary studies within the varying fields of research (Elkins et al., 2012; Luvera, 2021). According to the Demos (2021) visual studies' legitimacy and integrity in the academia is found debatable because of their diversity in methods, plurality in perspectives, and expansiveness of the object of inquiry which are the exact points that make the visual methods invaluable for the non-totalizable postmodern approaches. In delivering original commentaries on the topics around the emanation of videography into the social sciences, Baker (2011) have argued, as a requirement the medium should be interrogated before the content is to be dwelled into. For this study, it has been previously mentioned that researcher is both the medium that generates knowledge as well as it is an active component of the reality where researching happens. Therefore here it is meaningful to highlight how and on what degrees the data collection using visual methods operated during the research process.

For this study, one of the most elucidating attempts to explore and improve visual methods is Pauwels' (2010) integrative framework working out comprehensive guidance for founding a solid visual method for research. Drawing from Pauwels (2010); through the data collection that visual tools enable; researcher can create photos, videos, sketches, drawings, etc. by being the first-hand upon the researched phenomenon, concurrently researcher can also capture the visual data like advertisements, family albums, leaflets, posters, archived documentaries, films, etc. that are created by others. These are all equally visual data, differently useful in terms of what research questions are going for. Thought-provoking examples of visual ethnography can be found in Iqani and Baro (2017) and Andron (2019).

Considering this very study; during the first phase of the research that is the field observation, and later goes for the participant observation, the data in form of photography and videography were directly “created” by the researcher. That is because

researcher was experiencing the context of reality symmetrically with other existing components. Withal, during the second phase being netnographical observation, researcher “captured” the data that were created by the brands as their brand communication practices and put out publicly in form of posts and stories on Instagram. So the researched had to take a step back to observe what is being done and said outside of the researchers' intrusion in form of visual and textual contents to understand the meanings linked to them, thereon to interpret the effects of such branding in relation with Urla.

The word “creating” here refers to the data collection practice in which researcher that is generating pieces of data directly interacting with reality, what Pawuels (2010, p. 551) called:

“researcher-initiated production of visual data and meanings”

On the other hand the word “capturing” refers to the practice in which the researcher is retrieving pieces of reality that is being co-created with others, again simply put by the direction of Pauwels, 2010 (p. 550):

“found materials as data source”

Belk et al. (2018b) discussed that visual methods, specifically videography, should not be taken for granted just as a hyped up tool used for qualitative research since the visionary ideas behind such methods can elevate the utilization as well as positioning of other forms of data in the research. The innovative thinking reinforced within the visual methods paradigm trigger more in-depth reflection on the researching, such that, in line with the Pauwels' (2010) framing on the nature of producing visual data, data of conventional textures can also be evaluated. Therefore; field notes taken during field and participant observations can be though as created data, at the same time voice-recordings of expert interviews can be taken as captured insights, beyond data. This shows that even only looking at the data collection of the research, the multiple levels of complexity

can be seen and contributions coming from heterogeneous agents in the making of reality can be acknowledged.

Pauwels (2010, p. 557) warns researchers to;

“be aware of the inevitable difference between the depicted (the referent) and the depiction (the visual representation)”

Accordingly it is critical to assess that while retrieving pieces of reality, researcher should not forget that what is at hand are the slices in shape of images, not the whole reality. This is already emphasized by the approach adopted for this study; thereby adequacy of collected data cannot be evaluated in terms of numerical mass, neither the analysis can be tested to be proven right. That is because the exploring aimed at this research is already acknowledged as a subjectivity upon the reality.

Hence, data generated during the data collection cannot be claimed to be extended to every endpoints of the phenomenon under investigation as that is not the intention. There is also the issue Luvera (2021) articulated, for applying the visual methods into research in a novel manner, visuals are not to be mere decorative items in the paper. Underscoring the visuals produced in different natures during the data collection as the core sources of data, be it created photos or captured social media content, places visual method at the heart of this research (Table 1). Additionally, since the data itself can offer glimpses that are residing inside of the boundaries of ethics makes the flow of study more stimulating. Thus, visual aspects of data collection are to be reflected upon the presentation of the study; such that, in the analysis part cropped collages from the data are to be granted.

3.3.1.1. Field Images

During the day of the field observation conducted in central Urla, 25 photos and 53 videos were created. Photos are of majorly the imagery of the landscape, containing

material and expressive components of the area. Videos have been recorded in engaging styles in varying lengths, that aims at supplying a “naturalistic observation” (Belk and Kozinets, 2005) of the context.

Short videos that recorded a particular scenery are containing imagery like trees standing across while sitting in the Central Park, and short videos that recorded movements are containing imagery of the flow of crowd strolling along Arts Street passing by bursting names of newly established brands. The longest of the videos is created as a walking-tour (Pink, 2007; Cheetnam, McEachem, and Warnaby, 2018) of the central Urla titled as “The Full Walk” lasts an interrupted 6.21 minutes. Movies are watched, videos are seen (Baker, 2011). The aim of taking videos is to see the retraction of the pieces of the phenomenon under study in an active way that only visual methods can offer.

At the participant observation conducted in Gastronomy Festival, 204 photos and 10 videos were created. Photos are similarly contained the imagery that gives character to the event, but moreover in this event attending brands were attentively recorded and brand communication materials were closely captured. That is why, photos are of abundance in the field of participant observation compared to the field observation. Workshops and the panel that cultural creatives of the observed brands took part in were fully videotaped to be reflected on for the triangulation of the analysis that is generally leaning onto the netnographic data. Again, a walking-tour was recorded during the event, this time titled as “The Gastro Community” and lasts 2.30 minutes.

3.3.1.2. Screen-shooting

With smartphones becoming mundane parts of everyday life, things are changing without losing momentum, thus researching is also changing. Gorman (2016) reflected on how data collection in the physical field is evolving into a new form where note-taking apps replacing pen and paper. More relevantly, discussions in the diverse circles of social science about how the data collection upon the digital field is to be properly practiced have fired up (Halford et al., 2017) due to the increasing interest on using

social media content in empirical research (Chen et al, 2021). There are also the issues about legal regulations and private policies concerning ethics in the data retraction from social media platforms.

Therefore, it is a must to recognize the challenges of maintaining ethics in social media data collection (Williams, Burnap, and Sloan, 2017) as emphasized in the below quote. Instagram has strict rules for regulating retrieval of the content as data, even publicly shared ones. A careful investigation conducted on the Instagram's fair use policy by reviewing the Instagram Data Policy, Terms of Use, and Platform Policy (last updated on 20th December 2020) clearly explains that any data created by the user accounts cannot be a commodity for the commercial transactions. In other words, for an academic research retracting data from Instagram to be ethical, data collection cannot be assisted by services that are subjected to fees, like as in the paid apps. That is because such transactions would promote commercial interest on the contents shared by the user accounts which are produced and shared without necessarily receiving payments for it. Therefore it is ambiguous what can be a trustable and appropriate data collection strategy for retrieving netnographic data from social media platforms.

“Codes of ethical conduct that were first written over half a century ago are being relied upon to guide the collection, analysis and representation of digital data. The result has been a rush to have a go without the benefit of the full picture. (...) Researchers need to interpret and engage with terms of service through the lens of social science research that implies a more reflexive ethical approach (...).”
(Williams, Burnap, and Sloan, 2017)

To resolve the issue, Bianotti, Caliandro, and Gandini (2020) shared their strategy for collecting on Instagram, which was quite enlightening. They handled the data collection through a free app that retracted the stories and posts under certain hashtags shared by a random sampled set of accounts to understand what kind of contents popularly created by Instagram users. For this research, however, purpose is different. The observed accounts needed to be of a compact a set of mindfully selected

brands to keep close track on each of the shared contents, everyday and constantly for a couple of months, to maintain detailed records of every brands, as well as at the moment reflect on how the brands' communication practices are unfolding in the course of time, trying to connect the meanings of brands to the meanings of Urla, later to interpret what these collectively mean.

Data collection for this study thus needed to be real-time and managed on-hands, literally. Meaning, data collection thus managed via practicing one of the much peculiar practices that humans learned to adapt with to get along with smartphones; the researcher has been using an Iphone 11, and took screenshots of posts and stories as ongoing while observed brands shared them. Similarly, the study of Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan (2017) displayed the usefulness of screen-shots for collecting visual data on Instagram. Creating images of the Bazaar during the field observation taking photos with the same device is not very different from capturing the contents created by the brands that are encountered on the Instagram feed of the researcher with screen-shooting; since these should known to be as just some of the divergent manners in the myriad of collecting data within the in situ customizable tenets of visual methods.

During the process of the netnographic observation that lasted about five months, the data captured by screen-shooting accumulated the brand communication output of the observed set of brands by total of 4,620 screenshots, while these consisted of contents in form of 3,341 stories and 304 posts created by these brands cumulatively. Not included in the secondary phase of the data analysis but had valuable contributions to the analysis in the first phase analysis, 584 stories and 125 posts were aggregated from the relevant cultural accounts titled as the “others”. It was sound logic that sharing the quantitative extents of the data captured from the brands in the provided table (Table 1) without any identifying information which could taint the anonymity of the brands, thus the table should be adequate to clarify the sources of collected data.

Due to the earlier mentioned fair use policy of Instagram that necessitated the practice of screen-shooting to be incorporated into this research as a data collection method, researchers are not permitted to disclose the raw data directly that is why non-identifiable visuals will be provided in the analysis part in form of collages. Nonetheless,

citing translated data while keeping the anonymity was possible since the quotations retrieved from the texts in visual data contented by the posts and stories of the brands cannot be searched on Instagram, thus identification of the sources again ensured to be not a risk. Meantime, it is useful here to assure that during the thesis proceedings all data collected for this research is stored in a hard disk owned by the researcher.

3.3.2. Conventional Tools

Considering how this research was founded majorly on netnography and competently relied on data collection through a smartphone, it is kind of ironic that taking the field notes proceeded very much in a traditional sense, ill-fitting to the popularisation of digital note-taking in the fieldwork (Gorman, 2016).

Additionally, in the face of transcription programs that are now widely used for converting interviews into texts and rescuing researchers from the bulk of the typewriting, voice recordings of the expert sessions (Table 2) were transcribed manually. This is valuable to here to mention to highlight how new and old approaches, regarding especially researching but also everything else, originally come together and create the lived practises; as these are not erasing each other or make completely obsolete, but make a heap that transforms the old and new each time differently while it is manifesting itself into being (DeLanda, 1997).

So, this section of the data collection briefly explains the other two tools that are rather conventional compared to the tools borrowed from the extensively discussed visual methods, but they are used during the research and produce valuable data in their own terms. At the time of the field observation, participation in the festival and later in the forum; respectively 5, 7, and 6 pages of field notes were taken.

For collecting data using the conventional tool of note-taking, it is important to give due to the details of the background. Thus; the dates, time of the day, details caring for a wide range of aspects of the observation from specific events encountered to the temperature, visited locations, human and non-human actors present, sequences of the events, reflections of emotions about researcher's own experience, were all recorded.

During the field observation and the first participant observation that have been conducted physically, data were created manually using pen and paper and later these were transformed into Word Documents. The second participant observation was an online event, thus notes were directly recorded on a Word Document. The field notes were handy for the triangulation of the preliminary analysis conducted in line with assemblage mapping; they enabled cross-checking the relevant components for developing the Urla's assemblage map.

3.4. Data Analysis

So far, the data collection process is situated in a manner that satisfactory data in both content-wise and ethics-wise has been secured. Data analysis is thereon emerged as an integrative process of laying out all the data, first of all semi-analyzing, and mapping out the Assemblage of Urla through identifying agents that are relevant to this research. This map needs to adequately present the heterogeneity of the assemblage including a focus on the nested brand assemblages with all their materiality and expressiveness based on the data. In other words, first there need to be a construction of a map; this drafted map will secondly be supplied with the traces of relations, negotiations, and unprecedented emergencies.

This kind of simultaneously evolving data-analysis is underlined as necessary by Ger (2009) as well as Arsel (2017, p. 2) in order to have data itself as the guide for the qualitative researchers since it is advised that;

“each data point and each iteration within the research process should compel (...) to reconsider your understanding and the motivating research questions”

Analysis therefore will enable categorization, abstraction, integration, and iteration of the diverse data (Spiggle, 1994). Interpretation conducted upon the analysis will thus be able to understand meanings, identify patterns within meanings, and represent how these meanings are produced.

Qualitative content analysis is the subjective interpretation of data by adopting a systematic classification and coding process, to generate meaningful themes and patterns out of the content (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Lune and Berg (2017) explains that it is the technique for examining the information contained in varying sources, in a way all qualitative analysis is content analysis with differing strategies. What is called data is content generated for serving the interests of a research.

Usually content analysis is a nonreactive method, since original creators of the content most likely are not aware that their content would be analyzed. Just like in the case of social media data collection for this study, brands were putting out content as brand communication efforts, not intentionally for creating research data. Content analysis supports working with large amounts of material, again appropriate for this study considering the data that has been amassed, and document specific features within such bulky data. A critical advise for researchers is to be careful about not to omit how they are doing the analysis, besides outlining what and why they are doing (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

It is an indispensable task for content analysis to establish a systematic analytical procedure to avoid arbitrariness (Lune and Berg, 2017). Thus, specification of basic approaches of analysis and later categorization of codes hence are useful steps taken towards proper data analysis.

Therefore, in this part of the study the two phases of content analysis using customized forms of assemblage mapping and thematic analysis will be illustrated, followingly the approach in determining how analytical framework is established for the first phase and how the codes are used for the interpretation in the second will be disclosed.

Induction is the way to go when it comes to content analysis since the primary claim in the qualitative paradigm is offering an authentic glimpse of reality through grounded data, avoiding top-down instructions of a priori knowledge. However, while preliminary analysis is conducted bottom to up, the interpretation of the researcher is inevitably involved as a holistic gaze. This does not imply deduction is an impasse for qualitative analysis which needs to be avoided; reflecting on the existing literature

meanwhile acknowledging the equal importance of data and the precedent knowledge during the analysis is an opportunity for bringing multiple dimensions into the analysis.

On similar grounds with such qualitative approach, rhizomatic thinking that inspired this study as in approaching the topic of inquiry as well as in developing the research, informs the connecting points in the analysis for reaching an understanding which can appease the research questions.

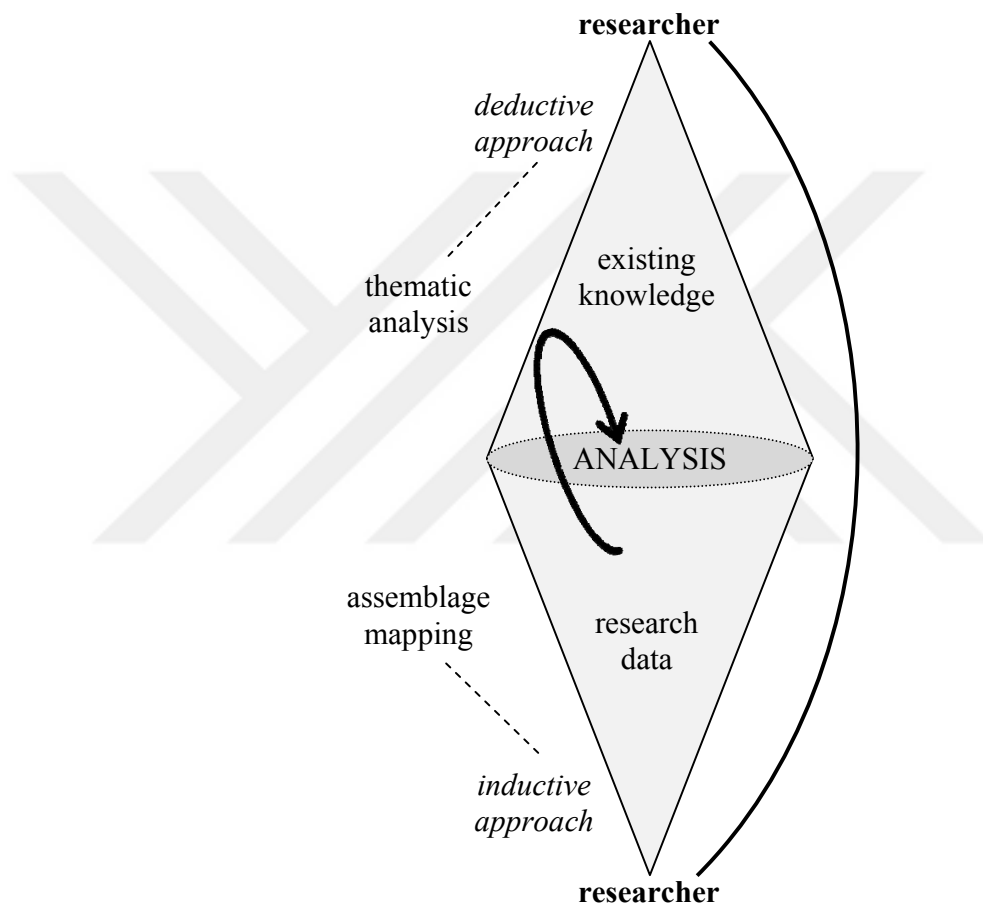


Figure 3. Inductive and deductive dimensions of Analysis Bicone.

The analysis for this study is thus organized around two phases that simultaneously realizes each other, as in the shape of bicone; meaning, understandings achieved in the second phase cannot exist without the first phase since the

subjectification of the phenomenon is to be achieved within. With such an intersecting two-phased analysis (Figure 3), the aim is to first describe the context, then to demonstrate how meanings are interpreted through it.

3.4.1. Assemblage Mapping

Deleuze (1972, p. 4-5) situated that, the signs:

“are the object of temporal apprenticeships, not of an abstract knowledge (...) [and] worlds are unified by their formation of sign systems emitted by [many agents]”

Thus; as mentioned earlier, the discovery of a truth is ill-conditioned while what humans can learn about is an interpretation of the reality. Signification is deemed as the act of signifying by the symbolic meanings regarded as signs, seems to be utilization of ready-made meanings and reproducing existing understandings (Muckelbauer, 2007). This exactly means that a sign is of an abstract knowledge; thus there is the need for seeking another notion for what Deleuzian signification process was meant for (Coffin, 2021). Hauptmann and Radman (2014) accounted for the “asignifying” process of Deleuze, in contrast to the phenomenological signification of phenomena, as a condition preceding what it conditions by its right to be. This is parallel to the creation of perspective as previously discussed in this study.

Followingly, the “sense” is depicted to be the productive mechanisms of such signs and their meanings. The raw content and the in situ interpreted links can therefore become ingredients of a-signification (Genosko, 2014). Accordingly, an idea or a sense-making process like this analysis, can produce a-signified signs and meanings as a part of reality. But the complication on how research can erupt and become a fraction in the form of knowing, maintains its obscurity.

“The rhizome is (...) a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing. (...). What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an

experimentation in contact with the real. (...). It fosters connections between fields (...). It is itself a part of the rhizome." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)

The concept of rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) is highly relevant here as called for earlier in the literature review part to be handy path for working towards approaching the contemporary phenomena of relational processes. Thereupon, the context can be grasped from any entry points and supports the researcher to analyze the happenings from multiple dimensions starting at the bottom of it. Rhizomes do not consist of hierarchical units like tree's root-body-branch units, but consist of multiple dimensions which are dynamic directions that the rhizome grows through.

An important aspect of rhizomatic thinking is, thus, the post-dimensionality that can fly any direction of reasoning at any moment in interpretation. Rhizomatic thinking creates maps of open entries from any direction it spreads (Kinchin and Gravett, 2020); maps that are always sketched right from the middle of it since any moment, situation, existence is a middling. This thinking is favourable for positioning the analysis as far away from being an inspection of mere occurrences that are signifying the hypothetical reasons behind them, and closer to the scrutiny of asignifications of reality as these are naturally manifesting themselves. Hence, a prelusive analysis can be implemented to illuminate the opportunities to improve understandings that are rooted in reality.

3.4.1.1. Analytical Framework

In order to answer the first research question, to start off the analysis bottom to up upon the raw data; as the first phase in the analysis, there will be the assemblage mapping looking inductively at the world surrounding the "depicted" through the data. For Muminovic (2019, p. 62), such an assemblage mapping adopted as an analytical tool surely;

"is not a simple representation of reality but has certain levels of abstraction and editing"

That is, since maps of any sorts are the definitions of particular directions of reading an understanding of a place; they are constructed to generate a subjectivity that traces can be worked upon. Thus, in line with the above quote from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the map of Urla can be regarded as an assemblage, created by the researchers' glance upon the empirical data with a purpose in mind, situated in the branches of the growing rhizome of this study. So that, analysis can eloquently connect to the roots of thought process.

Feely (2019) disclosed a third-step assemblage analysis retracted from the instructions of DeLanda (2006); on stage one components of the assemblage were identified, on stage two the flows within the data were mapped, and on stage three processes of territorialization were explored. Data analysis similar to the stance in the mentioned study can be resembled to a machine, processing data according to certain rules to produce findings (Fox and Alldred, 2021).

Howbeit it should not be missed that, for the beginning phase of the analysis in this study, to describe the context with assemblage mapping of the components, any ready-made coding structures should be avoided since such a template could manipulate the analysis into an irrelevantly over-coded scheme instead of creating a volatile map. The need here is to make a tentative path towards the reality within the post-coding world of assemblage analysis (Augustine, 2014).

So, drawing from Pauwels (2010), analysis at this first phase is to describe what are the things existent in the observations of the phenomenon relevant to the research purpose, and what are the elements that come across while looking at the brand communication practices. The things referred here surely are of heterogeneous existence, identifying the components of expressivity and materiality as they are relating to each other within the network of a human and non-human agents is the focus.

“Researcher can (...) scrutinize the ways in which particular objects or events are being represented visually by certain actors or institutions over time. Thus, the focus of attention moves to researching form and style and so to the world of the image producers rather than that of the depicted.” (Pauwels, 2010)

In this section, a frameless framework, a cumulus-like formation of cloudy thoughts condensing the molecules data will be drafted. Briefly remembering the notions informing the concept of assemblages from the introductory chapters of this study, assemblages are emerging through the multiple relations that the interacting heterogeneous components with diverse properties create and they have the ability to affect and be affected (DeLanda, 2006; DeLanda, 2016).

Usually the framing of analysis is explained by using the grounds of intertwining horizontal and vertical axis, shadowing a tetravalent (DeLanda, 2006; Acselrad and Bezerra, 2010). These are two axis which are in a “reciprocal presupposition” (Bogard, 2009), existing due to each other without causing each in line with the independently relating entities of Deleuzian thought.

To begin with, on the horizontal axis the components are situated. Components have material and expressive properties that carry the potential to energize the capacities of the assemblages; these can be regarded as the traits, lots, identifying marks characterizing the linked components. Components can be seen as nested assemblages; like bumps within a cloud, stratifying and dissolving. What this phase of the analysis of this study is about at the beginning is exactly this, drawing the horizontal axis of the assemblage map of Urla in reference to the research interests.

Conversely, on the vertical axis the internal and external interactions of the assemblage are situated. Territorialization is the process of coming together in a unique way, de-territorialization is the process of disruption to the status of the coming together, and re-territorializing is the process of coming back together each time in a different way (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). These are the notions highlighting the intervals among being made and being unmade as a processual entity.

There, at this point of analysis, the lines of flight are to be situated as these are the routes to one dimension to another. Meaning, brands rooting their meanings into the meanings of Urla or get inspired by the traditional rituals of Urla for their commercialized activities, these brands are creating linkages between the assemblage of Urla and the assemblages of these brands. In translation to its practical use, the strategy is to benefit the visual, textual, and discourse analysis tools. From there, analysis will

further interpret the links between the existing knowledge and the data, also creating multi-dimensional lines of flight, generating an understanding of the phenomenon.

ASSEMBLAGE MAPPING

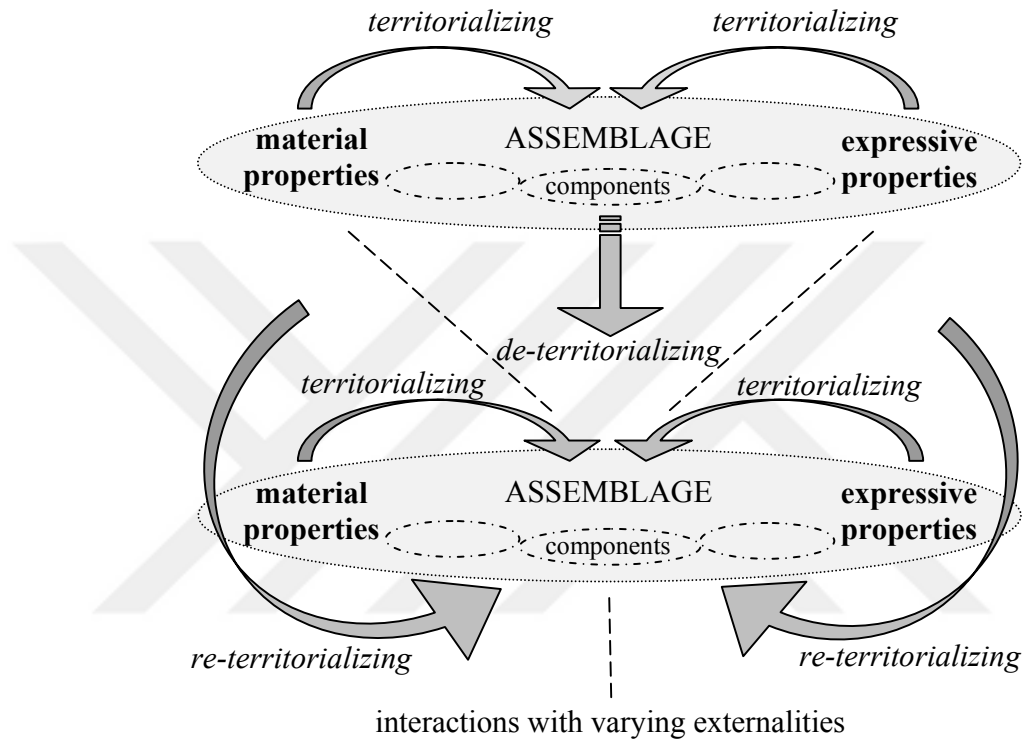


Figure 4. Diagram for visualizing the Assemblage Mapping process.

To effortlessly explain the lax frame of assemblage mapping used for this study and simplify the idea that has been tangling in between the words, a diagram (Muminovic, 2019) is produced drawing from original guidelines of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), DeLanda (2006), and DeLanda (2016) to blueprint the analysis in the first phase that will enlighten the concerns of the first research question (Figure 4). Additionally, to clarify how the theoretical terms for the relations and names for the components are to be used in this study interchangeably with the jargon of branding

school and to foreshadow the content of the upcoming main body of the study, a customized framework also introduced (Figure 5).

ASSEMBLAGE-MAPPING OF GASTRO-URLA

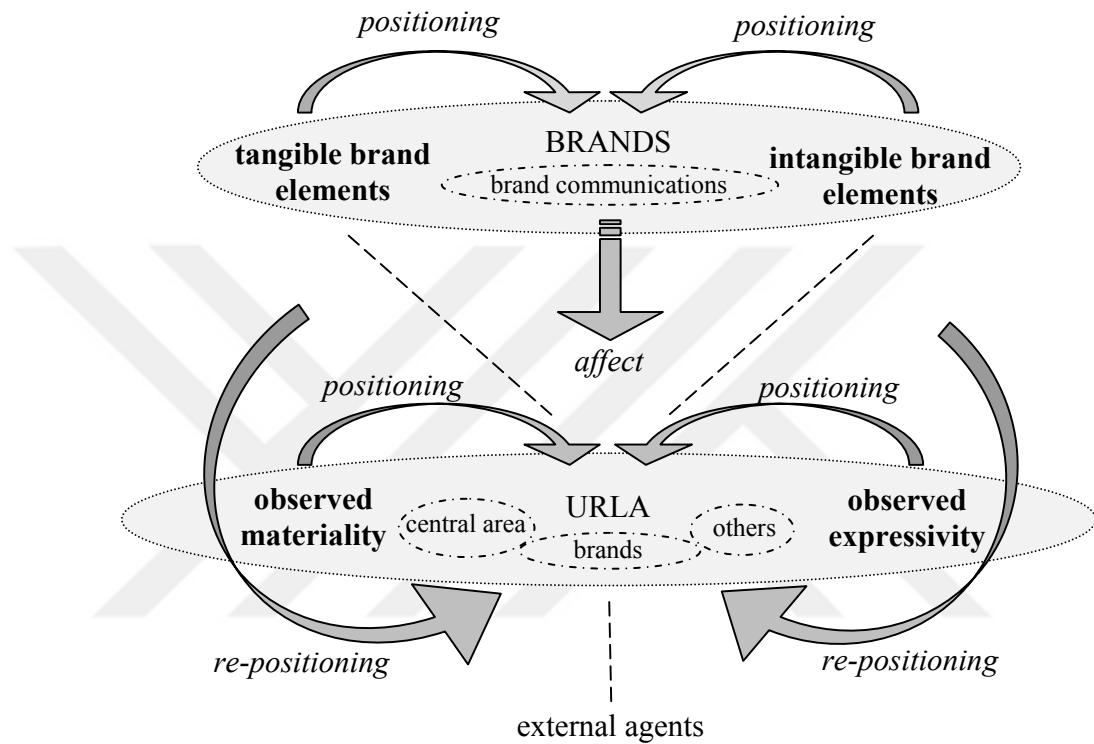


Figure 5. Customized diagram for the Assemblage Mapping of the phenomenon.

3.4.2. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the trivial as well as the substantial methods of qualitative data analysis to learn, since, as quoted Braun and Clark (2006, p. 78) articulate;

“it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis”

It is beneficial to use thematic analysis in extracting key features of a massive data set and harvest thick descriptions at the same time fostering a fertile ground for unexpected insights that may emerge through the findings. In the antecedent phase, the researcher tracked the data as it was a-signing the components and properties of the map, respectively can be regarded as the codes and themes of content analysis. Instead, for this consecutive phase, the researcher is involved in assigning an understanding out of data with preconceived codes that are expected to bring an insight on the content and therefore a synthesis is to be meaningfully established.

Thematic analysis is also found advantageous due to its theoretical and practical flexibility (Clark and Braun, 2013; Clark and Braun 2017) in its adaptability to different philosophical paradigms as well as to both bottom-up and top-down analytical operations (Alhojailan, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Meaning, thematic approach can analyze content of data inductively with open-coding, nonetheless can analyze content deductively by searching for the codes that were retracted from the theories that interpreter found possibly relevant. In this light, the first phase of the analysis which is achieved with assemblage mapping can be seen as a version of open-coding, meanwhile the second phase is the theoretical thematic analysis.

As multiple references may have given the hint, comprehensive definition and precise proliferation of thematic analysis has been facilitated (Braun and Clark, 2006; Braun and Clark, 2013). Therefore, the systematic process they embellished was employed in the secondary analysis part of this thesis. Pondering upon their advice, a condensed plan for thematic analysis was put in several steps; becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing these themes, defining these themes further and writing up a detailed interpretation (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In other words, these steps are targeted respectively at; first identifying the data to manage within the mass of the raw data, secondly connecting the data with research objectives, third modelling the concepts that meanings are gathering around, cross-checking these, digging into underlying meanings, and offering a demonstration of the findings. One critical point that needs to be addressed before moving on, is the clarification of conditions in which materiality and expressivity in data are to be

evaluated for this phase. For the first phase, material and expressive components have been acknowledged in a balance within the framework.

Distinctively, the thematic analysis designed here is for hunting certain codes in data to converse with the explanatory capacity of a set of scanned theories (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). However, superficial positioning of this process can be problematic to the consistency of the interpretative lens. That is because ill-fitting of this process to the lens may result in a misunderstanding of some materials taken as inherently signs, carrying certain meanings in their essences.

At the moment when a change is demarcated as gentrification, then it means that it has been signified. Acknowledged by Legendijk et al., (2014, p. 363);

“signification attributes meaning abstract terms and relations, tying for instance, real estate investments, displacement and shifting social mixes in a coherent story”

Although this change can be a spatial one so elements of transformation can be grasped in material; the conceptualization of such evolution is created by the human mind, as the nature of the material is interpreted by the researcher. For this acknowledgement, as signification of signs has to be revisited, and for this going back again to the original notions of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is of assistance.

By their very right to be, materials are not essentially the signs in the human mind, nor the observed materiality in the area under study are presumed to be codes compelling the literature of gentrification. If not for this awakening, consequently any reconstruction plan upon a historical street would become an attempted gentrification, or any restaurant opened up in a neighbourhood of working class dwellers would be labelled as gentrifier business. That is why, there comes a “tracing” of the in-between, that is not meant for copying but interpreting, lining, and connecting. To draw lines between point A and B in a map is an act of creation, these lines are not pre-existing, they are deliberately signifying a path among the asignifiers. Because, components can be of both material and expressive properties, and when interacted with others, they can emerge signifying capacities co-operating materiality (Feely, 2019).

Therefore, if the public announcement of the reconstruction plan of a historical street expresses goals of remaking the purpose of the street to be appealing to contemporary artists, or if the restaurant opened up in a working-class neighbourhood marks itself as a fine-dining experience for consumers who are ready to pay the price; the researcher can trace the links between the materiality and expressivity to tackle on the interpretation of gentrification upon the phenomenon.

Through the relations between the components, the agency of to affect and be affected emerges (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and the nature of this agency can be analyzed with an analysis aware of possible many ways of subjectivization of reality (DeLanda, 2006). By the way, the notion of “expressivity” is only a category of the mind within the analytical framework of the assemblage thinking since the sounds, ideas, meanings, images, way of speech, gestures, meaning and typing of the words, hashtags, all are “materiality” in different nature. This issue, however, will not be tackled within the scope of this study.

3.4.2.1. Coding Gentrification

“Is it not of the essence of the map to be traceable? (...).But the opposite is also true. It is a question of method: the tracing should always be put back on the map. This operation and the previous one are not at all symmetrical. For it is inaccurate to say that a tracing reproduces the map. (...). The tracing has already translated the map into an image; (...) according to the axes of signification (...) belonging to it. It has generated (...) the rhizome, and when it thinks it is reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself. (...). What the tracing reproduces of the map or rhizome are only the impasses, blockages, incipient taproots, or points of structuration.”
(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)

To elevate upon the asignification of the phenomenon with interpretative links; as the second phase, there will be the thematic analysis looking at the “depiction” through the map that preliminary analysis created, with the purpose of offering a

synthesis towards the second research question by deductively engaging the codes from the existing knowledge to the underlying meanings of the data. That serves the very intention of creating a map; as the quote from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) illuminates, again can be found right above.

Hence, the goal of the analysis in the second phase is demonstrating how a change of specified nature unfolds through looking at the events, activities, and choices during the process of transformation (Giesler and Thompson, 2016). These will be categorized as happenings, doings, and sayings of the brands relying on the understandings derived from their branding efforts.

As the assemblage mapping situated the components, linkages, territorializations with varying directions; this thematic analysis will develop on what could the dynamism in the area mean, understood from the point of view of the researcher as the interpreter. The goal of the coding template thus will be assisting the structuration of the analysis upon the interpretations of gentrification directed towards the data. Luckily, the hint given by Pauwels (2010, p. 560) has already modelled the frame in which to start off with thematic analysis of mixed data considering the topic of gentrification:

“Theoretical grounding of a project not only involves the visual analytical side but also includes the main subject matter or the thematic focus of the project. Researchers who for instance study gentrification processes (...) start by selecting particular definitions and aspects of gentrification.” (Pauwels, 2010)

Drawing mostly from the literature review presented earlier in earlier chapters of this study, combined with updated searches on the hot topic of gentrification, the classical and contemporary codes with potential of reviving a gentrification reading upon the collected data has been aggregated. Therefore the literature at hand came by providing a substantive template for assisting the thematic analysis here, contending the primary codes to address the observed phenomenon as an authentic version of the ubiquitous phenomena of gentrification. Wherewithal, at the first step of this interpretative phase, the researcher looked back at the assemblage map generated

throughout the first phase of analysis and highlighted key properties of the brand communication components of each brand. Secondly, retracted the data which are related to the codes generated from the literature. Thirdly, the researcher glanced upon the data contents accumulating within the coding folders and began writing up interesting points that are directly matching, completely contradicting, or negotiating with the gentrification codes found in the existing literature.

From there at the fourth step, the researcher featured the themes that interlocking meanings of the contents within the codes share. At the fifth step, the researcher expanded the scopes of the themes with interpreting the data by engaging in dialogue with literature. During the last step of the tracing chapter, findings are to be eloquently presented and analysis is to be melded into a synthesis for kicking off further discussions upon. From the assemblage theory approach, interpretation of changes in Urla in terms of gentrification is a representation of projective possibility (Lagendijk et al., 2014).

3.5. Research Validity

Methodology of qualitative research recognizing the quasi-causality and multi-finality of reality contributed by the research that conceives interpretations of it, suitable to the stance of this study as reckoned earlier. Howbeit, interpretivist research does not mean the output of researching is accepted as completely being of an accumulation of researcher's own ideas upon a phenomenon; given interpretation's connections to the reality must be assessed in the qualitative paradigm's own terms to assure the rigour of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

As Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 95) argued:

“although ‘qualitative’ research cannot be subjected to the same criteria as ‘quantitative’ approaches, it does provide methods of analysis that should be applied rigorously to the data”

This is why paying attention to the concept of triangulation is beneficial for qualitative studies. In Creswell (2013, p. 251) triangulation explained as a process that can be administered in various ways, such that;

“researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence [and most of the time] this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective. [By the same token, triangulation is also implemented when a researcher] locate evidence to document a code or theme in different sources of data”

Meaning, converging the research data to a qualified dialogue with the literature is a crucial part of providing the validity of the study while presenting the findings.

The validity of the codes and themes and their connections to reality can therefore be evaluated in accordance with the synthesis conducted regarding the analyzed data and the previous knowledge in the findings and discussion parts of this study. However; the appropriateness of research design in relation to the aimed research questions, the ethicality of research operationalization, fitting of the analytical framework to the data, and credibility of the interpretations must be gauged before they came into being as an output of knowledge.

The triangulation of methods can be argued to be satisfactory considering the utilization of diverse visual methods in data collection (Table 1). Furthermore, given that this study is an overall supervised master's thesis, it is safe to say that, to begin with research was designed from scratch to be fitting to its purposes, and the operationalization of data collection is considerate to ethics in each step, also analytical framework was developed in line with the referred theories to best utilize the data at hand towards generating a view upon the research questions.

It can also be questioned, although the analytical framework that is used for the initial analysis (Figure 4) conducted for describing the context is to be welcomed, that how the analysis of data that is dominantly visual (photos, videos, screenshots of social media content) proceeded for developing interpretations upon the observed phenomenon

since it can be ambiguous compared to analyzing fully textual data. This concern is resolved, under the supervision of the thesis advisors, by sharing them the coding template generated for the thematic analysis.

The remaining problem about the validity of the research resides in the trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1986) of the interpretations because synthesizing meanings upon the phenomenon, even interpretations are drawn from the data, can be criticized to be a mere reflective narrative.

To address the challenges about the trustworthiness of a qualitative study when relying on the interpretations coming from an individual researcher, taking advantage of Wallendorf and Belk's (1989) often cited guide was found instructional. They suggested a "criteria of integrity" to be involved into the consideration of trustworthiness of the studies. Noting that this is a short-term masters research which is strictly limited in time and scope, not all but some of the techniques they suggested for availing the triangulation of the interpretations have been implemented to improve the credibility of the findings.

One technique used for enhancing the extents of trustworthiness of the research and the findings of this study is the "prolonged engagement" means making iterative visits to the field of observation to repeatedly assess the context related to the researched phenomenon. To succeed that technique, researcher informally visited Urla to improve the interpretations upon the changes that are ongoing in the area which are evolving after the data collection for this research was completed, and presumably during and after the completion of this study. The other technique for trustworthiness is "debriefings by peers" which comes by as being of major importance. This can translate into the proceedings of a master's thesis in two formats.

First format is supervision (Fagbola, 2020). Researcher attended meetings with the supervisors that were held periodically to have them evaluate the study in each step. Receiving their reviews and putting the interpretations on the right track with the research questions helped advancing the study by the adequacy standards and ensuring the authenticity of a rigorous research. Second format can be adopted as collaborative

feedback sessions with other academics, which were conducted in format of expert interviewing.

3.5.1. Expert Sessions

Table 2. Expert Sessions

date of session	expert no	relevant expertise	conversation topic
15.11.2021	<i>Expert 1</i>	gastronomy and culture	gastronomy in Urla
31.01.2022	<i>Expert 2</i>	urban change and new media	coding gentrification

Doing expert interview normally means conducting formal interviews with people that have expansive knowledge about an issue of concern and specialism around the topics that may offer contributions to the related study. This method incorporated into this research design not necessarily as a data source but as a triangulation method for evaluating the trustworthiness of the interpretations that researcher generated upon the data retrieved regarding the phenomenon under study. Expert interview here thus refer to the interviews which have been implemented with participants of academic community carrying expertise, knowledge, and/or experience interlinking to the interests of this study to supply an outsider glance upon the preliminary findings of the study to enforce a collaborative feedback system mimicking the goals of peer debriefs (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989).

Accordingly, these interviews were included into the research design not at once but at varying points during the research to enrich feedbacks in line with the process of the study for improving the validity of the interpretations as they develop in time. For maintaining the throughout adopted ethical tenets during these interviews, beforehand a semi-structured interview protocol was prepared and went under the approval of the university's ethics council. Driving on Roth's (2018) “transactional approach” that is supporting a post-structuralist interview process (Moisander et al., 2009) which is line with this research's stance, these meetings emerged as a semi-formal and idea exchange sessions (Table 2).

“It is a world of encounters (...). Now, my perspective (...) is a part of the whole of the street, but it is not the whole of the street. At the same time it is not the whole of it, it is also a part of the whole of my individuality. Meaning, my perspective is a truth; but it is not the whole truth of the city we all live in.” Baker (2014).



CHAPTER 4: MAPPING

4.1. Central Urla

The walking tour of Urla started by strolling down to the centre after dropping from the highroad that connects this suburban area to the urban İzmir. The first thing is arriving at the landmark teahouse in Central Park (*Urla Merkez*). The shabby open-air tea-coffee serving teahouse is a small business next to the Municipality of Urla, thus the place is rather a public spot operating as the transportation nexus between the local area and the larger city. Large tree in the middle, arches of jasmine and bougainvillea creepers, large wild chestnut tree, all very much grown presumably for long years and shadowing the scratchy wooden tables and worn out short stools that are almost full with customers sitting.

Customers of the teahouse in the central park are diverse with youngsters, children, middle-aged people, yet elders being dominant. Customers are served with Turkish coffee, some lemonades, mineral water of regionally produced brand, and tea that comes within the “thin-waist” (*ince belli*) glass, in exchange for modest prices. A couple of meters ahead the ending of the park crosses the Main Avenue (*Zafer Caddesi*) of the area, where the entrance of the Bazaar (*Malgaca Pazarı*) is. Mimicking the path that common visitors of the area used for touristic purposes (Visual 1), the analysis of the relevant material and expressive properties of the spots within the central Urla will be delivered in the coming sections.

4.1.1. Bazaar

After taking a straight dive into the Narrow Alley (*Arasta Sokağı*), then passing by a handful of small vendors selling miscellaneous tools, utilitarian clothing pieces, liquor, and chophouses serving offal and giblets; the local Bazaar spot comes across. This place is historically the local marketplace of central Urla, attributed as thememory

storage of Urla (Egemen Haber, 2016). It is a tiny courtyard-like area yet is packed with activities, textures, movements, and noise.

Many wooden and plastic chairs which are mostly seated by shopkeepers and customers seen across the court, linoleum upon the grocery counters and sleazy awning adds to the functional randomness. Many small food-related businesses catches the eye; a shop serving a type of “filled pastry” with ethnic-origin (*boşnak böre ği*), others specialized in “flaky pastry” (*katmer*), a butcher, bakery, an open-air coffeehouse resembling the teahouse in the park. It is a marketplace mostly like any other, therefore, more importantly, there are groceries with open counters displaying various veggies and fruits meanwhile buyers and sellers roam around those; stacking, picking, purchasing, packaging, and exchanging.

What is distinctive about Urla's bazaar is the availability of local produce supplied alongside the agricultural ancestry of these Mediterranean lands which soak up the fertile climate and symbolism surrounding the central area (Datta and Young, 2007). Today the region is known for the “geographically marked” (*coğrafi işaretli*) species (Saygılı, Demirci, and Samav, 2019) like “red okra” (*kıvalı bamya*) and the infamous “gummy artichoke” (*sakız enginarı*) that is the official symbol of Urla (Urla Belediyesi, n.d.). These can be bought fresh directly from the producers in this bazaar, as well as the bigger bazaar that is settled during the particular days of the week within a location closer to the Historical Marine (*İskele*) which has been a site of remaking plans itself (Erincik, 2021).

The varieties of quality olives and grapes, figs, cabbage flowers that are marketed for stuffing, and more that fill up the counters of the Bazaar changeably according to the season. Also, canned versions of the highly demanded produce now can be found even when out of season. These locally rooted species and their producers are promoted by the collaborative efforts of the area's municipality and the larger governmental bodies. Thus, they make up some of the reasons why the bazaar is not only a local dwellers' marketplace but also the occasional shopping spot for the visitors that are interested in seasonal ingredients and having an initial gastronomic experience of Urla. However, certain situations imply that the past supply-demand pattern of the

marketplace currently goes off the rails; A woman with a casual outfit, bleached hair, and big sunglasses asks the greengrocer: “Do you have any avocados?” which is a product that has no association to the history of the marketed endemic species within Urla, neither it is a product that is widely farmed in the area yet. Greengrocer replies: “Unfortunately no.”

Upon the outer circle of the bazaar, where the narrow roads lead, the traditional restaurants that have been in their places for decades are situated. Specialized in olive-oil-infused vegetable dishes of Aegean cuisine, these are the old brands of Urla; that serve family recipes which pass through generations to the customers, for moderately reasonable prices. Buildings that these restaurants locate in were subjected to change, as one can see the joints of modifications. One of those surely extended the space for hosting more customers, the other must have updated the nostalgic horns of the wooden door to a full-glass sliding one.

These local brands are representing the decadent gastronomy roots of Urla, and are well known for their gastronomy tourism potential as the carriers of the food heritage within the area (İrigüler and Demir, 2018). Nonetheless, adjacent to those, there follow the new shops and franchises of both the domestically or globally owned chain brands. Franchises of the pizzeria, ice cream, cupcake, and bakery brands live together with the traditional restaurants in a hub only a few meters in-between within the historical streets of the local Bazaar.

4.1.2.Arts Street

Exactly from that point taking a right turn introduces the stroller to the Main Avenue, which overlaps the area's preliminary recreation centre, the Arts Street (*Sanat Sokağı*). It is a cobblestone street about 250 meters long, opened after the reconstruction work completed by the Municipality of Urla in early 2010. This is an intentionally re-purposed space, to connect artists and art-enthusiasts (Güler, 2019), in translation; a “consumptionscape” (Ger and Belk, 1996) generated for attracting local artists and

crafters to display their outputs and receive inputs from tourists that are to be appreciating those marketable art pieces.

Walls surrounding the street are generally un-plastered stone surfaces, some painted bright walls in very distinct colours; all together accentuating the aesthetics of inter-textual and multi-coloured vertical sight of the street. These walls are of the buildings which once were residential units, now dominantly commercialized, only a few empty lots left upon the area around the street are carrying “selling out” or “renting” signs. Right across the walls the counters of the artists and crafters, usually open every day of the week yet for the weekends more stands are being operated. Handmade crafts of jewellery, pottery, woodworks, ornaments, oil-acrylic paintings, decorative objects, are all sold in these counters. These counters are mostly waited by people of upper-middle or elderly ages who are generally women and occasionally men, and a handful of youngsters.

Although the systematic observation was conducted starting from an early hour, there was a constant flow of people, wandering up and down the street, in and out of the alleys, glancing at the arts stands. Nonetheless, the landscape of the spot commercialized so fast that the counters of art crafters became the secondary excuse to visit the Arts Street. Casting an eye upon the physical aspects of the street, compared to the Bazaar spot the materiality observed seems intentionally curated in a tasteful manner rather than being merely functional. Both right and left sides and tiny alleys in-between upon the Arts Street spot occupied by brands; fashion stores and antique shops, cafes and bars, restaurants and patisseries, small bookstores and galleries, a musical arts centre and concept galleries, as well as couple boutique hotels.

These brands pack the public space with their private places, sneaking their branded materiality onto the street. Even the noise of this spot has a refined texture, soft Turkish pop music or French to English oldies but goldies songs played within the branded spaces of shops, bars, and cafes, as these mix into the street's open air sounds. Leaching out from the brands upon the cobblestones of the street, there are many things that can be accounted as a part of the spot's facet: the chairs of wrought-iron, bamboo, or blue coloured wood; weaves and wicker items for the boho-chic coastal aesthetics;

themed designs reflecting the distinctive aspects of each brand through their signs, lights, doors, windows, flower pots, nonetheless wall paintings.

There is more to the interlocking of these brands' into the Arts Street, as can be seen through the expressions floating within the spot. Upon this very small yet crowded street, there are rainbow-coloured signs in certain corners directing arrows to the brands of the cafe, restaurant, and bar purposes to make it easier for the visitors to find the locations of the popular places they desire to spend time. Such brands put menus outside their doors, offering items namely Italian pizza, local wines, herbal sherbets, signature cocktails, with “fine arts and fine wine” kind of connotations.

An interesting point is that, unlike the food-related brands in the Bazaar area; the restaurants, bars, and cafes that are located in Arts Street specifically use the “Urla” name within their brand names. These relatively new brands are absorbing the linguistic way of expressing the Urla area itself as a part of their overtones, even though the oldest restaurants situated upon the circles of the Bazaar do not do so.

Furthermore, there are numerous symbols and implications linking the physical spot of Arts Street to the digital-verse. Inserted on the walls, tables, menus, windows of the restaurants, cafes, and bars, there can be seen the logos of social media platforms connecting the central Urla to the accounts of the brands. Fittingly, people were seen holding, tapping, scrolling on the screens of their phones, or taking selfies or taking pictures of their food. Another interesting point observed within the assemblage of central Urla is the dominance of the properties with gastronomy associations both in materiality and expressivity. That is due to the fact that the food, drinks, menus, gourmet ingredients, as well as activities of people eating, drinking, serving, taking orders are all over the place; because of the doings of the above-mentioned natures of the popularly visited brands. Indeed, restaurants are quite important attributes for an area to be valued as a tourist destination (Sparks, Bowen, and Klag, 2003).

Generally, the stroll of a visitor of central Urla ends with an arrival at one or more of the many branded places in the area, initiating interaction with the agents that some of which are considered for this study. Enjoying gastronomic delicacies, engaging in enthusiastic organic food shopping, or taking a third-wave coffee break before

continuing the stroll to the Historical Marine, are the activities that can be exclusively preferred by the gastro-tourists of central Urla.

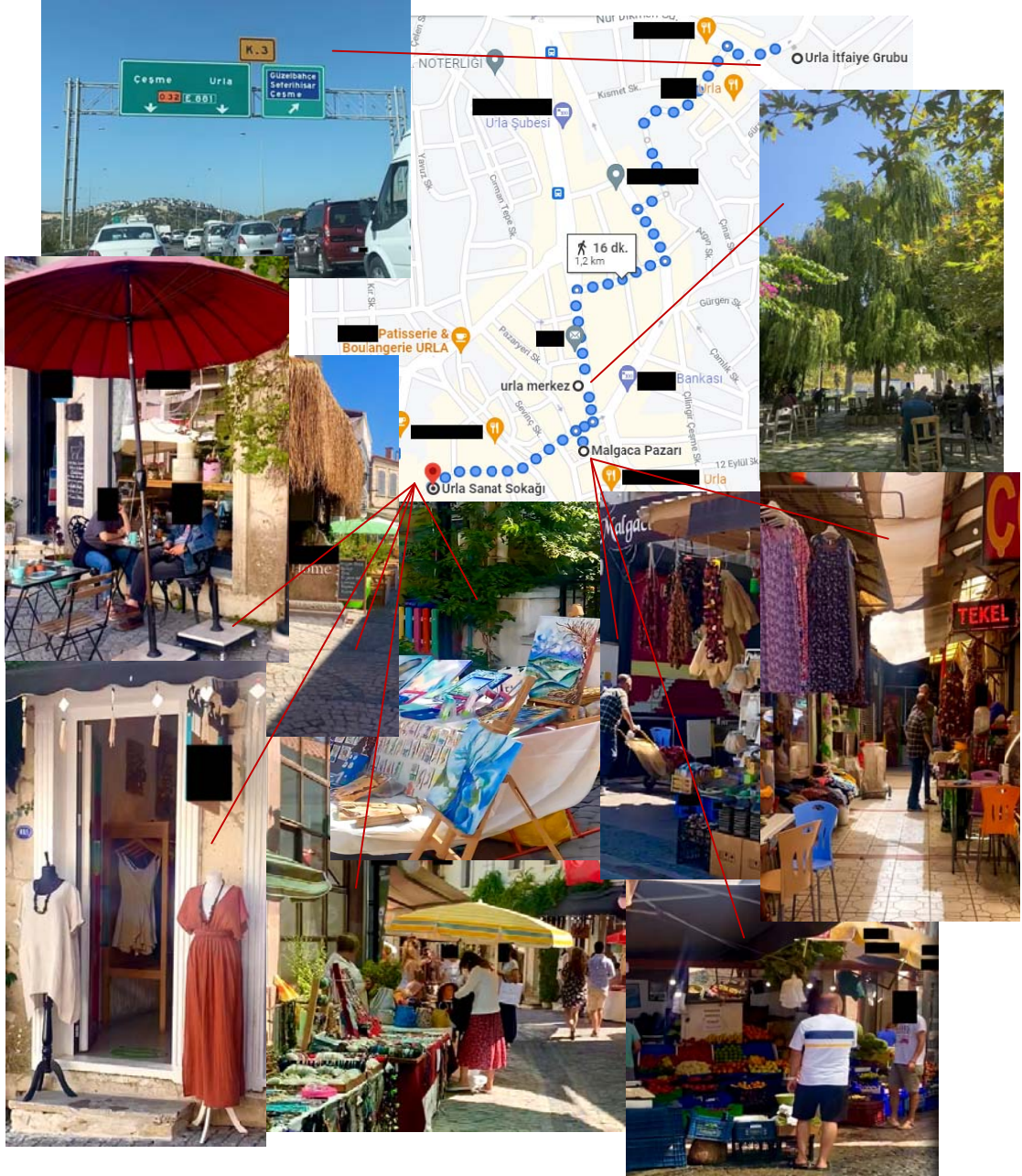


Figure6. Path of the observations in Central Urla (Source: Photographs are taken by the researcher at 05.09.2021).

4.2. Agents of Urla

For this part; firstly, analysis of the entangled tangible and intangible elements of the nested assemblages of these brands will be situated to later work on understanding how they are influencing the assemblage of Urla. Also, to inform the context of Urla within the digital-space similar to the touring storyline regarding the central Urla, important elements of some accounts that were observed accompanying the accounts of the selected brands will be complementarily evaluated.

Secondly, the analysis of the participant observations, which were events that were heterogeneously conducted physically and digitally, will be presented as other agents that are closely linked to the observed brands. That is because these events were found as meaningful components for this study as being the ephemeral parts of the assemblage of Urla, at the same time being the sites of value creation which are encountered during the research process of this study. In addition to mapping out the relevant elements of the selected gastronomical brands here; their doings, sayings, and what is happening during the branding processes of these brands will be highlighted in more detail within the tracing part of the study.

4.2.1. Brand 1

Founded as a forest for organic olive-oil production, later the brand extended into a restaurant that is serving glocalised tastes. Today it is full-fledged evolved into a self-claimed design universe. Brand 1 is one of the pioneer gastronomy brands of Urla, influential in both the agricultural production and the experiential service sectors within the area. The restaurant which can be considered as of a moderate-upscale segment (Muller and Woods, 1994), is taking residence within a historical hewn-stone building located in the central Urla, as interiors being renovated for comfort as well as to reflect the differentiating philosophy and style of the brand.

Years ago the brand owner who was a marketing professional, moved from another big city to İzmir, to start an enterprise that will build an agriculture and

gastronomy tourism network around olive in Urla. What makes the olive so noteworthy for Brand 1 is the past of the area. Many archaeological excavations and historical records (Gürbüzer, 2017) show that there is an ancient olive oil processing facility dating back to thousands years ago. And within the ruins, there found the clay vessels aka amphora, which were used to store and transport olive oil (Vossen, 2007). This simply explains the two veins of branding efforts of the Brand 1; reviving the doings in the area's history and retelling the sayings in the stories of the past. Brand 1 is currently doing multiple things that are wisely complementing each other, under the roof of an integrated brand name.

As expressed within the repeated statements of the brand, components of Urla are core inspirations for the operations of Brand 1. The very activities of production of olive oil (Şenol, 2011) as well as the regional commerce of the surplus through trade routes and the port alongside the winery is rooted deeply in the historical background of the area (Koparal and Vaessen, 2020). For sure, things have changed since then.

With the modern production facilities and optimized techniques, Brand 1 communicates how it brings innovation into these historical production activities, and in a dialogic manner informs the consumers and prospects about its semi-traditional and semi-automated olive oil production process. Additionally, it takes pride in promoting the quality olive oils in global fairs and exporting batches to certain gourmet food stores in abroad with a cover story that is benefiting the antiquity of Urla.

The past and present immersed further into branding practices throughout the value creation chain of Brand 1. For decades, the local villagers of Urla who still habituate in certain parts of the area have been picking the olives from trees and help out their neighbours by engaging in “collective work” (*imece*) during the harvest season (Eskiyörük, 2016). This activity, by the hands of Brand 1, becomes a performance which is creating added value to the brand's products. Considering posting pictures on social media accounts showing how local women work with their traditional clothing “embroidered headscarves” (*tülbent*) and “printed shalwars” (*basma*) do the harvest for the olive oils or other branded agriculture by-products that are grown in the brand's

curated forest; this communication practice proposes the values of authenticity and locality for the brand.

Another activity that has shaped into being a performance for staging brand values can be observed in the bazaar shopping. As such, the marketplace spot mentioned earlier comes by as an occasional backdrop for the branding. When Brand 1 shares the Instagram stories in which its creative chefs pose as they purchase ingredients for the day's menu from the local bazaar, imagery that is unlikely to be linked with the restaurants situated within the central city; it is communicating the value of a local lifestyle which brand claims to be a part of.

Similar to the value proposition in these cases through immersing the activities shaped into contents for brand communication, Brand 1 also uses ideas that have associations to Urla's culture straightforward as the brand's discourses for building its points of differentiation. Situating in the suburbs of the coastal Aegean region, stress-free local lifestyle, olive oil, and vegetable-heavy cuisine, are all the parts of an idea implying Urla as the source of healthy living. Brand 1 positions itself as a “health food store” on social media, visibly connecting what it is promising to its consumers to its habitat. Also, linking to the idea of wholesome wellbeing, sharing pictures of the area's landscape and articulating how Mediterranean culture experienced in Urla is a pleasure-seeking, relaxed, hedonist way of living; Brand 1 actually is being the opportunistic one, selling the value of this hedonism to the ones who are interested in taking a breath into.

More to the local labour and culture becoming an added value for the brand, many re-makings can be seen in the different doings of the brand. The knowledge of the locals regarding the olive production and the herb foraging in the wilderness has been passed through generations in Urla in a tacit manner, akin to the transmission of information regarding the healing properties of olive oil through rituals (Kaplan and Arihan, 2012). However, Brand 1 takes the liberty of planning leisure events that are informed by its continued research and exchange of knowledge with local communities so that it can guarantee an immersive and participative experience to the targets of its harvesting and foraging events, or the oil tasting trainings. Hence, the tacit skills and knowledge of the locals reform as a commodity in the market to attract people who

are outsiders of Urla; meanwhile, a routine and productive activity of villagers take the facet of a product itself, as a distinct experiential consumption offered for consumer interests.

Not only the brand changes the relationship between these activities in the market by shifting them from the production to consumption acts, in addition, it changes the habits tied to these activities. For one thing, the activity of olive harvest becomes a festival when Brand 1's vision is incorporated into; as the city-dweller consumers who are paying the brand to do the olive harvesting in the open-air suburbia, are irrelevantly accompanied by a jazz band during the event.

Besides, there are other aspects to the commodification through branding by the part of Brand 1. Nature and its diverse non-human items are components of Urla that are incorporated into the practices of the brand. For instance; crafting a ceramics line resembling the silhouette of the “endemic olive tree” (*erkence*) specie of the area and marketing it as the whole line exists due to the aim of paying respect to the history that these trees have witnessed proudly. This act is appropriating the contextual elements of the area into being brand artefacts, which leads to commodifying nature by its regional associations.

Continuing with the non-human items of Urla that have been engaged into Brand 1's nested assemblage, two other cases are strikingly relevant. Artichoke was previously stated to be an important component of the area. Drawing from that, the Urla Artichoke Festival has taken place in the area since 2015. The event was initially organized by the aggregate efforts of the Municipality of Urla, the Metropolitan Municipality of İzmir, collaborating universities, and other governmental bodies. Excluding the period of disruption during the covid-19 pandemic, there has been a growing number of numerous other agents like the participating restaurants, visiting international chefs, locals, and tourists involved in the event each year more than before (Bakırcı, Bucak, and Turhan, 2017).

From the organizer's perspective, the festival has been influential for increasing the production and sales of artichoke in the area, raising awareness on the problems of the farmers; meanwhile bringing the area forwards within the worldwide gastro-tourism

scene, improving the demand for the gastro-tourism concept by making Urla a successful example of it (Orhunbilge, 2020). Benefitting from the hype on the Artichoke Festival, Brand 1 shows its active participation in the event as a brand with the mission of promoting Urla in line with the goals of the event itself. However, rather than just being supportive of the agricultural revitalization of the area, moreover offering the monthly menu in April, the month in which the event traditionally takes place, with the element of gummy artichoke and advertising it as visitors can find it in the “place in Urla that speaks of Urla” is a direct strategy to make the already polished item of artichoke an artefact of the brand itself.

Digging deeper to the locality aspirations in the positioning of the Brand 1, there is more to be seen. As described in earlier situations, the brand is rooted from the past of Urla. Meaning, for manifesting its desired expressions Brand 1 is taking inspiration from the past of the area and it is re-imagining it through storytelling. Repeatedly saying that the repertoire of the restaurant is the reflection of what is derived from “Urla's food heritage” the brand relates to the properties of local memory.

As learning the local ways of gastronomical creativity, it is also reinterpreting the traditional dishes like “oven pumpkin” (*sinkota*) through its professional chefs using modern utilities and fusion techniques. Marketing the cooking workshops that the brand organizes by spotlighting the hosting chef's family background that is local to Urla for many generations, has a similar purpose to pointing out the local heritage influences in the brand's interpretations. This approach of showing references behind the re-making of the recipes into new things extends to the frequently appearing words planted in the discourses of the brand. The words of “Aegean”, “Urlalı”, or “Anatolian” are used for being connotations that describe the brand's cuisine origination, without limiting its fusion creativity.

Brand 1 is thus have been serving updated gastronomy stories for enthusiasts meanwhile preparing the basics of the “new Urla cuisine” that was soon to be renowned. The adoption of the past for the aspirations of the present day in the kitchen is an integrated vision of the brand, which can be seen in its diverse yet complementary products. How Brand 1 incorporates elements related to the history of the local area into

its branding is exemplified below in the Figure 7. As so, it can be argued that telling stories for and of the brand grounding on the historical past of the local area through utilizing the power of re-imagination is a fruitful (Eichinger, Schreier, and Van Osselaer, 2021) and a consistent line in the communications of Brand 1 as seen in the observed branding practices.

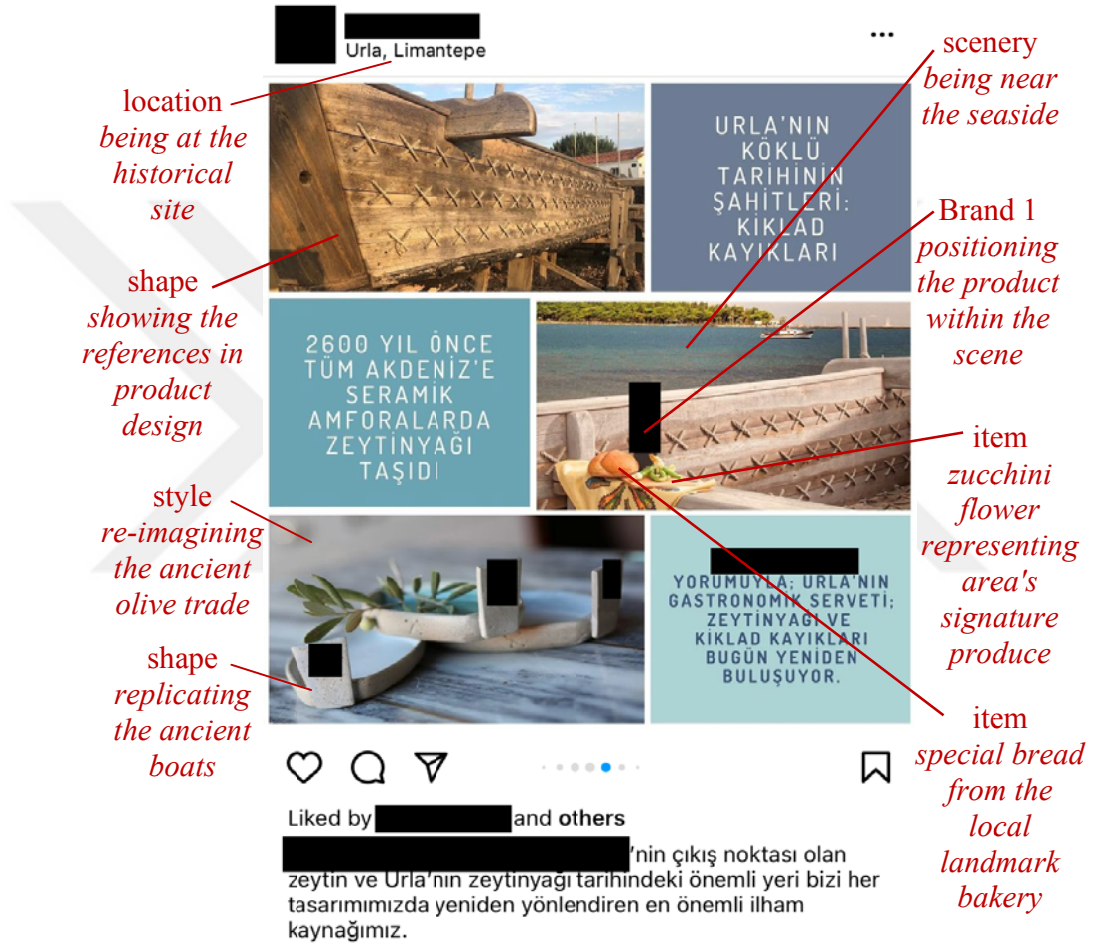


Figure7. Example of value proposition by signifying connections to local history in a Brand 1 content.

4.2.2.Brand 2

Not just another case in which follower city-born white-collared people moving to suburbs to seek gastro-opportunities taking a previously strategized path to success; the Brand 2 is a love child born into Urla, which as soon as it did, originally elevated the premium gastronomical scene in the area. Such that, short after Brand 2 opened eyes to this life, its influence grew bigger and stronger. Since then, seasonal menus have been marketed as they carefully paired with the selections of local wines, meanwhile, commercial activities of cooking raised up day by day, to be the next advanced cheffing (Yenal and Kubiena, 2016).

The story goes as; once upon a time in İstanbul, there was a couple, a marketing professional and a chef, indeed a match made in heaven. The couple found themselves tired of the city buzz and meaninglessness of the corporate lifestyle. Even worse, talented chef was not satisfied with the products that were available in the markets of the metropolis. Ingredients that can be put on the plate in the city were either not fresh enough due to travelling long distances, or they were not authentic enough due to nearby markets being filled with imported agricultural produce in face of the unavailability of domestically grown high-quality ones. One day, the couple together dreamt of a dream, then decided to take the high road from İstanbul to İzmir. Leaving the craze of the one of the largest cities in the world behind, they moved to the mouth-watering mini-peninsula of Urla.

They landed upon a magical place, located on the track of Urla's wine route. As they did, the story of Brand 2 began as a fairytale embracing both the enchantment and the risks of an ongoing adventure. During those promising times, which dated not so long ago and promise is told to be prevalent with less risk at more profit, initiatives of promoting touristic “wine routes” (Kasaroğlu et al., 2021) have been newly established. Such efforts of organizing product-oriented routes and taste platforms have been sprouting ever since, making the branches of the now wildly popular gastro-Urla.

In Urla, there are renowned vineyards, which are, congruent to the Brand 1's olive production strategy, have been appropriating the historic production associations of wine regarding the area. The so-called route is an informal association of these local vineyards producing awarded wine batches for tourists of particular interests of adoring

quality wine. The winery brands of the area also serve the activity of wine consumption in a rather traditional manner, offering local wine tasting experiences in the production fields for decades now. However, the gastronomical experiences served by the local restaurants of Urla, so far have been positioned somewhat as segregated from the treasures of the winery.

Right upon this setting, Brand 2 comes along into the scenario as a protagonist with a brand name creeping on the wine-connotations, although being not a wine producer but an upscale restaurant (Muller and Woods, 1994). Firstly, showing its loyalty to the local produce, Brand 2 underlines that it serves wine paired menus, customized specifically for such locally sourced wines. It followingly draws an age limit that excludes children, to ensure only the appropriate segment to be present as the guest group that the adult-friendly delicacies are to be served.

Adding local ingredients to the Italian recipes served at excellence, or creating signature dishes made by using seafood sourced in the shores of the area and interpreting them into the recipes that are traditionally prepared with red-meat within the broader Turkish cuisine, are just some of the heroic doings of the chef applauded by the gastro-crowd. While Brand 2 curates the best wines in the area in its sack and designing menus signed by the creative chef, the guests can have the wine and dine experience together, happily ever after. Henceforth, what the Brand 2 really takes as an original stance in Urla is mixing the high-style gastronomy with the potential of the wine route, offering pleasurable value for the consumers. Therefore, the wine, when combined with the added efforts of the brand, becomes a brand artefact; as Brand 2 becomes a distinctive component within the wine route, being the first one that has created an alternative approach to the consumption experience of wine within the area.

Production around agriculture has been the main activity shaping the region of Urla's history as mentioned previously, priority is put on the farming of olive farms and vineyards. Circling back from the wine to dine for, to the general agricultural production in the area, it can be seen that Brand 2 adds value to the production and consumption of agricultural produce as well. The word "Aegean" is not being directly used extensively in the brand's marketing, yet the climate of the peninsula is recognized as another

artefact; the main source which is full of potential that supplies the best and most fresh local ingredients to a perfectionist chef's kitchen. In a similar manner observed in the efforts of Brand 1, the chef of Brand 2 is presented within the social media content of the brand as shopping for seasonal ingredients at the local bazaar, communicating a certain value proposition consequent to the brand's doings.

Although only a few months later that Brand 2 opened doors as the first creative chef restaurant in the area many more began to flourish, it can be claimed that it was Brand 2 which earlier incorporated the consumption activities of local dwellers of Urla into its menu being a premium restaurant. Meaning, locals of this suburban geography have been using regionally produced seasonal ingredients in their kitchens thus the traditional Urla cuisine has different patterns of changing seasons, unlike the consumption of produce in the cities where any ingredient is available at any time due to the modern production and global commerce. However, with the practices of Brand 2, underscoring the worthiness of this seasonality for creating a gastronomical restaurant that is truthful to the ups and downs of locality was utilized as a deliberate brand communication effort. Hence, visitors of Urla began to take a liking to the menus in the chefs' restaurants which are changing monthly or seasonally, parallel to what is that the local bazaar supplies these chefs.

Furthermore, besides positioning itself being a zero-waste kitchen that is rigorously supplying ingredients locally, Brand 2 advocates agricultural systems that account for long-term environmental sensitivity, thus it attracts attention to conscious food design within the area it operates. At the moment, the very topic of food sustainability is sure one of the most trendsetting issue around the globe (Saad and Raslan, 2017). Consequently, it is something that will be seen more of in this study. Nonetheless laying low in quantitative measures, Brand 2 accomplishes the “soil-less farming” (Di Lorenzo et al., 2013) aka the soil-free farming of a limited number of produce used in the menus as in-house, promoting itself as exemplifying a more sustainable alternative to the agricultural production in Urla. Doing and saying so, it is sharing the considerations about the rising demands in the land market that is speedily converting the farms to commercial venues.

Despite the topic of food sustainability is found to be positively amplified by the advocacy acts of the premium restaurants initiating intriguing narratives on it (Jean, 2019), there are particular critics involved in the matter; for instance, ongoing arguments about the impacts of soil-less farming contesting its associations to a really sustainable future (Muller et al., 2017). Whatsoever, within this very tale retrieved from the story book of gastro-Urla that is to be continued, well-intended Brand 2 is so far appears as an unstained protagonist.

As the last chapter of Brand 2's fairytale, reflections of the Urla's culture of hedonism and relaxed lifestyle can be signified as manifested in the design of the brand's tangible and intangible elements. The communication approach of the Brand 2 is much engaging, dialogic, occasionally humorous even. Transferring the consumers that the whole brand really is a love project of the founder couple through delivering such sincere brand communications is complementary for the suburban lifestyle that the idea of Brand 2 was inspired from. So, the hindered brand objective of truly living the locality culture the creators were striving for is achieved. By the same token, the building of the Brand 2 designed and constructed from the scratch as a replica of a Mediterranean villa; which is a style called as the "Mediterranean revival architecture" (Fu, 2019).

Building a restaurant in form of a stone villa, can be said for hinting the myths of Urla's imagined past filled with delightful wines sipped within the tasteful atmospheres. As so, a glimpse into the brand's building that is created for making guests enjoy the ambiance as well as the food through welcoming them under a roof covering the intersecting aspects of a cozy fairytale cottage undertones and exquisite historical villa overtones, can be taken at the below Figure 8. Overall, what Brand 2 has been observed as branding is a practice of love, embodied in Urla as gastronomical miracles, in line with the literature showing how the making of the culinary grounds always have something to do with love (Wessell, 2017).

The way in which Brand 2 shares its story has been crafted with bravery, care, contested affairs regarding the claims of sustainability, and a well-received mixture of quality food and wine, opening for more to be encountered on the curious path leading to the upcoming days of Urla; this point, being certainly not the end.



Figure8. Examples of value proposition by signifying welcoming atmosphere in Brand 2 contents.

4.2.3. Brand 3

Another dream was planted upon the soil of Urla, in not much of a long time after, it triggered the sophistication of the gastronomical scene of the area, so soon influenced the habits of the whole city. Currently, the dream revolutionized more like an ambitious project, aspiring for more, towards fulfilling its potential of competing amongst the worldwide recognized peers that are also not outside of this world. Brand 3, is not only one of the leading gastronomical brands of Urla, but it is the first-ever fully

upscale restaurant (Muller and Woods, 1994) that has inserted an unprecedented fine-dining element among the components of this local area. Brand 3 is an enterprise of a creative chef, similar to the co-founder of Brand 2. However, the Brand 2 do not directly position itself within the fine-dining segment and remains as a premium restaurant.

On the other hand, the Brand 3 is shooting for the stars, since the very beginning of its journey. It so far gathered all the essential ingredients for a slow-cooked pot of culinary success into its basket, nowadays simmered and served, within a plot of a captivating story. The creative chef was born in İzmir within a family who has been involved in agriculture for generations upon the lands surrounding Urla, having a father who decades ago opened up a well-known restaurant located in the İzmir city centre. Topping the gastronomical influences received from the family, the chef, as a self-making visionary, built themselves a distinctive career through tourism education and lengthy years spent gaining work experience in various places abroad and in İstanbul.

The background of the chef is quite important for understanding underlying aspects of the branding practices for the Brand 3, realized in form of a restaurant with couple rooms to stay, which will be explained. The outcome of the agricultural activities in Urla has been the offering of the products that are a variety of quality farming goods grown in the area. However, in this case, combining agricultural activities which are rooted in the family background with the vision of a fine-dining experience, the value production of Brand 3 emerges as a full premium service offering. Accordingly, the shift in Urla from the production of goods to the production of services can be observed parallel to the changes of the activities operated within a family that has local roots in the area.

To begin with, this can be seen in multiple statements shared explicitly for communicating the relevancy of creative chef's childhood for the doings of the brand or in others in which this is implicitly embedded within the expressions. Brand 3 is using this special element of the past; the personal background of the brand's founder.

The past behind Brand 3's core inspirations, which is immersed into the motivation to tell a story that re-imagines the pre-modernist respect towards the agricultural activities and the embracement of traditional tastes stored in the

gastronomical memory of the local area into a postmodern form; seen as redressed as the promise of a “contemporary Aegean” cuisine. As so, a ritualistic “farm to table” experience is crafted, to be marketed for the attention of gastronomy enthusiasts worldwide.

Meanwhile being aware of mere offers of what is traditionally on the basket cannot fill the table of any contemporary fine-dining claims, Brand 3 hints its original interpretations of authenticity. Likewise, this approach is observed through its newly introduced concept recipes, in which Aegean ingredients are mixed in not only in a fusion across Anatolia, but with the techniques borrowed also from the Asian cuisine. Consequently, how from different angles the components of Urla's assemblage are intersecting the Brand 3 storyline, which is not only a repeated personal project but a growing process that is intrinsically embellished with varying tangible and intangible elements, needs to be examined further.

The concept of "farm to table" means a food creation process in which the table symbolizes the end state where food is consumed and the farm is the beginning point reminding where the food is being produced; so that the two are connected without additional mediums, as ingredients directly find their places into the dishes without extra intrusion along the journey. Yang (2020, p. 16) states that;

“the use of farm-to-table emphasizes a direct relationship between a farm and a restaurant, [so that the restaurants, instead of]buying through a distributor or a food service, (...) establish relationships with farms and buy directly from them”

Considering the recent studies among the growing debates of sustainability in the gastro-tourism circles (Mac Con Iomaire, 2016; Scheyvens and Laeis, 2019;Zhang, Chen, and Hu, 2019; Leer, 2020), the farm to table concept and other concepts similarly carrying environmental and local production sensitivities will be relevant in the near future of gastronomy.

Hence, branding with farm-to-table connotations can be observed as an on-point strategy which is sensibly realized in the diverse acts of Brand 3. Frequently advocating

the value of adopting farm to table concept in the sayings, for Brand 3, it can be said that engaging in activities of agriculture and supplying ingredients from local producers are also utilized as purposeful performances at the same time being functional doings of the brand, likewise seen in Brand 2.

Likewise Brand 1 and 2, the chef of Brand 3 also can be seen as shopping for seasonal ingredients at the local bazaar, posing a certain value delivered through the social media content. Additionally, akin to Brand 1, olive trees are again seen as the components within the nested assemblage of Brand 3. However, they are assigned with a different role rather than being the main muse of the brand, possibly because that corner has already been taken. Brand 3 is another style of a restaurant; a fancy gastro-experience positioned which, in the very beginning, had no match within the area.

Brand 3 was founded on the land which is located in one of the villages that are distant from the city centre, that the family of the brand's creative have been using for olive farming for decades. Through converting the farm into a fine-dining business by constructing the luxurious building that is currently being used with an interior of block marbles and dim lightning, without damaging the existing trees on the land; the architecture of the Brand 3 complies with the claims of farm to table concept as guests are welcomed into the farm that is turned into a garden where the some of the ingredients are being freshly picked from. The brand uses olive trees as not only an artefact of the brand's philosophy but also as the figures of an aesthetic atmosphere (Biehl-Missal and Saren, 2012) that the unique Brand 3 Aegean experience takes place within. Guests are hosted in tables situated under the olive trees during the spring and summer season, to offer a distinctive atmosphere for any story these deep-rooted trees witness.

More can be said about the processing of the locality through the aesthetic filter of Brand 3. Evident in its precise expressive positioning of the brand's doings, Brand 3 utilizes the location of Urla to justify having two brand names, one being the wood-fire and other being seafood cuisine, under one physical restaurant roof. Due to the fact that Urla itself being a perfect example of a coastal geography where Mediterranean weather breezes over the resourceful intertextuality between land and sea, the geography

becomes another brand artefact. As so, parallel to the “surf and turf” (Barrett, 2010) mentality, the idea of integrating the Aegean soil and salted water comes across, for grounding the independent cuisine functions but interrelated brand names of the Brand 3. Continuing reflecting on the inspirational geography in a more local scenario, the waves hitting the shores of Urla communicated into a storyline in which the sea is represented as an actor involved actively in the creative process of the brand.

Specifically, as another non-human within the set of heterogeneous items incorporated in the brand's expanding story; the marine, where the local seafood for Brand 3 dishes purchased loyally from, appropriated into branding, initially resembling the performance in the bazaar yet actually with a quite different operationalization. The aesthetically pleasing images used for the communication content, in reality, are taken at the public spaces of the marine where fisherman and seafood distributors engage in everyday business; dealing with the entangled nets, scaling the fish, haggling for the best possible prices.

On the other hand, the content shared on social media as branded images are for sure filtered, but more curiously, tagged under the private location of Brand 3. Thus; the idea of tasting the local produce which can be found fresh at the marine used to prepare the value behind the brand's signature seafood recipes. Nonetheless, the distinction is only attained as these are meticulously served at the high-priced tables of Brand 3, as all are clean and covered with a pristine white cloth.

Distinction through signifying the aestheticization of Urla's gastronomy experiences that are connected to the material and expressive qualities of the area is also apparent in multiple instances regarding the observations of the communication efforts of Brand 3. Below in Figure9; there can be seen a precise example of what is really going on as the self-manifesting fetishization of the ingredients into being desire-items in the market. How the brand highlights the locally sourced ingredients through using a lens that is bringing a new angle which put directly upon these local elements and so positions the brand's appreciation of these ingredients on an imperative ground, exemplifies the degree of signification.

As so, it can be said that, being aware of what underlies this particular effort is communicating a wholesome story for the brand that has a high level of aestheticization, driven from the motivation of being in line with the carefully cultivated taste of an upper-scale gastronomical brand. Indeed, what the branding practices of the Brand 3 trigger within Urla remind of a bullet hitting the targeted area; on a spot that is somehow close to the spot examined in another case that was encountered elsewhere, in which, the situation has been diagnosed as a fine-dining renaissance (Firth and Passidomo, 2021).

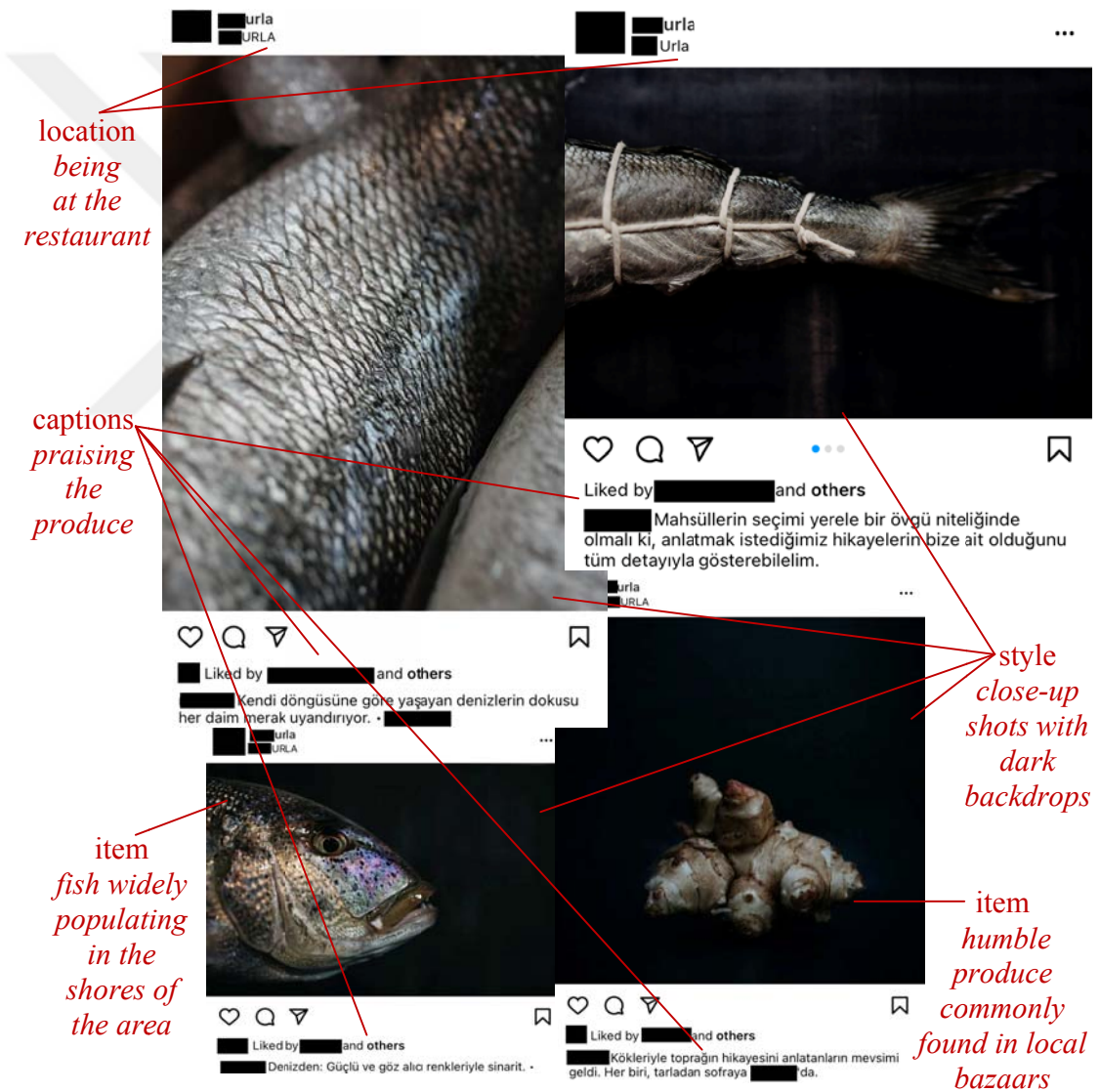


Figure9. Examples of value proposition by signifying appreciation of local produce in Brand 3 contents.

4.2.4.Brand 4

Chronologically, amongst the brands that have been closely investigated for the purposes of this study, Brand 4 is the last one that carved a role to itself in Urla's stage. While the brand's project was announced in the midst of the pandemic, other were already began to be renowned nationally as well as internationally as they have been exemplifying the intensively promoted untapped potential lying within dazzling gastro-Urla. However, there is no latecomer to this market yet; since, the growth of gastro-Urla is an incomplete work as many opportunity corners are still available to be occupied by the good ideas of distinctive positioning.

In other words, there needs to be diverse efforts that many artists put out there courageously to emerge the cumulative influence of a renaissance. Must be underlined here that, it is no easy job to be the next big thing within a crowd of succeeding cultural creatives. Thus, directly debuting as being a fine-dining restaurant (Muller and Woods, 1994) which is also a hotel complex with an agro-tourism concept, Brand 4 proves its qualities by showing how it can effortlessly master the recently established high-raised standards of Urla's gastronomical scene. Moreover, by coincidence, the story of Brand 4 also has the element of a couple's love in it like the fairytale of Brand 2, making another case of a brand that is rooting passionately into the yielding soil of Urla.

The creative chef of the Brand 4 values the local produce grown in the area which are placed at the heart of the branding discourses parallel to the kitchen activities of the brand, in a manner similar to the acts of the brands previously looked at. Brand 4 too, integrates its own interpretations to the local produce; it is embellishing the local produce that added as the core pieces of the dishes that are created by using recipes from the Italian and French cuisine for its seasonal tasting menus. To put the spot upon this value, the locally sourced ingredients are emplaced in the brand's contents aesthetically as its own artefacts, akin to how Brand 3 fetishizes these elements; but for sure, through using a different filter with the light that comes from its own energy.

An original point of the brand communications of the Brand 4 is calling the kitchen of the restaurant-hotel complex, that is limited only for adults, as the laboratory. This laboratory where the chef is conducting experiments using the simple local elements, towards the making of the exquisite dishes with maximized tastes. This aspect of the branding practices is accentuating an approach that falls can be connected to the recent discussions on the blurring boundaries between the arts and science of cooking (Borkenhagen, 2017). Meanwhile initiating all these activities and narratives that are entangling into the existing doings and sayings of the other brands, Brand 4, as some say, is nonetheless exceeding what is already being done within the area.

Likewise the earlier brands, farming is not just an activity practiced for supplying fresh products in the assemblage of Brand 4 either. Growing herbs and such in-house in the garden surrounding the restaurant-hotel is innovated as contributing parts of the service that is provided for making guests feel the village vibes. The “agrotourism” aka “agritourism” is a concept merging the production facilities of the agriculture with the service of tourism into one hybrid experience offering (Wicks and Merrett, 2003). On one hand, this concept have been endorsed as a way of bringing the capitalist profit gains into the declining rural areas (Ramona, 2020).

While on the other, to what extends this consumable experience is really benefitting “agri-” while farmlands and nature being utilized as a mere background for ensuring usually a big-ticket touristic desirability is rather ambiguous (Mastronardi et al., 2015; Kordel, 2016). Anyhow, what is important here is Brand 4's initiative of realizing the chef's inspirations derived from the progress made in Italy about managing luxury and agritourism in harmony with the environment, under the prescribed conditions in which this may be possible (Grittani et al., 2015).

Referring back to the non-human components of *Urla* which are used frequently in the observed branding practices, it should not be missed that the area would not have this much of a marketable value without its landscape consisting of; yearly olive trees, hills bursting with wild Mediterranean plants, farms growing artichokes, and vineyards displaying their changing colours. Guaranteed, the approach of Brand 4 in branding its agritourism project would be a whole a lot of a “country” from how is it much of a

“chic” now if the lands surrounding the brand's place were potato farms and not vineyards. The properties linked to the agritourism component of the assemblage of the Brand 4 which enables the core differentiation capacity of the brand, are almost seamlessly in line with the initial codes found in the study of Andéhn and Decosta(2020). The codes regarding; olive trees, authentic products demarcated in a unique experience, entrepreneurial spirit, environmental consciousness, purchasing locally, benefitting the rich heritage of the interacted area are the ones that can be straightforward mentioned as matching. However, vital aspects of the Brand 4 need to be additionally remarked shortly.

Through the philosophical references in the brand's mantra that are emphasizing the combination of the nature of Aegea with a sense of stylized territory; the production-meets-restaurant-meets-hotel enterprise comes into life as promising its guests that they will find overall rejuvenation in the welcoming lap of Urla, once they decide to take a break from the all the distressing hassle of city life. To deliver this promise of living within nature as locals do, only for a couple of days indeed, the building of Brand 4 designed its handful of rooms with attentive aesthetics to wow the targeted pleasure seekers with its curated locality.

Similar to the building of Brand 2, the form of architecture in Brand 4 is also resembling the ancient Mediterranean villas, however, the lines are being drawn more vaguely. Here the style is chosen to be more minimalistic and luxurious boho-chic, as can be seen in the joining textures of marble, glass, metal, bamboo, linen, and wicker in subtle colours. This is in line with the expectations from a luxury agritourism brand (Kordel, 2016, p. 2016), as it is deemed to be the right thing to do to arrange the branded place in a;

“sophisticated, modern fashion to distinguish new accommodation from old-fashioned establishments, recognizing tourists' demand that local components be combined with a high standard of living”

Additionally, the existing landscape what Brand 4 makes the agritourism kind of a getaway experience in Urla more socially desirable as well, another avenue for consumers to manifest their good taste on social media (Friedman, 2017). This can be seen in the communication of the Brand 4's guests, which are also supplying supportive narratives for the positioning of Brand 4 through the contents they create, as these are shared in the reposts made by the brand's account as indirect parts of the branding practices.

While the guests articulate their appreciation for the conveniently refined Aegean soil, wind, and the sun with which they interact through the one of a kind menus they taste and the healthy climate they inhale upon the grounds of the private place they enjoy; these elements become market commodities to be shared and remembered after being handsomely paid for. Not to go without noting, parallel to the brand's goal of shepherding the consumers towards the natural leisure experience that tickles multiple earthly senses; in the communication, it alleges silence and being permanent as its worshipped values. Hence, it was not contradictory to see that among the brands selected for this study, Brand 4 is the one that shared the least amount of stories and posts during the research.

Somehow, the engagements on the contents in form of likes and comments were not less than the others, thus it is possible to imagine the interest in the stance of the Brand 4 to be at least ongoing, if not guaranteed to be forever permanent. Above can be found the Figure10, an example of the proposition that Brand 4 makes upon Urla, as through that it can be argued in which way such particular branding efforts make changes in the area. Albeit it should be acknowledged that receiving positive assessments from consumers are indeed can be translated as advantages for the success of a gastronomical brand (Erkmen and Hancer, 2019); it is necessary to take a look at the bigger picture to see how all this is happening.

The branding situation, for this case, has something to do with Urla's local elements. These are being regional myths, signified aspects of the area's history, nature, culture, etc. which can be reshaped into prized sources of marketable value; as observed all in one pot within Brand 4's contents. Withal, by the practices of the new brands, the

present state of the assemblage of Urla is linked to its re-imagined past, as there the carefully planned future of high hopes for it emerges.

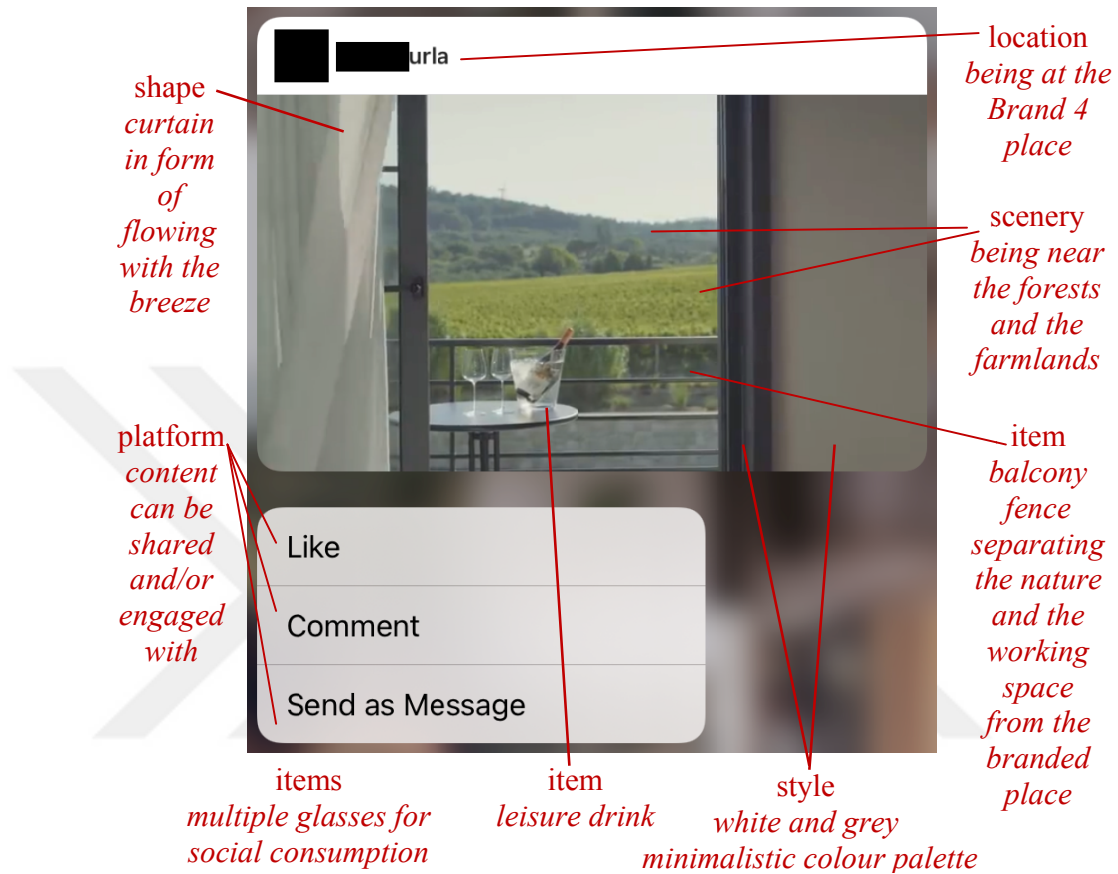


Figure10. Example of value proposition by signifying leisure consumption in a Brand 4 content.

4.2.5. Other Accounts

There are various cultural accounts on Instagram that the algorithm suggests for the followers of any other gastronomical brands located in Urla. By the time of this study, more of such accounts were seen as created as they fall into the main feed of the researcher. These accounts were seen posting announcements of opening, just like businesses hosting opening cocktails. This is interesting because, although these are

majorly unofficial and unauthorized accounts, their managers and content creators put their voluntary efforts as a contribution to the larger project of making the new Urla. Declaring deep love of Urla and goals of highlighting the area's diverse faces for ones who are interested, these cultural social media accounts observed alongside the new gastronomical brands of the area made it possible to understand the larger happenings within the assemblage better.

To begin with the acknowledgment of these accounts, there is the Lifestyle Guide which is an account that began as an online magazine of Urla, later published printed issues that were distributed to the landmarks and at certain gastronomical brands in the area. The Lifestyle Guide magazine positions itself as a willed concern about writing and drawing everything that has to do with Urla and offer pleasant time for the readers, meanwhile respecting local production and local workers, keeping the tradition alive while keeping up to date and nonetheless as yet another tribute to undeniably admirable Urla. Like any other lifestyle magazine, the Lifestyle Guide promotes the local art galleries and the latest exhibitions that can be seen, announces hotspots of the week, gives information about historical sites that can be visited, as well shares the lists of Urla's best pubs, child-free hotels, family hotels, brunch cafes, and third-wave coffee shops. Additionally, Lifestyle Guide keeps the “Urlalı” people and also Urla's visitors notified about the upcoming concerts and events in the area.

The second cultural account to be mentioned here is the Gastronomy Route, it positions as the Urla's exploration route for the gastronomy enthusiasts as can be expected but set out to track down the unexpected tastes that are now said to be the real leads of the story of Urla. Among the observed brands, Brand 2, 3, and 4 are actively taking their parts in the collaborative work put towards realizing the idea of a “gastronomical route” with some other new brands and some traditional restaurants together akin to the “wine route” concept that has been around. Thus, they are directly given due within the content of this account as the rising values of the area. The notions of locally grown produce, sustainability, common goals and concerns, are repeatedly communicated meanwhile claiming a spot on the digital-verse for the gastro-Urla.

The third account is the Arts Route, which is an account announced up after the data collection for the research began, and since it was promoted by the mentioned two accounts, it was included in the observation alongside the other contextual components of the assemblage. This is a route like others, in which multiple local organizations come together to make a stronger promotion pitch, this time around the arts. The Arts Route positions its motivation as the collaborators are declaring they have decided that their beautiful Urla needs an art route as well, understandably but not surprisingly, for complementing a lifestyle-gastronomy-arts triangle related to the area. The museums must be seen, new galleries to check out, renowned artists visiting Urla are things that can be easily kept up through the help of the content the account creates for its followers.

Continuing with the Historical Guide as the fourth account linked with the cultural creation of Urla, what can literally be found is the contemporary making of history. Contents in this account are framed with a manner of intellectual formality rather than carrying directly a promotion enthusiasm caught in the contents of the earlier mentioned accounts. The account shares commentaries resembling mini-articles about the architecture and history of Urla as it positions the aspiration behind its establishment as to keep the civil architectural memory of Urla awake and transfer it to new generations. Consequently, the focus ranges from the past of the Main Alley within the central Urla or the restorations of the olden-style houses upon the Arts street, to the ongoing archaeological work that is being done in the ancient sites near the surrounding villages.

Lastly, as the fifth account to be mentioned in this section comes the Tourism Guide. This account was announced right on the first day of the new year 2022 as if it is founded to crown the efforts of cultural creation regarding Urla that has been put out so far and effortlessly sit upon a throne positioned right on the gastro-tourism concept. Promoting all of the cultural accounts mentioned previously here, the content is very colourful as it is inclusive of any quality sights to see, food to eat, wine to taste in Urla. What is a thing that particularly should not be overlooked about this account is that the contents are shared not only with captions in Turkish but with multilingual captions

attached to them, in English and French to be specific. Considering all of these non-targeted branding efforts organically emerging in relation to Urla's assemblage, it can be said that in aggregate, these accounts are acting as non-identified agents influencing the changes occurring within the area as they are co-creating redressed perceptions related to it. Since, these are bottom-up initiations of promoting the local area as they are positioning it by bringing it a presence upon the digital-verse of Instagram. This, can be argued to be contributing the organic recreation of the perceptions about Urla.

4.3. Gastronomy Festival

The event that the researcher participated in during the data collection process was a festival that gathered a wide range of actors related to the gastronomical scene in İzmir, organized by a private tourism company in collaboration with İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey (*Kültür Turizm Bakanlığı*, in short *KTB*). Plus, event had an activist mission regarding the future of the natural environment. Consequently, the main theme of the panels was "living soil" parallel to the event's mission statement. Like any ticketed festival, besides the panels and food stands, there was the element of fun; assured with open tab drinks, pleasant weather, and live music. Rolling back to the beginning of describing everything about the Gastronomy Festival, the location of the event should be accounted for. It was held in a central location of İzmir, within a venue that used to be a coal gas factory. At the end of 2008, the Metropolitan Municipality restored the historical factory building (İzmir Belediyesi, n.d.);

“which [once] played an important role in the development of the industry in İzmir, (...) to take place in the city life again , [but this time] as a culture-art oriented attraction spot[long after many years it has been abandoned]”

Not only was the factory chimney, steel windows, and stone walls preserved as major parts of the exterior, but the building conserved the references to its industrial past

in its renewed interior design as well; this time not for the functional but the aesthetic concerns. For instance, an enormous fan welcomes the visitors of the venue as an artefact of history in the entrance, and a big black power plant boiler sits right in the middle inside the hall. The new parts that were implanted into the venue fit with the earlier industrial style; as can be seen, the ceiling surrounding the upper spaces of the hall is left bare showing the steel structure of the dome. Gastronomy Festival was surely a culinary art and cultural event deemed worth to be hosted in this hyped-up venue.

The visitors were welcomed with a reusable gift bag including a festival mug, a glassware storage box from the brand that is one of the main sponsors, samples from an organic tea brand. Everything that visitors can eat and drink was all included in the ticket price which was approximately equal to a concert ticket. Upon the open area of the venue, there placed the stands of the gastronomical brands as restaurants, patisseries, coffeehouses, food entrepreneurs; moreover the stands of the sponsoring corporate FMCG and delivery brands; stands of the supporting media agencies, gourmet guides, international food security associations; stands of collaborating university, İzmir's Chamber of Commerce, the Aegean Exporters Association; and banners of the metropolitan municipality right next to banners of KTB.

The media agencies and collaborating bodies gave out freebies of gastronomical books, promotion catalogues of Aegean agricultural products, and publicity papers of new shining values of İzmir in the gastronomical arena which were all reviewed by the researcher as informative artefacts of this event. The representatives of such organizations were present at the festival, participating in panels and workshops. Furthermore, the crowd visiting the event consisted of gastronomy and culture intellectuals like gourmets and academics, scientists working on interdisciplinary fields of agricultural production and botanics, high profiles from the governmental and industrial players, entrepreneurs, and activists. Many “people from İstanbul” (*İstanbulllu*) and couple international foreigners were present as well. On the other hand, a few criticals who self-disclosing as “true-tellers” were there too, voicing their scepticism on the reality behind the gastro-tourism in whispers absorbed by the mesmerizing rants about how the Aegean region is a treasure to be valued as it should. Nonetheless, the

commoners making the half of the crowd were also vivid and diverse in ages in line with the heterogeneousness of this gastro-community.

The programme of the festival was rich, quite impressive panels giving voice to many renowned guests were held in the hall one after the other, from early in the morning until midday. Starting from midday and up until the evening, a couple of workshops were hosted meanwhile the food and drink stands were opened for tastings and the event was finalized with a cheered show of a 1920s swing band. During the panels held within the hall, nation-wide and state-related bodies spoke alongside the local figures, as well as the international guests were participated in the sessions.

The creative chef of Brand 3 was also among the panellists. The discussions raised by these agents that participated in the panels will be evaluated in detail later in this section. For now, following the panels, the real festival that was kicked off will be explained briefly. Although the renewed building has its own character, the space where the food and drink stand has been placed in the open area looked very much similar to any other traditional food fair. There were wooden plates, whickered baskets, marble layouts holding and presenting the sample foods that stands offer for the visitors, all matching the “organic aesthetics” that the theme of the Gastronomy Festival brings upon the ironically industrially-designed venue.

Somehow, the dominating material element of the event, again ironically, was plastic. Such that, the plastic cups, plates, mini containers, forks, and spoons that have been distributed by the food and drink stands; carried away first in the hands of the visitors, some filling the wastebaskets, some drifting away, later rolling on the ground. Additionally, simultaneously happening alongside the panels and the stands that were concreting the contemporary organic and inorganic contradictions; there were workshops hosted by the popularizing chefs of the acclaimed gastronomical brands.

The workshop area has been placed upon the small space in between the open-air food stands, which was created with the structuring of a semi-open visible kitchen and chairs put right across it for visitors to see what is going on. During workshops, chefs were showing crucial culinary techniques used in formulating a signature dish served at their restaurant to the audience, meanwhile a moderator was co-hosting the show as

asking questions to these chefs about their brands' journey and prompting chitchats on issues related to the expanding gastronomical stage in İzmir. The three workshops planned in the festival programme, of which two were hosted by the creative chefs of Brand 2 and Brand 4. The one and only professionally curated gastronomical event of İzmir inviting the chefs of Urla to participate in the workshops as panellists and hosts, shows how much of an accreditation gastro-Urla has earned for itself.



Figure11. Field images from the Gastronomy Festival(Source: The photographs are taken by the researcher at 24.10.2021).

Moreover, there were cameras, everywhere; moving photographers were shooting every spot and invited guests, and a couple of camera operators were recording each and every minute of the event. Also, the visitors were extensively using cameras as if they were volunteer camera-people of the festival; they were taking photos and videos of the food, atmosphere, the celebrity chefs they get to encounter, and the music band, through their smartphones. From early in the morning until live music began, speakers incorporated a soft jazz playlist within the backdrop of the festival.

People in the festival let it be organizers or participants or common visitors, all observed as having they were either having a good time or working hard to make others have a good time. These different people that were carrying various purposes of being in the gastronomy festival were noted as they were engaging in listening, speaking, eating, drinking, strolling around the venue, talking with the participant brand's representatives, brand to brand networking, engaging with the visitors of the stands, taking pictures, scrolling up and down on their phones, chatting around, later some were smoothly dancing along with the swing band while the sun was setting as well. All observations about the happenings during the event can be summed as being the parts of a socializing around gastronomy theme.

By the virtue of their participation in the Gastronomy Festival, researcher had the benefit of socialization with the observed brands through this event. Since there came along with the festival the opportunity to interact with the selected brands within the composition of this event that is a physically temporal yet influentially prevailing component of the assemblage of Urla. The researcher had the chance to grab a bite of, literally what they served to the visitors, but more vitally of their positioning in a not captured but direct manner.

Taking a glance at what are they doing and saying, what intangible and tangible elements they use to manifest their being in this event through the limited space upon

their food stands and the time-bound conversations they could deliver about gastronomy are worthy of taking a note of here, before getting into drafting the lines of the compelling discussions that encountered during the panels and workshops. The three stands of these participant “Urlalı” fine-dining brands were placed next to each other, cornering the open-air food and drink area. Respectively to their sequence in their identification as the nested assemblages aka the agents of Urla, mentions are to start with Brand 2 and then to be followed with Brand 3 and Brand 4.

As a continuum of the heartfelt love story has previously been told of the Brand 2, the communications of the creative chef and the two other employees that were present at the stand with the visitors were quite cheerful and engaging. Coming to the material aspects of the Brand 2 stand, a mini-laboratory representing the alternative agricultural production system placed as an artefact representing Brand 2's environmental-conscious initiatives taken on soil-less farming was surely an eye-catcher. The star ingredient of the dish that was offered in samples to the festival visitors was a mushroom that grows and is seasonally picked in Urla, signifying the brand values about seasonality. The first cooking workshop of the festival programme was held by the creative chef of Brand 2 as they first made conversations about the power of gastronomy and how it can create resourceful attraction spots with the co-host. Yet at some point, in between the lines of the workshop talks, the chef admitted that touristification of Urla is a two-edged sword.

Expressing that Brand 2 was born in Urla since the founders wanted to go where the local produce is; it was acknowledged that as the number of branded names increase in the area, the concerns about locals inhabiting the villages renting their ancestral lands or selling out their farms to the non-agricultural businesses also increase. As so, creative chef implied that they are aware of the existing affect of gastronomical brands in relation to the change occurring within the area they take a nest. Consequently, it can be said that such chefs indeed are being the cultural creatives that take roles in the making of the positive and negative impacts of this affect.

The presence of Brand 3 in the Gastronomy Festival was spotted earlier to the opening of the food stands since the creative chef of this brand was among the panellists.

Chef talked about how Brand 3 created a “chic” element in dining that was lacking not only in Urla but in İzmir, which is a key to unlocking the promises of the development of Turkey's touristic value to compete with the global rivals. Consequently, they called out for governmental support for all premium gastro-tourism enterprises around the country that are struggling due to many fluctuating paradigms.

This point was argued as so; since the chef retold the story of luxury gastronomy brands as they start as enthusiastic initiatives of the founder individuals, but at the same time holding unmatched collective potentials. Such that, these brands said to emerge sustainable returns to make a progressive difference for the economical and prestigious growth of a country; hence policy decisions benefiting national gastronomical brands should be worked on and delivered as a throughout action plan for Turkey.

The chef additionally called for attention on educating the new generations of culinary artists, as it is necessary to give proper education to talented youngsters to multiply the quality gastronomical brands for increased margins of value. Lastly, to be reckoned, the chef of Brand 3 directly used the term “prosumer” (*türetici*) to describe his kind of entrepreneurs; as they highlighted the idea of going local as chefs have been improved and used too specifically by them, indirectly attributing their doings as cultural creatives.

Coming to the Brand 3's food stand in the open-air, it should be given due as the busiest stand of the entire festival. Besides the chef, there were multiple employees rotating around the stand to catch up with the visitors. The most eminent material aspect of the stand was sure the fire pit that has been installed right next to it, spreading the scented smoke of slowly burning chunks of wood, that is the symbol of Brand 3's earth-related cuisine. The sample dish was also chosen as an appropriate representative of the values of the brand rooted in the refined remaking of the local past; as the brand served a version of a traditional west-Anatolian dish of “coarsely ground meat and wheat” (*keşkek*) which until the day served at weddings taking place at Aegean villages.

Brand 4 designed a rather humble appearance for the Gastronomy Festival reflecting its overall minimalistic brand aesthetics, as nothing besides the sample dishes have been placed upon the stand. The communication approach of the creative chef and

the other employee of the brand attending the stand were sincere and informative as they explained the ingredients and plating of the dishes they were offering. Brand 4 served samples of tuna tartare, which is a dish that exclusively needs to be prepared with the freshest and best quality ingredients, and requires expertise on simplicity.

Although varieties of fish and seafood can be seen extensively consumed by the public of İzmir as a common part of the cuisine, this raw-serve specialized version of this familiar fish produce was a risky yet distinctive sample choice. Accordingly, the dish sample chosen for the festival can be said to be in line with the Brand 4 mantra in emphasizing the local fresh ingredients, the expert method, and the positioning by differentiating itself with its sophisticated simplicity. The creative chef hosted the next cooking workshop of the event, in which they demonstrated a special technique of cooking the tuna species that has been caught from the shores of Urla. During the conversations with the co-hosting moderator, they talked about the goals of creating a “zero-waste” kitchen at the Brand 4 complex, meanwhile working on showing how the brand is exemplifying the new ways of discovering the village life; as it was claimed to be generated through “mindful” agritourism.

Now coming to the discussions which the researcher exposed in-depth thanks to the panels held each after one another; there were many interesting points regarding the complementing, conflicting, competing, and collaborating expressions that participants made. Thus, just to start, the notions and headlines that were repeatedly voiced during the speeches will be mentioned.

The abundance, preservation, journey, environment, and consciousness were among the words that have been utilized in the discourses about making something great out of the fertile nature of the Aegean region at hand, something of great marketability for sure. Within those discourses, the concept of “offerings of the soil” was interesting, since it can be taken as it signifies an idea of soil being akin to the “mother-earth” (*toprak ana*) mythology (Minami,2009). Drawing from the references to those myths seen in diverse cultures, the notion of soil embodies the characteristics of traditional femininity in this concept, which is a thing that is always giving to, providing for, and nurturing towards, the others; being the humans.

The other concept coming forwards during the discussions was the “female gaze” (*dişil bakış*) (Bowers, 1990), which elaborated from different perspectives. Indeed, the original concept was vastly re-interpreted in situ of the event. The female gaze concept used here to applaud the space taken by the efforts of women practicing environmental activism and gastronomical professionalism on the field, by the participants of the panels, which were dominantly female; during the narratives related to the future of agriculture in Turkey and the ups and downs of gastro-tourism for İzmir.

Furthermore, without dwelling into the debate on why women are still inheriting the roles of cooks at home while men are more likely to become “self-made” celebrity chefs (Druckman, 2010; Kurnaz, Kurtuluş, and Kılıç, 2018); it can be said that the co-existence of these two concepts results in a hybrid between the underlying giving-mother-earth and the uplifted taking-professional-women in relation to the context. In which, within this component, the imagery of female figures were positioned as both the creators and users of the soil connecting to the larger contexts. This can be regarded as an extended link reflecting the nature of changes in how the cultural creatives are prosuming the assemblage of Urla.

There were other interesting concepts referred to during the panels that were found worthy of mentioning within this section. However, one of those was only briefly raised by one participant and only a few others contributed to it shortly. That underrated concept was “food systems” which is a headline under which ground is growing for the policymakers to give attention (Campi, Dueñas, and Fagiolo, 2021), if are really considerate towards sustainability issues on the world food security. Parallel to it, a critical participant used the dichotomy of “city-born versus village-born” (*kentsoylu vs.köy mefhumu*) in sharing their scepticism about how the people who were born and raised in cities, then became white-collared professionals, are to save the agricultural production in the local areas with their lack of tacit skills and never-ending exploitative marketing efforts. Arguing for this, instead of making the necessary policy changes towards resolving the local villagers' problems, was the point of their questioning.

So, the brilliant idea of agro-touristification or premium-gastronomization of particular areas was advised to go under objective evaluation. Nonetheless, implications

that most panellists were circling around were emphasizing that proposing environmental sustainability without securing economical benefits is meaningless. In other words, it was declared that; if the alternative agricultural production systems do not project marginal returns on investment, or if the gastronomical brands do not be in demand by the consumer segment that are niche but consisted of people who can spend big amounts, sustainability ideals are to be tagged as unrealistic. Thus, it can be said that the gastronomy community is to welcome neo-liberal business-savvy environmental entrepreneurs.

Recalling the official theme of the Gastronomy Festival bearing environmentalist connotations, the bringing up of a matter like the food systems could have been something to be expected. However, all seemed makeshift when brought up during the discussions as a buzzword to be looked for later. That was possibly be argued because of the apparent fact that the festival, in practice, was more on the publicity side of an event, parading the gastronomical riches of İzmir; rather than being on the advocacy side that would have been swotting on the urgent problems of agricultural production within the Aegean region. Hence, a limited number of participants voicing critical standpoints and a few environmentalist narratives given during the panel were contradicting with the realized goal of the event which was promoting gastronomy tourism as a perfect catch satisfying every individual, institutional, and governmental bodies' desires.

Therefore, the expressions actually were to expect were the high-pitched advertisements of the upper-scale gastronomical brands, which indeed accomplished since event called to be a success by the organizers. So, the second concept to be mentioned here comes as "the white-cloth" that symbolized the pleasant fine positioning of Urla's latest restaurants, as well as exemplifying the high hygiene and aesthetic standards that these new gastronomy brands set within this local area (Erdoğan and Özdemir, 2018), in a manner similar with the code noted earlier in the analysis of the Brand 3. Overall, from the doings and sayings observed during the festival in which common ground happened to be on the claims on gastronomy being a meeting point of the cultures; it was understood that for today's culture, it condenses an opportunity that should not be missed. It can be granted that İzmir now is recognized as the new place to

fine-dine with an authentic taste of the local produce, and specifically the Urla area is projected to further strengthen its position within the global gastronomy arena.

4.4. Regional Forum

The open-to-public event that the researcher participated in through an online streaming platform was a forum programmed in sessions that were held within a couple of weekdays. Organized by the collaborative efforts of a private business partner and the Aegean Economic Development Foundation, the theme of the event was selected as “for a greener future” meanwhile the headline of the last session that took place on the last day of the forum was “a tourism magnet: gastronomy” was an extremely relevant session for this study.

The participants of the observed session were inclusive to a journalist which was the moderator, a board member of a national tourism association, a board president of İzmir's artisan chamber, a culinary academician, a well-known gastro-culture researcher, and two gastronomy brand founders in which one was the creative chef of Brand 3.

Many compelling ideas and thought-provoking discussions made during this session, therefore, these are to be evaluated here as the meaningful properties of the event. For starters, it can be noted that parallel to the common ground in the festival; gastronomy was acknowledged in the forum as a field that connects people from different cultures, and at the same time, it is a fertile field for harvesting economical value if meticulously cultivated. Then this ground was linked with the ways of achieving Turkey's potential in gastro-tourism.

As it said, which can be done so by transmitting the tradition's knowledge to the new generation's energy. Meaning, a distinctive as well as strong positioning of Turkey within the worldwide gastro-tourism sector is to be possible by learning from the local insights and transforming them into contemporary gastronomical brand experiences.

However, although Turkey already has an exquisite source of local food heritage and gastro-tourism is such an opportunity that evidently can create high returns on investment, through what ways in particular this potential can be reached was articulated

in between the lines of the expressions given as a part of the forum that need to be dug deeper.

A thing that was brought up many times by all of the participants, is the need of careful assessment of the marketing strategy for securing a future of grandeur for Turkey's gastro-tourism plan. Since gastronomy is what foreign visitors spend the most money on among the tourism services they consume during their stay, gastronomy earns the title of currency-maker, thus the target segment was said to be mindfully worked on. Additionally, Turkey was pointed to as so for being one of the countries that attract the largest amounts of international tourists; yet, from now on, the objective was settled as not to host record-breaking rates of visitors but to make record-breaking figures in tourism revenues. In other words, that participants directly articulated, the goal is to increase not the number of tourists but the amount of spendings tourists are to willingly make.

From there, the content of the speeches shifted to the desired consumer segment for Turkey's gastro-tourism aspirations. First of all, all agreed due to their experiences that gastro-tourists spend generous amounts of money if the offerings are worthy of being notified as top quality. Since, the international gastro-tourists profiled as; upper-middle to purely upper-class pleasure-seekers, food and good time enthusiasts, travellers and intellectuals, who look for memorable experiences.

Unfortunately, a gap that sits between Turkey and the other countries in the play of catch-the-wealthy-gastro-tourists was pointed out, as the scarcity of the premium gastronomical brands that could serve the fine-dining versions of the local cuisines. This gastro-tourists segment was granted to grow, thus the market for gastronomical experiences is to be on-demand in the near future, even more than it is now. Considering the situation, participants were set out to make their points about how to close the gap for increased competitiveness.

One to claim to have a strong magnet should be certain of its pulling force. Consequently, how to put together a story such that it would be an undisputedly compelling one to shine amongst the many others was the main consideration of the forum session. The prescription of creating an original yet without doubt interesting

story for the gastro-tourism branding of Turkey starting from the Aegean region was argued to be found within its unique ancient history.

The concept of “gastro-archaeology” (Woodward, 2021) implies the newly emerging field of study that connects biology, archaeology, and the food culture all together in its site of research was raised among these discussions. That was probably because, as the participants underlined their awareness of the current situation, it was not enough to polish the wine and olive history of the Mediterranean or to redress the traditional Aegean cuisine that root back only to the written history, since these corners have already been occupied by the leading rivals namely Italy, Spain, and France. But what could really be distinctive to the existing positioning was spotted as using connotations that only Turkey and partially Greece inherits: the legends of Anatolia.

For example, one participant advised associating the gastronomical brands to this untapped ancestry, through linking the stories of the offered dishes to the food that is known to be consumed by the philosophers of the Ephesus. To give another example, the gastronomical value of the beer was said to be elevated through connecting to the re-imagination of the speculations about the first-ever beer that was crafted by humanity being within the borders of the archaeological site of “Potbelly Hill” (*Göbekli Tepe*) (Dietrich et al., 2012; Desalle and Tattersall, 2019).

In addition to suggesting creative plots, social media was stressed as an imperative platform to take advantage of; to not only to be able to tell a story that grows in time with the routes and the tools for interactivity which is nonetheless important but moreover to precisely attain the gaze of the targeted consumer segments in the most engaging manner.

As a reflection of a marketing strategy towards gastro-tourism growth in Turkey, the concept of “gastro-diplomacy” is the incorporating gastronomical specialties of a country into the public diplomacy as a tool for creating foreign attraction on the national cuisine (deMelo, 2015; Granlund, 2015) was referred as a useful approach in connecting the gastronomical treasures of a country with the state communications.

The call for state-level involvement in the development process of the gastro-tourism destinations within İzmir and governmental support into the efforts put into the

premium gastronomical brands that are earning acknowledgment only to a degree so far was one of the heavy-handed discussions made during this event. Such that, gastro-tourism said the be worked on as a throughout the national policy.

The creative chefs in the event asked to be personally included in the creation of the promotion campaigns of Turkey's touristic value, as in the examples of Italy and France. Moreover, a striking statement was voiced by the chef of Brand 3. It was on rising land rents and housing market values since the opening of the upper scale gastronomical brands like their own within Urla; and in face of this contribution to the economic growth of this local area, the infrastructure within Urla, precisely the roads leading to the Brand 3 restaurant, were complained about being not yet improved by the state bodies. This was especially interesting, because; in line with neo-liberal ideals, the state was perceived as a fundamental appreciator and a required supporter of increasing marketability of an area due to the emergence of successful private enterprises in response to the economic development they supply. As in the case of Urla, this has been happening through gastronomical brands.

Furthermore, it was believed that, if the state support is guaranteed, the revenues gained from foreign currency would be as high as the rivals. In addition, within the scenario that the state is an active manager of promotions towards gastro-tourism in Turkey in collaboration with the creative chefs; the new generations of entrepreneurs and chefs are hoped to be growing out the existing successful brands, creating their own, ensuring the sustainability of the long-term interest upon the strategy. However, a mere promotion of brands and touristic venues was said to fall short of effectively managing a gastro-tourism plan; as the primary requirement would be a wholesome strategy regarding the long-term destiny. That destiny, although at the core lies the economic profitability, was also given due as being bounded by the soundness of agricultural regulations. Modernizing the production traditions of the Aegean region and preserving the locality of ingredients being the distinctive highlight of İzmir's gastro-brands, were the underlying motivations of the discourses of the forum that were given around the topic of agricultural revitalization.

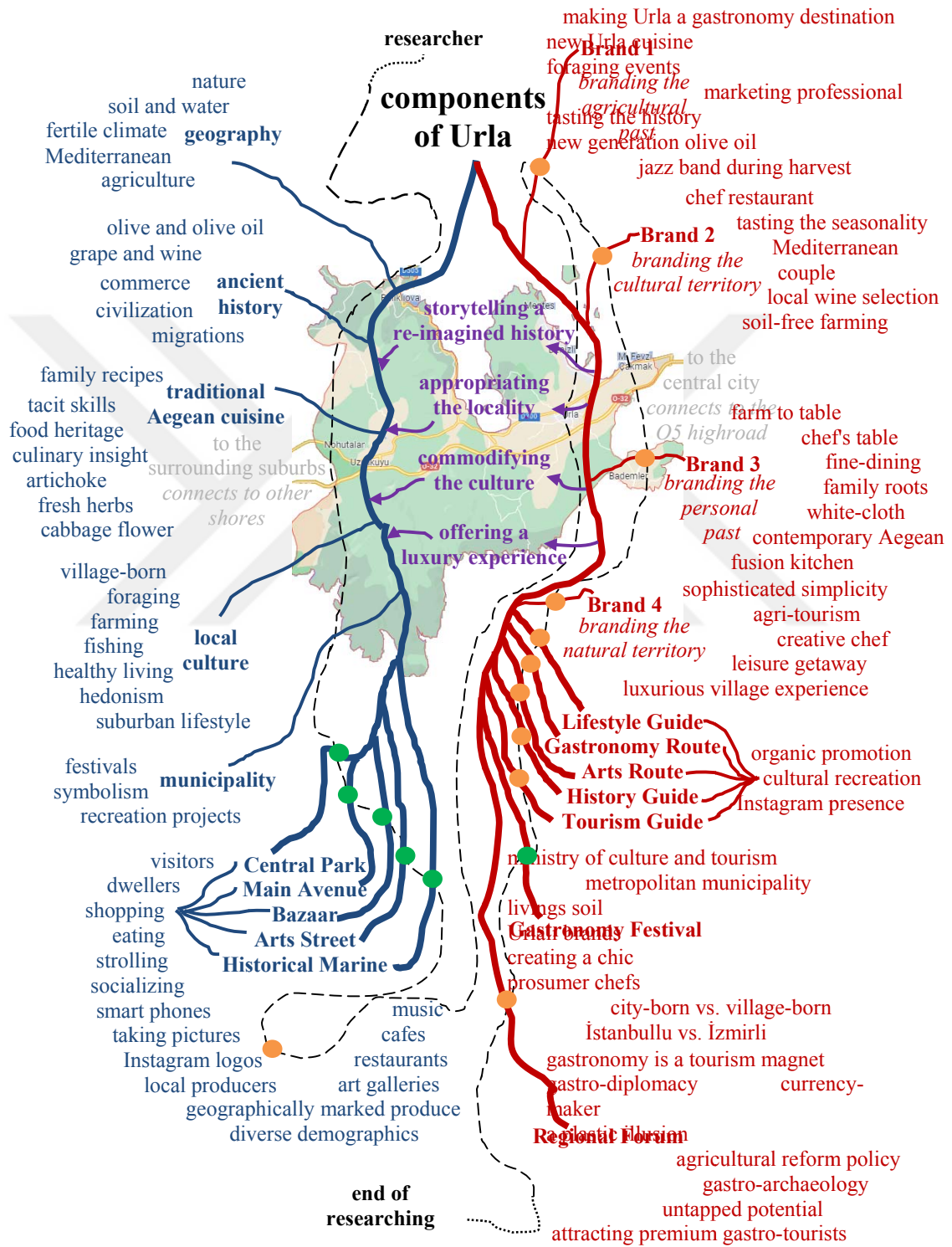
The other creative chef that was a participant besides the chef of Brand 3, directly manifested an urgent need for agricultural reform operated by the state. If not, quoting from that chef; anything served would just be “a plastic illusion” instead of being representative of the richness of the Turkey's cuisine. This reproach was backed up by other participants, as it was agreed that the key thing to construct an authentic gastro-brand value is to go after what is real and what is locally grown.

One proposition to help with the branding on the front-end and the agricultural revitalization on the back-hand of the gastro-tourism development was the establishment of a “ministry of gastronomy” as a body within the governmental institutions. Such an institutional body was deemed to be useful if realized; hypothetically in, standardization of the program on the detection and labelling of the geographically marked produce, in managing integrative branding, as well as in efficiently managing the relations between the many heterogeneous actors and industries that are interlocking within the field of gastro-tourism.

Similarly, it was suggested, if not for a ministry, but founding a specialized advertising agency only working for the promotion of the gastronomical values of the country should be considered. Since, it was ensured that, such kind of aggregating promotion effort would surely double the foreign currency influx. Not only the premium gastro-brands but the hospitality businesses, not only the state but municipalities and local governmental bodies, not only the chefs but the complementing production and service providers; all agents of the market were invited to take their chance to work in the larger gastro-tourism project of Turkey and earn massive profits which the opportunity guaranteed to avail. So that, the progress goals through gastro-tourism said to be achieved through a bottom-up organization that reaches the capital; meaning being part of the state-level policies, by flourishing upon the local soils, initially starting from the networking of the possible closest ties.

4.5. Assemblage of Urla

Drawing from data, the manner in which reality of Urla has been conceptualized by the researcher for the sole purposes of this study grounding on the retrieved data was visualized in below Figure 12.



- physical-verse encounters
- digital-verse encounters

Figure12. Urla's Assemblage Map for the study.

“What you select from, in order to tell your story, is nothing less than everything, (...) What you build up your world from, your local, intelligible, rational, coherent world, is nothing less than everything. And so all selection is arbitrary. All knowledge is partial - infinitesimally partial. Reason is a net thrown out into an ocean. What truth it brings in is a fragment, a glimpse, a scintillation of the whole truth. All human knowledge is local. Every life, each human life, is local, is arbitrary, the infinitesimal momentary glitter of a reflection of ...” LeGuin (1995).

CHAPTER 5: TRACING

How do the new gastronomical brands incorporate local components into their branding, and how does this affect the assemblage of the local area in return? In what ways are these brands' branding efforts intertwined with the ongoing transformation process in the area?

5.1. Findings

The assemblage analysis picked upon the roots that the observed brands extended out to entangle themselves within the soil of the local area; meanwhile, this deliberate mapping marked the particular spots in which new roots strike by the virtue of the plentiful nourishments coming with the promises of the changing climate within the area. It has been described what properties of the assemblage of Urla have been incorporated into the branding practices of these brands. In other words; the properties that have been found as existing in the assemblage of Urla are the contextual aspects of this local area.

Therefore, drawing from Holt (2006) the integrated evaluation of the gastronomical brands can be said to utilize the cultural meanings, myths, and values that can be tracked down in the background of Urla. Additionally, not only the intangible aspects of culture but tangible ones like geography, climate, certain items readily found in the local area when these brands came in are also part of the connections made by these brands in their sayings and doings. However, while the collective influence of these observed brands upon the area is to be accounted for; in line with McCracken (1986), brand communications imply an amplified cultural creation that is re-positioning the existing background of the area into something that what it has been, here noted as gastro-Urla. Such that, both the existing tangible and intangible elements were seen as mixing with the ones that brands are bringing in, or being replaced altogether. Thereon the answer to the first research question can be summed up in four highlights as inserted in Figure 6 previously presented.

Firstly, data showed that brands' storytelling efforts are incorporating elements from the local history, which have been re-imagined according to their positioning purposes. Secondly, data also displayed that these brands are trying to appropriate the locality in a sense that marks themselves as “Urlalı” brands, alongside their claims of new Urla is what they make of it. Thirdly, data came by as an exhibition of cultural commodification not only because these brands are triggering commercialization of the whole area in line with their gastro-tourism aspirations, but also because they are putting big price tags on what has not been sold before. Fourthly, through the data, it can be seen that all these interactions are initiated by these brands in name of offering a luxury experience that attracts a segmented kind of consumers; consumers which these brands are desiring to host not on the dirty soils of local space, but at the comfort of the hedonistically designed places of Urla.

These preliminary findings describe what is going on in Urla, in a sense that gives a glimpse of how the gastronomical brands are affecting the assemblage of Urla. Henceforth, the further question asks for more details that can deliver an understanding of the nature of this change. Therefore, this part of the study will bring about researcher's interpretations on the interesting points seen in data that will be foreshadowing the upcoming implications in relation to the nature of transformations observed in Urla.

5.1.1. Sleek Road from İstanbul to İzmir

The cultural creatives that gave life to the thriving gastronomical brands of Urla that have been investigated for this study were the marketing professionals and chefs who are either from the metropolitan cities outside of İzmir let alone Urla, or from İzmir yet lived a life within the city then spent years in abroad before coming back to İzmir then land upon suburban Urla. These creatives are talking about how it is important to be close to the locally produced ingredients and benefit the local's knowledge on regional cuisine to interpret what is at hand into perfected dishes served with utmost elegance. Recalling the speeches given and discussions voiced during the events that the creatives of the observed brands participated in, this very issue was quite a hype. So this issue of

creative chefs resigning from the plasticity of the produce delivered into the plates of restaurants located in the big city and hitting the road to Urla or alike Mediterranean suburban areas to start their own brands for having localized associations with the ingredients was something that is promoted, applauded, and taken pride of in the gastronomical circles.

The new highroad between İstanbul to İzmir (*İstanbul-İzmir Otoyolu*, in short *O5*) which has been completely opened for use in 2019 (Özdemir, Çelikler, and Akay, 2019), is a suitable metaphor to demonstrate the necessities for creatives from metropolitan backgrounds to thrive within a local area like Urla. The highroad has been an object of dispute since the announcement of its construction project (Cumhuriyet, 2009), which was a collaboration between the state and private business incorporation. Due to this very point, the project was received as yet another example of Turkey's ongoing struggle with the “build-operate-transfer” (*yap-işlet-devret*) model introduced by the current government carrying neo-liberal aspirations towards state-led privatization of the public services. Once the construction was completed and the road began to operate, it reached a contested site beyond its considerable kilometres.

The project has been burnished as generating improved revenues from the tourism services and availing investments on diverse sectors within the areas upon its route (Şan, 2021; Ünal, 2022; Hürriyet, 2022), with the main selling point of shortening the 8-hours ride between İstanbul to İzmir to approximately 3,5 hours of a ride. On the other hand, the extremely high tariffs for the public using this highroad comes as a greater drawback (T24 Haber Merkezi, 2019a; Gazete Duvar, 2019; BirGün, 2022) than the proliferation of the service sector.

One critique directly pointed out the unspoken side of this project in voicing the public's expectancy from the state is not building roads so that high-income people living in the cities can flow to the beaches of the suburban İzmir easily; but the duty of the state is establishing the infrastructures that will stimulate the production and trade locally as doings so for the local people while caring for to those people's budget (T24 Haber Merkezi, 2019b). The matter of interest on the highroad for this study lies exactly

on this very point, as a reflection of the high costs of debuting the next big thing into the gastronomical scene of Urla.

Indeed, as Scott et al. (2014, p. 284) noted;

“material world is more than the passive product of human endeavour [as it can exert] forces that shape, limit and direct the most essential human experiences”

Therefore; the highroad of the debate can be utilized for arguing to connect its affect on the consumption of Urla to the increased turnarounds of the tourists coming from other places. Moreover, accounting for the capital required from the observed creatives to make it into Urla also has direct material and cultural bearings. Borrowing from one of the founding theories of business management, the concept of “barrier to entry” (Fisher, 1979; Eaton and Lipsey, 1980) is convenient here. It has been mentioned that Urla already had a humble reputation in gastronomy thanks to the traditional restaurants still in business within the central circles of the area. Besides, due to being a coastal village; Urla has been visited by the local tourists and few outsiders for leisure consumption for decades, so the moderate-scale service brands like restaurants, bards, and small hotels were already in business. Therefore, the figurative road to Urla (Figure 13) between İstanbul and İzmir should not be taken for granted as a sleek one.

There sure is a barrier to entry, much like the expensive fees paid to pass this highroad. To bring something exciting and sustainably competitive to Urla's existing gastronomical scene, so to make an even bigger splash than the caressing waves of the traditional brands; what was necessary was the creativity of the chefs trained in fine-dining excellence and the marketers experienced in integrating attractive visions. This signifies a capacity provided by an accumulated cultural capital, which enables these creatives to re-territorialize how things are done within the local area that they are in interaction and connect it to global competition. Consequently, to realize the unprecedented uppers-scale brands and achieve the standards of the new gastronomical brands in the projection of such cultural creatives within this local area; the monetary capital preconditions itself as the reinforcing capacity.



Figure 13. Barrier to entry.

Hence, the availability of the cultural creatives to make large amounts of investments, as especially seen in the tangible elements of their brands, is something that must be noted. It can be said that the creatives of the observed gastronomical brands that are remaking Urla as gastro-Urla through agencing a refined version of its reality, like grapes turning into a batch of quality wine; should be considered together with the barriers of monetary and cultural capitals that they were readily surpassed. Sure, the opportunities of gastro-Urla have been ripening for grabs now, yet, these are not for everyone to benefit; akin to the highroad that opened to serve the ease of the public, in which public corresponds to a selected bunch.

For emphasizing the future directions on understanding gentrifier characteristics, Billingham (2015) underscored the issue of middle-class families moving into areas that come with the benefit of renowned schools that can assure their children a better education. The central idea of this argument can comply with other cases with diverging takes on it. In fact, chefs and the marketers who are resourceful in monetary and skill capitals locating their restaurants into the suburban areas to reach better, freshest, and locally produced ingredients to found their creative culinary enterprises can be considered as a lesser-acknowledged form of gentrifier characteristics; in contribution to

the contemporary discussions on gentrification. Furthermore, due to activities brought into the area by these brands are being service production and complementarily small-scale goods production, in essence, this occurrence could also subscribe to the production-side theory of gentrification (Smith, 1979) as new cases being shaped through creative industries.

Nonetheless; when the cultural creatives start gastronomical brands with high-pitched positioning, they also initiate paths to acquire locality to Urla by reserving the value of being authentic through their marketing communications, although originally being outsiders. Not only referring to creatives being outsiders of the lifestyle of Urla, but the brands being outsiders to the traditional gastronomical scene in Urla. However, they are somehow the ones stressing the “Aegean-ness” (*Egelilik*) or “Urlalı” identity the most in their brand names and generally in every aspect of their marketing.

This was observed in a resembling case within a totally different context. Gregory (2019) underlined that new brands adopting the connotations of authenticity into themselves to mark a desirable position in market through benefitting the values of their located area have impacts on both the narrative and material dimensions of gentrification within the related area. As it happens, the new gastronomical brands which identify with local components of Urla can be said to have an influence on the perceptions of the whole area, meanwhile adding to its gentrification in practice. Considering the relevance of the discriminating barriers of entry and the insights complimenting the literature, the topic of gentrification in evaluating the changes in Urla will be on the table in the following sections as well.

5.1.2. Farm to Chef's Table

The soil, agriculture, locally sourced ingredients, loyalty to producers, respect to nature, and healthy living are notions that have been incorporated into the efforts of the gastronomical brands under investigation for this study. These also came across among the issues of debate during the gastro-community events. Therefore, the agricultural production within Urla in relation to operations of the upper-scale restaurants comes

along as a central matter in the sayings and nonetheless the doings of these brands. However, for the restaurants of such high positioning, communicating the brand value centralizing on the supply chain is not the mere thing that contributes to the brand experience of the consumers.

Asides the quality in food, service, and atmosphere; Erkmen and Hancer (2019) argued that consumers' satisfaction of the fine-dining restaurants is being influenced by their perceptions with regards to other consumers, in multi-dimensional means which can range from the mass of the crowd within the place to the appropriateness of the manners of these other consumers. Likewise, Hyde (2014) underlined the importance of the restaurant reviews made by the consumers with experience for the potential consumers in creating symbolic value. In the scope of this research, the branding efforts of the observed brands had an aspect that was addressing the manifestations of consumer-generated content to replace the traditional marketing communications (Schultz, 2005; Schultz, 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2007), which is something somehow correlating with these briefly mentioned discussions.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, brands in this study were seen re-posting the stories and posts of the consumers who were addressing them in their social media contents with positive commentary of food or imagery that appreciate the aesthetics of these brands. It is fair to point out that gastronomical brands put an emphasis on the other consumers' perceptions of their brands, as a useful input to their own branding efforts for attracting other consumers. Therefore, here consumers should be given due as active agents that involve in the branding practices in rhizomatic ways. Owing to these brands' common storyline stressing a sincere start at the local produce and a whimsical end right up in consumers' social media accounts; the entanglement of the consumers of Urla's gastronomical brands into branding was evaluated in line with a farm-to-table journey. Yet, the table in the title of the section being the “chef's table” and not a mundane one, is a purposeful portrayal, hinting at what has been found in form of an illuminating triangle.

A farm is a collective context signifying a space in which villagers are working for producing agricultural outputs. A fine-dining restaurant, however, is a selective

context that signifies a place where consumers are engaging in experiential consumption through receiving the inputs that are accrued by the service providers. Within this selective context, there are again eliminations; the consumers who can pay for the gastronomical delicacies offered by the uppers-scale restaurant brand, and among the consumers who can pay there the few consumers who can give justice to the exquisite taste branded by the creatives. Clearly, parallel to the barrier spotted in the earlier section, the monetary and the cultural capitals here too are relevant. Howbeit, within the situation with the consumers, monetary and cultural capitals do not simply conjoin in a barrier as in the capacity required from Urla's gastro-entrepreneurs. Conversely, they emerge as two different capacities in which one calls of the other, but that other do not guarantee the earlier one; as these are blueprinting the distinction between the two into a pyramid of taste (Figure 14).

As the hints already winked at the traces of the palpable connection, the phrase of “cultural capital” used in this section to understand the consumers' ways of consumption of the observed brands is drawn directly from the staple concept of Bordieu (1984). Hence, taste demarcates the preferences of food and the praise of the gastronomical experiences. Although the democratization of attaining a foodie identity has been argued (Johnston and Baumann, 2010), in between the lines of the same argument the intrinsic privileges of the achievers are also acknowledged. From there, the connection to Veblen's (1899) leisure class can be established; as its reflection can be tracked within the profiling of targeted segment of consumers noted during the participant observations. The leisure class of the debate here are the enthusiastic gastronomy consumers who have the ability to acquire and appreciate fine taste, due to possessing distinctive monetary and cultural capitals.

In proportion to these very references, the taste is considered as a dynamic capacity which the complementary capitals compose, and in an elitist manner resides in reach of leisure class since this is the class targeted by the gastro-tourism strategies promising high returns. Coming back to the specific topic of this study's interest, it has been stated that the new restaurants that are opening in Urla are changing the gastronomical scene in the area by raising the standards of cuisine selection and the

consumer service to a high bar (Erdoğan and Özdemir, 2018). Therefore, it is meaningful to ask what are the motives in the taste pyramid that emerge the attraction towards the new gastronomical brands which are levelling-up the area.

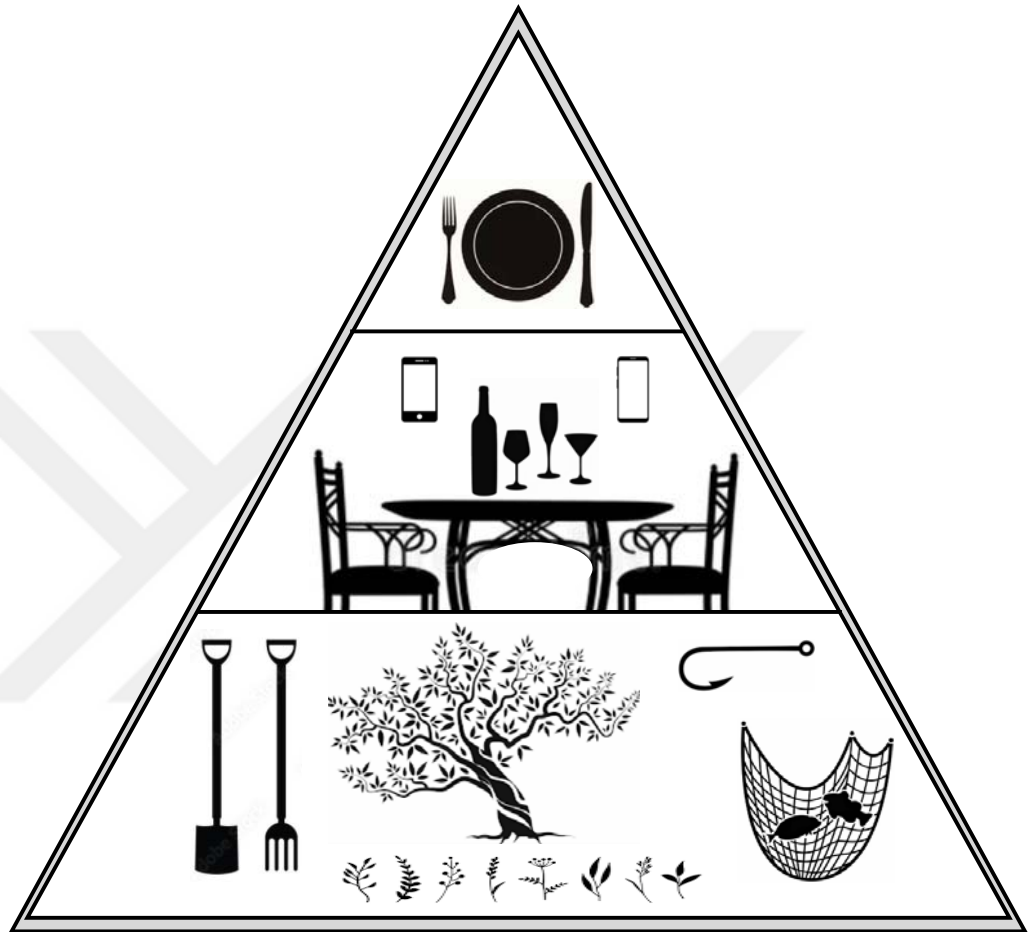


Figure 14. Pyramid of taste.

Quest is looking at how gastronomical brands emerge the gastro-Urla as a consumptionscape through satisfying the profitable groups of consumers' way of consuming. Inspired by the engaging literature on consumer labour (Elias, Gill, and Schraff, 2017; Rodner, Goode, and Burns 2022), novel interpretations of the findings are to be situated. To begin with, in the bottom that helps to ground their branding upon, there is the raw labour of the villagers and local suppliers. In other words, the bottom is

where the tangible value, of produce that is nourished at the farm that comes before the intangible value reaches the table, is realized by numerous unidentified agents. That implies a functionalized activity, in which, the purest versions of the properties taking pride in the dirt of the soil were produced, to be translated into market values in the following phases.

Right above, at the midpoint of the pyramid; there is the mixture of the contracted labour of service employees and the “social labour” (Anderson, Hamilton, and Tonner, 2016) of the middle-class consumers carrying sufficient monetary capital besides the latter's desire of satisfying their pecuniary emulation through conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899). Meaning, this is where the produce, the service agents, and the consumers are interacting; and some of these consumers voluntarily take the role of marketing agents as they put extra effort to share their economical availabilities as demanded values in the market. That deliberates a hybrid activity taking place at this level, practised to serve the purpose of in situ value presumption through the service creation of employees and the social consumption of it by the general consumers.

Then, the last part of the consumptionscape shines as a spine; there are the brands' creatives and the gastro-enthusiasts who are the influencers of the community, latter being the agents which creatives and other agents working for the development of premium gastro-tourism welcome at tip-toe. This is where appreciative labour is actualized as these comparatively rare consumers can receive, understand, and respond to the merits of the food's journey melted into a sophisticated dish by the touch of the artisan chef. This signifies an exclusive activity, similar to the menu at the chef's table. Hundreds of consumers with monetary capital can be served at these branded places, however, only a handful of them can be hosted at the chef's table. These are to be the entitled guests who distinctively have cultural capital in gourmet food and the etiquette of fine-dining; furthermore, ones that can spare time to live the ritualistic experiences that months ahead reserved in their names, and even can travel across countries for it.

Thereupon, an interpretation of the ways of consumers' agency within the observed branding practices can be situated. The same consumptionscape of gastro-Urla, is attracting both the leisure class and the middle-class at the same time, yet what should

be carefully admitted is not for achieving the same means of symbolic value. One is the way of consuming seen in the social consumption of the middle-class, the other is the enthusiastic consumption of the intrinsically motivated leisure class.

Once it is the class-segregation o'clock in interpreting the happenings within an area, the shadow of the pyramid of taste falls straight onto the ongoing discussions of gentrification in relation to gastronomy. Primarily, considering the nature of the two groups of consumers encountered in relation to the branding practices of the observed brands, it is apparent that these brands, as Keatinge and Martin (2014, p. 14) put;

“invite particular kinds of class-based consumption practices into local spaces”

As they do so and succeed, parallelly, their culturally and economically available middle to upper-class consumer segments started flooding into the local area which was beforehand overlooked. Since then, the area which has been presumed humbly as a regional agricultural hub speedily began to attain a buzzing inter-regional touristic status, as it is continually endorsed today. Such flood of consumers demanding social and experiential consumption of the area in line with their high expectations, therefore derives the emergence of gentrification with its all potential pros and cons (Markley and Sharma, 2016; Trujillo-Pagan, 2019) within Urla. Schmiz (2019) worked on the process of top-down branding that implemented with policy tools upon a small yet ethnically diverse area; and showed that with the promoted increase in the businesses marketing a sellable diversity for the middle-class tastes, the area became an attractive spot for consumption activities of the targeted outsiders.

Distinctively, this study took off from the bottom, with the purpose of picking on the influence of the branding practices that the individual businesses are tooling upon the located area. Through digging into the implications in the cuisine innovations and the positioning narratives of the brands which put under lens for this study, the findings implicate an agreement with the consumption approach in the emergence of gentrification. Hence, this tracing is cementing the theory of gentrification in the consumption-side (Zukin, 1995; Bookman, 2013) as underlining its relevance in the

occurrences of the phenomena in current reality. More specifically, the way of enfoldment of gentrification in the transformation of Urla supplies interesting methodological insights for the gastro-gentrification discussions (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007; Zukin, 2008; Alkon and Cadji, 2018).

5.1.3. An Amazing Place

It is a fact that the number of migration to İzmir has been accelerating during the past few years (Ünal, 2020), as the further development of the tourism investments was mentioned among one of the three key factors impacting the population growth of the city. Interestingly, in the same study, the Seferihisar and Güzelbahçe towns which are surrounding central Urla were noted as showing the highest net migration rates compared to the recordings in the other locations within the whole city.

This study is oriented upon the changes in an area that are emerging regarding the in situ usage of the space in face of the place-making positioning of particular brands, thus, the focus is not necessarily on the happenings that are occurring due to the changes in the inhabitant demographics and so. Still, the highest migration rates of the whole city being the ones towards the locations near Urla, posits a quite a strong implication. Withal, the numbers of gated communities and villa-type residences accelerating in the region parallel to the migrations, imply an aspect about the movement towards the suburban İzmir being of a middle-class dominance (Çınar, 2019). The discussions of Atik et al. (2020) can be of service in this situation, for opening up the implications that are converging with the data at hand for a better generating an understanding in relevance to this study.

Bringing their dying souls into the light by fighting the void at the core of their lives, which was enlarging due to continuous contamination of the meaninglessness corrupting the market society that they tried to heal with consumerism which only so late they realized only worsen the infection, the self-rescuing consumer subjects of Atik et al. (2020) resigned from their affluent city jobs and took refuge in the suburban lifestyle of İzmir. Such that, the hypothetical audience of the Lifestyle Guide presented

in the earlier chapter among the accounts observed in the complexion of the cultural context of the selected brands, falls into the similar grounds of the exact group of consumer subjects that have been investigated for the referred research. Additionally, the consumers' decisions of shifting their modes of life, scrutinized in their withdrawal from the market society in behalf of embarking on the challenging but serene alternatives that they try to figure out to reconnect with the meanings of life they account as valuable, supports a compelling provision in the scope of this study.

The framing of the new middle-class sensibilities in the emerging markets (Kravets and Sandikci, 2014) can be traced into the middle to upper-class consumer segments of the gastronomical brands under investigation. These consumers that have already been drafted in the prior sections, however here are usefully recalled for being actively committing into a particular tasteful mode of consumption in Urla, coupled with the branding practices of the brands. Subsequently, along with the efforts of the brands, the consumers themselves are also being involved in the shift in the mode of life within Urla, participating in the making of the ironies of gastro-Urla. Therefore, the issue of curiosity for this section is on the shift in Urla's own mode of life, that the consumers too are enrolling into. Particularly, the attempt is on interpreting how local area is pushed into the centroid of a shrinking circle (Figure 15) that suffocates the elemental sites of value it mesmerized the brands which are being made by the cultural creatives and equally their consumers.

Territorialization of the brands in relation to a local area is found as an eloquent brand value creation approach in a different gastro-context (Sassatelli and Arfini, 2015). Here, similarly territorializing the brands through utilizing the located area is practiced by these gastronomy brands nesting in Urla. Yet, beyond the innovations brought upon the traditional cuisine in their menus and the marketing communication; the changes triggered in the positioning of the area through the refined material landscape, besides the perceptions of it, are nevertheless needs to be acknowledged.

Firstly, there is the addressing of the expressions. Recharging in the arms of Urla's nature meanwhile experiencing the pleasurable atmosphere that brands curate for their guest has been marked as the vantage points used by the observed brands, to charm

the city-based consumers into the touristic consumption of this suburban area. The inspiring Mediterranean vibes, aestheticized village life, and the hedonist taste routes are all aspects of the changing *Urla* that territorialize a set of promoted versions of the locality; as such, localities are either being created by or incorporated into these brands.

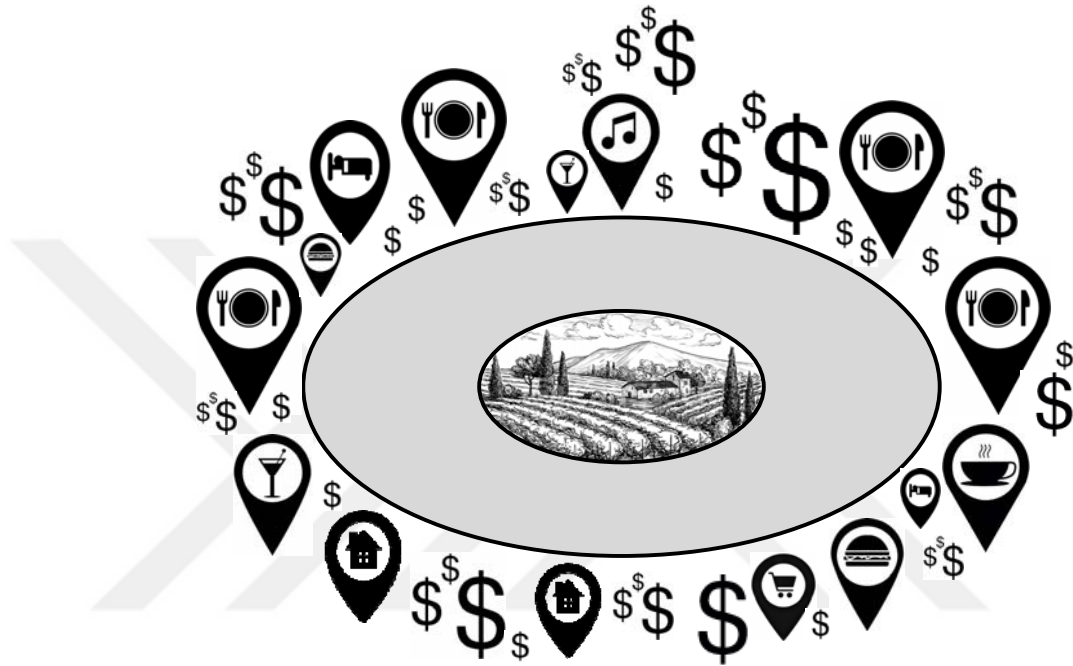


Figure 15. Shrinking circle.

Moreover, the consumers themselves also highlight that, quoting directly from a white-collared consumer living in *İstanbul* suggesting their experience to others in an Instagram story which overall resemble a strategically produced advertisement (Muñiz and Schau, 2007); *Urla* is an “amazing place” to “redeem oneself from the city hassle for a couple of days”. Much in line with the work of Willet (2016), the getaway symbolism attributed to *Urla* both by the brands and consumers of the area signifies as a place-making embedding the desired experiential value for the demanders, namely the high profile *İstanbulllu* people, as this effort brings a touristic mode of consumption to the area that enrolls into the consumption-side of gentrification.

Secondly, moving to the ways in which materiality is implying the gentrifying consumption of the local area, as the mapping of the brands highlighted; tangible brand elements, which dominantly exemplified in the stylized buildings and interiors making up the components of the branded places, can be linked to the interpretations of the gentrifier aesthetics which have been the matter of importance in many other discussions as well (Ley, 2003; Mermet, 2016; Stock and Schmiz, 2019). What is more about the changing materials within the landscape of Urla is the cultural creatives' demand for infrastructural improvement, which is also marked as a sign of a gentrifying mindset having the upper hand in the area (Catungal, Leslie, and Hii, 2009; Gainza, 2016). By the parts of the consumers, influences upon the material components of the assemblage of Urla are multifarious, although being indirect.

As emphasized here as well as within the earlier sections, the consumer segments attracted to the gastro-Urla are bringing in their own patterns of consumption in face of the ongoing changes. Indeed, newcomer residents and the outsider visitors of the local area claim that they to take a glimpse of the real locality; but what they really want has to be moulded into something else than its truly authentic version, to conform to the standards of these consumers' way of living it (Parekh, 2015). The domestic and global franchises opening up within central Urla is only one example of the spreading commercial gentrification (Donner and Loh, 2019). Hence, it can be stated that besides meeting the everyday consumption demands of the newcomers among the dwellers of Urla; a growing number of tourists pouring into the area are also partaking in the emergence of the profit opportunities, as the beneficiaries are being reflected in the increased numbers of the new businesses and the upscale brands within the area.

Coming back to the expressions used for the brand communications that are rooted in the serene nature and the unspoiled village which are the elements that successfully differentiate the gastro-tourism experience that can be found in this local area from its metropolitan peers; and from there, thinking on the expanding commercial places upon the agricultural spaces alongside the untouched nature, one can easily spot an apparent dilemma. That strikes a question that can be resolved within the very form of signification chosen here as interpreting the happenings in Urla, in relevance to its

marketability as an amazing place, or, comprehensively in relevance to the illusion of İzmir performed for the *İstanbullu* eyes.

Clearly, what is depicted here is not just a circle; it is labelled as a shrinking circle, since; now what is attributed as the antecedent version of Urla is losing its physical domains as it is decreasing in its cultural reach day by day, in the sake of, ironically, creating space for the places that are to open up next. Consequently, the mode of life in Urla can be said to be changing towards a direction, which sure will continue supplying people with amazement, at least the ones who can afford to comply with the middle-class patterns of the emerging markets. When combined with the observed brands' own communications efforts, the escape and redemption rhetorics emphasized in the discourses of the consumers regarding the luxury gastro-tourism offers that are proliferating in Urla, work towards manufacturing marketable meanings for it (Gotham, 2007; Belk et al., 2018). Simultaneously, the whole individual to collective branding processes can be argued to affect the transforming usage of the local area by the merits of gentrification (González, 2019; Lapiņa, 2020).

5.1.4. *What's Jazz Got to Do With It*

Probably needless to say yet would not hurt to clarify, jazz has nothing to do with the traditional elements of Urla, nor it is something purely a property that the new brand like the observed ones brought in the assemblage. The situation here, unsurprisingly, is rather complex than that. In this section, firstly the matter is on giving due to the other agents, meaning other than the brands and their consumers, which are entangling into the process that this study traces from the doings of the individual brands. Especially, the identification of the one agent which directly encountered during the observations is instrumental for developing an understanding of the changes within Urla. Thereon, jazz is to be accounted as an example of the mischief that has been in the making for some time now. Later secondly, the idea of jazz as an outlander that is being sentenced into Urla is to be taken as a representative of the artificial cultural mix and match pushed into the local area.

In other words, jazz is to be utilized as a tool for the signification of the interpretations regarding the occurrences within the area that is being drifted away by the waves of gastro-tourism. Akin to the Artichoke Festival and Gastronomy Festival, the jazz event which will host the further interpretations in this section was popping onto the flow of the researcher since it was advertised by the contextual social media accounts that followed alongside the accounts of the observed brands. Therefore, the idea of jazz in Urla and the actual jazz event should be noted as somehow practically linked to the assemblage of Urla which was brought together for this research.

The history of jazz in Turkey marvellously depicted by Uyar (2016) through going after the oral history of its case of emergence. Drawing from this reference, it is understood that within the context of Turkey, jazz has been practiced as a high form of music, and is still being consumed within the cultural spheres of the middle to upper-class segments. Having a hold onto this very information, another fact is that, across the world, jazz festivals are being heterogeneously organized by private agencies and/or the local governmental bodies, in different scales and formats (Formica and Uysal, 1996; Bonneau and Parantika, 2016). These kinds of organizations are advocated to be catalysts of regional development since they have positive impacts on increasing tourism revenues and creating job opportunities (Vladimirovna and Aleksandrovich, 2021).

Following the global trends, in 2019 the Urla Jazz Festival (*Jaz Festivali*) was marketed as the most comprehensive and entertaining jazz event in the country, setting a rivalry to other festivals within the borders since the very beginning. The 1st of this festival was organized by the efforts of the local Chamber of Crafters and Artisans and the Municipality of Urla (Kayseri, 2019). Then, for the 2nd year of the event, even under the disruptions of the pandemic, the organization grew bigger with the corporate sponsors and the celebrity names. The next year, it was a huge success enabled by larger productions, with the official endorsement of the *KTB* and İzmir Metropolitan Municipality.

For the current year of 2022, although the date of the event is yet to be announced by the time of this analysis, the organization declared on the media channels that it is upgrading its theme as the Urla Jazz and Gastronomy Festival (*Jazz ve*

Gastronomi Festivali), as if for applauding the focus of this very study. It is interesting to track the solidification phases in the organization of this event within a concrete period of time. That is because, the gradually intensifying efforts of organizing the jazz festival within Urla emphasizes multiple things, however primarily, shows consensus on the jazz music being an attraction element for the areas subjected to the touristification strategies (Saleh and Ryan, 1993; Walker, 2019). This is in line with the discussions on the areas experiencing gentrification through the push of the local municipal interventions as these bodies often use arts and entertainment tools for it (Rich and Tsitsos, 2016; McCarthy and Wang, 2016; Goldberg-Miller, Heimlich, and Kemper, 2020).

Besides the global streams in tourism trendsetting, the satisfactory supply-demand balance of entertainment events in the area directs the existence of the middle and upper-class consumption patterns dominating the usage of the area. So far, considering the coming together of the Urla Jazz and Gastronomy Festival profiles both the production and consumption sides of classic gentrification theories, since the implications are parallel to a cross-breed version of the two. Plus, the spice of the globalization-side (Smith, 2002) can too, be detected in the case of Urla; since within this section, it was foreshadowed that the global forces are the components driving the trends in touristic development of the local regions into unlikely paths. Albeit the section rolled into the mentions of doings by the hands of the agents seemingly exterior to the observed brands, the nested brands also have contributions to the mixed and matched culture of changing Urla. Thus, all seem to be formulated into a functioning peculiarity (Figure 16).

Likewise the patching of the element of jazz onto the local fabric of the area, in a manner not diffusing due to organically enfolding cultural exchange, but as a part of the strategic touristification of the area; as have mapped within the detailed nested assemblages, brands were incorporating assortments of outsider elements into the local grounds of Urla, in form of diverse material as well as expressive properties. Sticking with the headline, a brief denotative example can be given. What is the relevance of a jazz band in leveraging the doings that have been done traditionally without it, and how

it is improving the sayings regarding the sensuality of the area which was lacking before, are the critical thoughts that can arise while reflecting on the ways that olive harvests and local cuisine workshops are being planned.



Figure 16. Functioning peculiarity.

However, doubts are quickly annihilated by the promise of the artificial cultural coalescence appearing within Urla, since all should be well, thanks to the popularity of these fully booked events. Overall, it should be recognized that the agents like the municipality and the local bodies of Urla which are deemed external to the core amplitude of this study are nevertheless seen implementing practices that reinvigorate Urla, side by side with the gastronomical brands which looked through a converging lens. Through a multi-stage overture, these undertones set out to grant a sustainable market value devoted to the full performance of gastro-Urla. Meanwhile, the tunes these agents play are sure to be heard as the emergence of gentrification in the area, and all that jazz (Gotham, 2005).

5.1.5. A Bite of Glocalization

According to Baudrillard (2015), the forces of the global system declare the uselessness of the things that globalization itself did not produce or of the things it cannot use for its own benefit. Hence, connecting to the worldwide network is inevitable for any locality. Infrastructural projects are enabling an influx of metropolitan outsiders into small areas, agricultural background serving luxury tourism, public spaces

becoming branded places, foreign culinary approaches infusing into traditional dishes, unlikely cultural patches seaming onto the local fabric; all are the symptoms the data shows to notify about the chilly spreading from the global climate.

Within earlier sections, it already made obvious that; multiplex of agents trying to craft a new position for an area, region, city, country, etc. which has been deemed null before, through polishing the authentic values of the area of consideration, within the international platform of tourism, for satisfying their aspirations on attaining the revenues that gastro-tourism promises by selling the usage of the space to their affluent segments of consumers, is, in line with globalization theory of gentrification. However, it should be noted that the local elements are the components which are assuring the differentiation against the infinite options of the market, while it is agreed that the global enforcements are shifting the mode of the positioning of the area. Therefore, the goal for this section is to put the light on an undeniably relevant trace of glocalization (Robertson, 1995), as it should be signified among the interpretations of the transformation in the case of Urla.

Owing to the focus of this research; the discussions of Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007) that have been generated through a preceding case which evolved around the denotations and connotations of globalization, gastronomy, and a changing local area, are taken as valuable insights. Since, these can brighten the path that is leading to an understanding of the process observed in Urla, as it is linking to a similar track of globalization. The two concepts used for describing the consumer segments which have been found within the referred study are to be utilized for accounting for the branding implications found within the scope of this research. That is because of the fact that the comparison between the traditional restaurants and the new gastronomical brands in their consumer segments and strategic positionings is paralleling those concepts.

Drawing from that initiative, indeed it can be noted that the traditional restaurants of Urla are still proudly serving the local food heritage to the “ordinary eaters”. Since, within the nests of such brands it is implied that the whole idea of regional food, as in the case of geographically marked produce and local dishes, is deliberately linked with preservation and nostalgia (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007).

On the other hand, the new gastronomical brands prepare menus for the “gastronomists” who previously identified as the cultural creatives, gastro-enthusiasts, and gastro-tourism agents in this study; as they were together articulating that they see the gastronomy surrounded by “locality” as a “vehicle for development” (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2007) within their circles. Development, in culinary terms, means triggering a fusion between quality ingredients sourced from the local and the refined techniques appropriated from the globe; then on top, putting energizing touches to what so far has been sitting idly authentic (Harris and Phillips, 2021). This is the recipe that gotten a hang of through the branding practices of the Urla's creatives, as it is being kept not so hidden in the making of their menus respecting the local in signature dishes. Furthermore, the approach of glocalization is also reflected on the ideals of the gastro-Urla in redressing it as a pot for fusion (Figure 17) in reference to the currently happening merger of the imagined past and the projected future of the area.



Figure 17. Pot for fusion.

The blue-tail shrimp caught from the shores of Urla and the in-season gummy artichoke accompanying the local dishes that passed generations is not enough anymore, they need to be presented into nigiris and risottos, plated in line with the fine-dining trends; in name of serving the taste-seekers the glocalization of the area in just one perfect bite. For extending the scope of the impact regarding what is going on within and into the area; along with the creativity delivered in the hands of the observed brands, the promotion efforts are also being supplied by the larger bodies like the exporters' chamber of the Aegean region, universities, and media agents, even higher stakes namely KTB for filling the table.

As so, sliding within a spiral intersecting the tides of globalization, Urla cannot just remain as it's merely local self, since it is always a process, it should constantly strive to be something more of itself, like today it is aimed to realize as gastro-Urla. Consequently, it can be said that Urla enfolds as a case in which gentrification occurs as a reaction to the global processes outside the area (Smith, 2002; Gvion, 2016; McDermott, 2019). Withal, the emergence of gentrification is also interlocking the results of the active engagement coming from the governmental, regional, and local authorities as they are as well involving in the branding of the area (Cleave et al., 2017; Nathan, Vandore, and Voss, 2018).

5.1.6. Foraging

As Nyman (2019) underlined, thinking about food, does not merely refer to working on a thing, an object, or material resource; rather it is a practice of understanding the relationships between humans and the more-than-humans. Likewise, foraging becomes not just a habit of collecting uncultivated edibles but is a site of realizing an engagement between the foraged and the forager. What is observed within the case of Urla is the gentrification of that particular site of engagement, which, was previously territorialized outside the market system.

Henceforth, firstly in this section, briefly recalling the foraging activity among the components that were mapped in a nested assemblage, the way in which the practice

of foraging is being gentrified is to be interpreted. Stemming from the implications derived from this arterial, the following interest is to be on tracing how the branding practices of the gastronomical brands and the other agents gentrifying the whole area; through, not only pushing the new and improved components into the area as in line with their visions but also exploiting the local aspects of the area that are being momentarily demanded within the market. This is to be achieved by means of signifying the path that these agents take towards foraging the marketable properties within the assemblage of Urla, to put onto the money-making plates they hold.

Similar to the Artichoke Festival and the Jazz and Gastronomy Festival, the Herb Festival (*Ot Festivali*) is also an event organized within the physical borders of Urla. Held with the collaboration of the local and the metropolitan municipality, and additionally, with the contributions of a volunteering group of local cuisine activists (Tilki and Yalçın, 2021); the open invitations of the public event are disseminated to all that the digital borders can cover. This particular festival has some of the elements of urban foraging tours (Shackleton et al., 2017), like encompassing activities of collecting the plants.

However, distinctively; foraging during the Herb Festival in Urla is practiced on the fields of comparative wilderness within the suburbia, and practiced together with the local villagers. Moreover, the activity of shopping for the foraged herbs that local villagers sell on the counters of the bazaar that is being extended in size during the days of the event is what is being dominantly encouraged, not the foraging practice itself. Therefore, the production of foraging practice, the humble site of interaction between people and the plants which transmitted to the momentary society through remaining fragments of the earlier experiences of the human race, is being diluted into a consumptionscape; by the agency of the municipalities and local bodies that are subtracting it into a theme of an event that emerges as yet another site of the market.

Anyhow; besides that, when one of the observed brands innovates the practice of foraging into a big-ticketed experiential gastronomy event, the modification made upon the organic engagement site of foraging seems similar in its manner to the shift that the festival organized by the municipality make. A practice that emerges feral as an out-of-

the-market site, disciplined into a subjugated site enhancing the market; this situation, which is an example of gentrification in itself, can also be a site drawing attention to the visible hands of market (Figure 12) doing the taming.

Distilling the “invisible hand of market” hypothesis of Smith (1909) into an essence yet reductive, a free-market creation can be stated to lie on certain prerequisites that need to be fulfilled by a number of agents that are realizing its very being. However, once the market is to emerge, the invisible hand comes to play, influencing the actions of the profit-seeking agents within the assemblage of a market. This theory has been discussed widely ever since, and recently being revisited into the up to date measures, such as for detecting the drivers of prosperity in contemporary markets (Gesheva and Aleksandar, 2016).



Figure 18. Hands of market.

Within this study, although considering the quasi-causality it cannot be argued that all hands are blatantly visible when glanced upon from one perspective, the hand is not at all invisible; because, the hand of the market is not separate from the hands of its

agents, since the market is acknowledged as a being made of the links between its components. In other words, in understanding the process regarding the connection of Urla's local aspects to the market system, not one but numerous hands leading and sometimes dragging the market, are rather visible in their affect, some even can be identified. Amongst those identifiable hands, within the scope of this research, relevant players are the new gastronomical brands, cultural creatives, consumers, social media, municipalities, larger governmental bodies, local activists, highroads, tourism trends; albeit unintended, nonetheless the area's geography, climate, villagers, flora, fauna, history, traditions, and culture. All these can be evaluated as independent components, howbeit should be noted as interdependent in their work during the emergence of gastro-Urla as an expanding market; in the matter of their own direct and indirect, willing and unwilling, self-proliferating and self-annihilating contributions.

Circling back to periphery yet vital consideration of this section, on the whole, the means that the branding practices of the observed brands use to gentrify the local area of Urla can be broadly demonstrated in two. Concentrating the implications so far; the production, consumption, and globalization sides of the gentrification theories are all met along the way of interpreting the different dimensions of the findings upon the changing face of Urla as suitable approaches.

Primarily here in this section, in addition to commercializing the land, commodifying the aspects of local culture, parallel to a practice of foraging which serves the function of searching the soil for edibles; here by picking up the elements that can attract value within the gastro-tourism market, or at least can be potentially translated into value, are picked and brought to the nests of the brands to be exchanged into revenues. Meaning, the commodification of the material and expressive aspects of the locality (Avdikos, 2015; Langegger, 2016) is being provoked by the brands and other agents that are active within the marketization as well as the marketing of Urla. Therefore incidentally, resulting in the gentrification of the area.

Lastly, it can be highlighted that the traces prevalent within the data specifically report the instances of selling diverse re-imagined histories of the local area or promoting stories connected to its past, for the hearing of the outsider audience. This

signifies another means, which has been widely utilized by the heterogeneous agents as a driver towards gentrification (Kohn, 2010; Al Rabady, 2013; Masuda and Bookman, 2016; Moreno, 2020), as observed within the case of Urla.

5.2. Discussions

Through the data collection in the form of complementary qualitative methods, an overall understanding of the context of research inquiry was enabled. First phase of analysis helped the mapping of the assemblage of Urla and thus, prompted an understanding on the process of change. Developing an assemblage analysis of Urla revealed the forms of material content and the forms of expressions that actively engaging in the being of Urla. Picking from there, on the second phase the relationships among the re-territorializing brand communication components of each brands were studied as collective implications and demands that are interacting with each other.

Continually, tracings of the links and extended relations helped the construction of the interpretations on the context of context (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) in which micro-macro reflections of the research was further discussed. The synthesis is on where the purpose of the research is to be satisfied in a way, that, drawing from Moisander and Valtonen (2006, p. 37);

“will give a different purpose of acquiring another scope of which may provide transformative critique on the existing practices”

Within this study evaluating a phenomenon of change in Urla, indeed, has now depicted an example of how today's brands are acquiring cultural meanings (Fournier and Alvarez, 2019). Thereon needs to identify who are the new agents, in what way they are changing the area, and whom the change is trying to invite into the area were satisfied.

Delivered here, in a largely reductive manner, findings marked that; the focused new agents in the area namely the gastronomical brands, as in collaboration with other

agents which not all but some encountered within the data, are collectively putting the area towards a global gastro-tourism track, towards the bedazzled making of the gastro-Urla, and for the accomplishment of this motivation these agents are attentively targeting to attract the economically and culturally privileged consumers into Urla.

Whence, the road leading to Urla, the journey towards finesse, the movement upon suburban, the upgrade onto mundane, the fusion into bites, and the twisted manipulations of the hands of the market, are all situated in the grounded interpretations within the above sections. As a secondary layer, yet primary in contributions of this study, the significations of the collectively triggering affect that brands generate in relation to the assemblage of Urla were discussed by benefitting the canonical production, consumption, and globalization theories of gentrification. Notably, none of the agents, focused or encountered, nor the benefitted theories could separately make adequate sense of the whole of the phenomenon.

So, tracing the relation of change within Urla to the evolving discussions of gentrification, the happenings are signified as brands are affecting Urla towards gentrification. Hence, in what ways are these brands' branding efforts intertwined with the ongoing transformation process in the area has been demonstrated as answering the “who is affected by whom or what” (Reckwitz, 2017) questioning on the nature of the affect in above sections as summarized. The next sections will bring about the special arguments that the overall synthesized findings enlightened. Firstly on brand communications acting a re-territorializing component within the assemblage of Urla, connecting the nested brand assemblages and the local area. Secondly, on conceptualizing the branding practice being a gentrifying capacity, theorizing the merits of the findings.

5.2.1. Brand Communications as Re-Territorializing Component

Has been widely compensated, within the beginning chapters of this study, the conceptualization of the brand communications as a part of the branding practices, being a component that is in direct interaction both with the internal properties and

externalities of a brand assemblage; as brands have been are regarded throughout the discussions in the manner of assemblages of marketers, beyond-humans, desires, activities, and connections. Here in this section, although analysis and synthesis have been indirectly demonstrated, the three positions in which collectively evaluated brand communications act as components that re-territorialize the assemblage in which the brands of consideration are nested will be briefly underlined; within the frames of prosuming a refined locality, offering an elitist experience, and paradoxes of gastro-Urla.

Toffler (1980) defined prosumption, in comparison to the sectors in which production is done for exchange in a system separating the producer and the product and availing them to meet on the grounds of the market, as the production that is done for the sake of consumption; in which producer and the product are not separated, and creating an inner market cycle. In a sense, branding can be thought of as a prosumption practice that creates meanings and links to the existent meanings for the brands, and these in return used by the brands,. Therefore, through de-territorializing Urla's earlier understandings, and creating collectively a picturesque image towards the aestheticization (Featherstone, 2007) of local Urla, parallel to not only the assumed expectations of the target consumers but the visions of the cultural creatives themselves, activating the communication efforts of the gastronomical brands; are, indeed prosuming a refined locality, within this case, for re-territorialization of the local area as emerging gastro-Urla.

The reproductive practice of urban agriculture has been used as a closed card for endorsing eco-gentrification (McClintock, 2017), the beliefs of ethical consumption have been advocated to be attained through a schizophrenic contract of paying the expensive debt for neo-liberal slow food (Thompson and Kumar, 2018), the consumables although being mundanely substantial for human life have been translated into substances for the layers of differentiation within the social life humans (Curran and Chesnut, 2021); all can be understood as different situations of the gastronomy-related spatial and cultural changes. Common notion tooled for interpreting the phenomena under research within these referred studies, is, the taste elitism in a Bourdieuan sense.

Meticulously explained in the underlying implications of the data of this study; local agricultural revitalization and global gastro-tourism strategies in debating the transformation of Urla were observed as being narrated as going hand in hand, as if it is a natural balance issue, albeit, in reality being propagated synthetically and quite questionably. Moreover, various significations of gentrification found within the area supplied rightful suspicion on remaking of Urla being catering to the societal concerns, at all. Recalling the conspicuous social consumers and the enthusiastic gastro-consumers that are the target consumer segments of the observed brands possibly together be portrayed as the relevant agents which would be conceptualized as the contemporary members of the leisure class (Veblen, 1899).

Hence, as derived from the implications of the positioning of the gastronomical brands, by de-territorializing its suburban inertia through energizing the facet of Urla with the magic of gastronomy, through insisting that what is being done is a high form of edible ritual that is expected to be appreciated with praises, moreover necessarily supported with investments attained from the ones who can understand the value; not at all secretly, Urla is being re-territorialized into overall a luxury product, for offering an elitist experience, while the change is shifting from the surface landscape to its deep cultural soils.

The given two of the three positions that brand communications are occupying while it is re-territorializing the assemblage of Urla have so far taken a direction that is apparent to observation. However, the last position is the most ambiguous to locate, contending the influences of brand communications aiming at manifesting a charming story of a growing Urla as well as the ups and downs of the flux within the gentrifying area, hence this position is framed vaguely as the paradoxes of gastro-Urla.

Firstly, there is the matter of modifying culinary codes. Farrer (2010) unmasked the bias of the global gastronomy scene granting Western cuisine the haute couture influence of the artisan food titles, through a genius phrase of culinary occidentalism; arguing the prevalence of the bias within the emerging gastronomy hubs of a non-Western context of the day. This could be interpreted as the global gentrification of food, as the localities in gastronomy are being doomed to either gather dust in their

corners or adapt to the strategic trends within the high-end gastronomical arena. That is why rooting back to the gastronomical brands focused in this study, it was clear that what the traditional food elements within the context held do not shine enough for those brands' skies, but such elements had to be glowed up into fusion dishes.

Brands under observation did pay respect to the local producers, and really are using local ingredients at least to a handsome portion within the aggregate kitchen inventory; but about the menus, they romanticize how they are interpreting the Urla's local food heritage within the scope of their contemporary cuisines, as they do so by overshadowing the local dishes by the valour of the Western and Asian culinary approaches. Therefore, the ingredients used in the making of gastro-Urla are ripening speedily due to the modification of their inherited genes.

Secondly, exploiting suburban lands is a matter of a paradoxical nature too, as can be simply put by utilizing the rent-gap concept in a looser extent (Smith, 1979). Once the cultural creatives locate their gastronomical brands in a local area like Urla, they promote a hype upon the lands beforehand invisible to the city-born consumer segments. When reflecting on the occurrences from a different angle; quickly metamorphosing into agents of gentrification, these creatives put the spotlight upon Urla, as even if they have begun the journey with naive intentions, the process results in the rising costs of lands and fast commercialization within the region. All of which gives an opportunistic idea to capitalistic reasoning; of converting the farmlands that have been the working spaces of the villagers, into residences, to be sold to the middle-upper class newcomers, becoming their private places for their own ways of living (Parekh, 2015).

Thirdly, there is the matter of deconstructing local culture. This is also a paradoxical position that brand communications take as a re-territorializing component, due to the fact that; the aspects of the local culture are being used as the contextual amenities which differentiate the gastronomical brands of Urla yet there remains the need for differentiating their nests within the assemblage of Urla. It is not only a game of rushing for the unoccupied corners but also a creativity game to create corners that would identify with the particular brands for their own sustained succession.

Although, because of the promising benefits of regional promotion upon the individual economical growth, the direction of change that is being brought into Urla through the multiplying gastronomical brands and the touristic festivals organized by governmental bodies may be received eagerly, by some of the local dwellers and vendors (İrigüler, 2021); in a broader perspective, the happenings may also be evaluated adversely. Indeed the brands observed for this study put branding efforts that were complying with the success criteria of Hankinson (2004). They invest in the construction of the stylized buildings for their restaurants as a major part of the tangible brand infrastructure, tell the stories of how they are networking with the local grounds through bazaars and producers, and they are orienting on serving the best quality. However, since they are directly or indirectly shaping the landscape, writing the script for Urla's story, defining the understanding of locality, and propagating the service production within the area; inevitably, the pre-existing materiality and expressivity of the local culture loses its construct.

Accordingly can be concluded that, for Urla, the process of becoming something else than its early territorializations in this particular reconstruction of the area, is, being purposefully implemented by the observed brand agents, through their brand communications efforts; in name of realizing their re-positioning of the area as gastro-Urla.

5.2.2. Branding as a Gentrifying Capacity

The width and length of an affect are commensurate with the capacities of the considered assemblage; in other words, recalling that affect corresponds to putting influence on others and/or premising influence of others, which is powered by the abilities of the influencer and the influenced. Power, therefore, is defined as the ability to affecting others in obtaining the desired results. The affect, resulting from the relationship between the observed brands and the local area in this study, emerges out of the interaction between brands' components independently communicating the individual desires of each of these nested brand assemblages; which are, melted into the

interdependent capacity of the branding practice being collectively of a gentrifying one within this case.

Be that as it may, it is important to highlight that, brands should not be inherently labelled as gentrifiers. Grounding on the data, within the case in which individual brands' branding efforts are leveraging the re-territorialization of an area towards a particular understanding of the area that is relevant to the positive and negative aspects of a process that has been discussed as gentrification, there, the practice of branding can be argued to emerge as a gentrifier capacity in line with the properties of the local, contextual, and particular relationships between these brands and the interacted area.

Combining the literature on branding and theories of gentrification, this study aimed to seek evidence on how the marketing efforts of individual gastronomical brands in Urla became an influence on the change in the area, and how branding practices in line with this motivation need to be discussed as capacities that contribute to gentrification (Lucarelli and Hallin, 2015). Alkon and Cadji (2018) suggested, with a focus on the case of Oakland, that the food businesses and their branding efforts can work towards gentrification. Similarly, Belk et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of food creation and consumption to the gentrification of an area, while Gregory (2019) pointed to the combined workings of luxury branding and gentrification.

The findings of this study suggest that, considering the ways in which brand communications of the observed brands interact with the assemblage of Urla; branding emerges as a capacity created out of the relationship between the components of the brands and of Urla. Moreover, since this capacity is found to be closely connected to the implications of gentrification, the investigated brands therefore can be said to immerse a degree of gentrifying agency into their ephemeral beings.

Firat and Dholakia (2006) discussed the changes in the practices of marketing in postmodernism, and how those are to emerge new capacities that influence society. Drawing from the analysis of the data and synthesis of the findings, results can be said to be situating a clear understanding of branding as a gentrifying capacity. Nonetheless, enough attention has been paid to being careful of the pitfall dug by the standpoint of observing, for the most part, the branding practices of the gentrifier brands; since as in

this situation, the changes in Urla could have been superficially pictured as only a bit less problematic than an otherwise perfect opportunity for everyone in the area to cultivate cultural growth and economical interest. However, there are always links that do not meet the eye, therefore surely are agents that are much internal to the assemblage of Urla that may not have been internalized within the nests of these brands.



“The whole problem of speaking about the end is that you have to speak of what lies beyond the end and also, at the same time, of the impossibility of ending. In a non-linear (...) space of history the end cannot be located. The end is, in fact, only conceivable in a logical order of causality and continuity.” Baudrillard (1994).



CHAPTER 6: SELF-ORGANIZING

Why does this contemporary phenomenon of gentrification unfold in the way it does?

6.1. Brands, McCracken, and Mushrooms

DeLanda, in explaining the postmodern approaches which are targeting at comprehending the world as it is, not limited by the rigidities that modernist human minds created so far, implied that academic walls between fields of research and schools of thought are to be demolished (Dolphin and Van Der Tuin, 2012). Previously, Wallerstein (1996) advocated for breaking the division between sciences residing between the natural and social connotations. These initiatives provoke a proposition of crossing the boundaries of thinking, since, it can enable the freedom of multidisciplinary communication (Ekici, Genc, and Celik, 2020) among the fields for opening up novel interpretations of complexity regarding the new generation worldviews in marketing (Scott, Martin, and Schouten, 2014).

Within this chapter, before the last wrapping up of the whole study, critical thinking on the discussions and the contributions is to be emphasized. Since, for virtuous research, engaging with the findings through a critical angle is useful for perpetuation.

“Critical thinking can be understood as an active and systematic cognitive strategy to examine, evaluate and understand events and to solve problems.” (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006)

Thereon, an abductive analysis approach (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) upon the grounded findings will be used in name of advancing the theoretical discussions that are to be postulated. The chapter here is primarily for marking a fruitful start for upcoming debates, while, to do so, in the beginning, the part will revolve around the use of metaphor.

When approaching a phenomenon, entry-level questions are; what are the interplaying agents, and what are they particularly doing? The descriptive capacity in marketing-oriented literature is itself helpful to supply answers to these questions. More to it, there can be the questioning of; in what ways do these agents interact within and with the context, how do they change it? The analysis then has to elevate its focus from the description of “what” to the demonstration of “how” (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011), as is usually the case in macromarketing by connecting insights to the capacities within the wider sociological extents (Sandikci and Kravets, 2019).

However, the forthcoming quest is now dwelling on the deeper questions; why do these agents act in that certain way, and why is this phenomenon unfolds in the way it does? This point in which shift lands on the “why” is to be the initial phase of demanded interesting discussions (Firat and Dholakia, 2017), which can be originally situated by benefitting from the promising interpretations beyond the walls.

Considering the research conducted within this study as an example, exploring the relationality between the new brands and the processual repositioning of a local area, was evolved into a process that multi-dimensional links established above the paradigms that the two topics normatively have their associations, namely being marketing and sociology. Within the flow of the empirical research, an answer to an above-framed entry question has blossomed through the integrated analysis that utilized one of the fundamental theories in marketing served by McCracken (1986); the conceptualization of meaning transfer between the market agents and targets through foraging upon the culturally constituted world.

Tackling the second quest required leaning onto the converging pieces of literature on spatial and perceptual transformations while looking at the phenomenon with a rather inter-disciplinary gaze. Proliferating debates around the new materialisms (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Delanda, 1997; DeLanda, 2006; DeLanda, 2016; Hui et al., 2017) were the main stimulating inspirations for this advance (Lucarelli and Giovanardi, 2019). Hence, the codes within the data that implied gentrification were found and connected to the existing literature.

Drawing from the background of the new materialist theoretical inspirations and fresh empirical insights, an intriguing idea came by; as to how and why of the relationship between the marketing and its affects on an interacted context can be discussed through a metaphor of mushrooms. Driving further from there, the last level of questioning emerged as an attempt to understand the nature of the happenings by discussing it parallel to the self-organization of a mushroom troop, highlighting an unexpected awakening in the relative end of the thinking (Tsing, 2015).

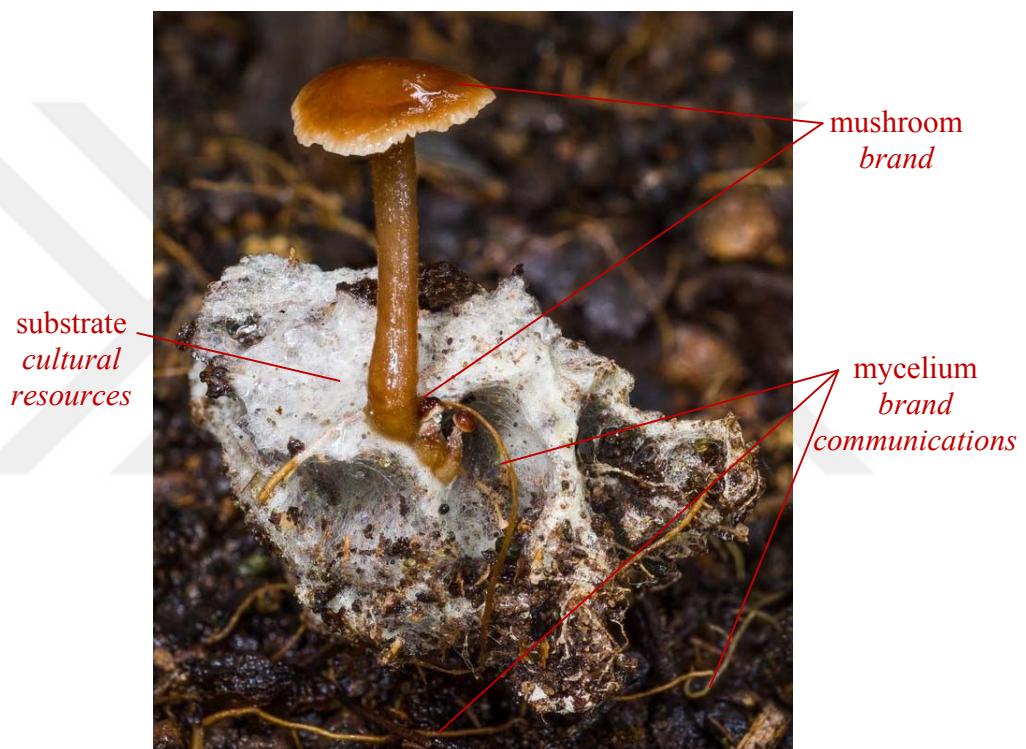


Figure 19. Re-imagining McCracken's (1986) concept of meaning transfer (Source: Photograph by Newman, 2012).

For the phenomenon under research, how things are happening can be interpreted by benefitting the view in which brands are mushrooms rooting into the substrate of a local area that is bountiful of cultural elements (Figure 19), through growing mycelium in form of branding practices. As so, how the phenomenon occurs can be interestingly

demonstrated parallel to the flow of a rhizomatic process. Furthermore, insights on why the particular changes are influenced by the observed brands in an interacted context can be discussed in the light of not merely the desire of being, but to connect; directly or indirectly contributing to the coming together of a system. While showing, what self-organization is all about. Stemming from the foundation construed here inspired by the act issued by an interpretive coalition of marketing-sociology-biology backgrounds, a tentative approach will be discussed next. The insights derived from this research will be of use to postulate an example for the theoretical discussions.

6.2. Self-Organization Theory of Gentrification

Theory can be a statement, or, an overall approach, that is contracting relevant propositions, which is suggested to demonstrate the underlying workings of a phenomenon by showing interrelationships of how and why it occurs (Corley and Gioia, 2011). In Giesler and Thompson (2016), the constructive strategies of hypothetical variance and process theories have been compared. On one hand, the variance theory strategized an explanation of change via identifying the relevant attributes of agents being various Xs, upon a resulting Y, within a productive function. On the other hand, the process theory was the approach that set out to explain change via the functioning of the agents in relevance to time, attributing a shift from reality X to Y.

Wherewithal, the core effort of research is grasping X and Y, is, in the variance theory, put on active agents and results; while, in the process theory, put on the shift between the interpreted realities. The complexity theories, as in the case of the mushrooming metaphor, are in this study worked towards an interest linking to both such variance and process focuses in diverging degrees. Such that, explorative mapping can be seen as the signification of the relevant A (brands) in the making of the resultant B (changing Urla), yet the driving goal is a critical tracing of the process through which the C (local Urla) as a territorialized version of the considered assemblage transforms into the D (gastro-Urla) being the re-territorialized one. Hence, it can be understood that,

a theoretical advance on the observed phenomena will tackle an explanatory strategy of processual engagements of diverging variables (DeLanda, 2006).

Keeping a sceptical distance about the benefits of the theory that is abstract alone, Ley, is said to be a defender of grounded theory, due to the contributions to the critical development of the theoretical approaches emphasized by empirically supported discussions upon the experienced geography (Rodaway, 2011). Belk and Sobh (2018) recommend a three-stage approach for arguing toward theory building; the first is taking off with an original phenomena-driven inquiry, the second is combining the grounded theory and abductive reasoning, and the third is generating and comparatively analyzing alternative theoretical explanations. It is then said to be imperative to demonstrate the comparativeness of theory with the criteria of fitting seamlessly with the data and thinking about the potential usefulness in other relevant contexts.

Albeit this chapter is not keen on fulfilling a wholesome proposition of a grand theory, the discussion will be located sensitive to the first two stages for building at least a feasible approach in contribution to literature. Hence, as an opine for accomplishing novel insights to reframe empirical findings (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), abductive reasoning will be utilized for borrowing and re-contextualizing (Janiszewski, Labroo, and Rucker, 2016) the self-organization concept; however not in contrast of the existing theories, but, in a renewed comprehension of them.

While things are existing in a processual manner as compounding, adding, and subtracting things into their perceived selves; each time doing so, happenings in the last cycle influence what happens in the next cycle, and building the self-organized reality (Deacon, 2011). As it is explicitly and implicitly addressed throughout this study, the enthusiasm for this work is clinging onto the Deleuzian philosophy of complexity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and DeLanda's (1997) interpretations of self-organization. The underlying idea behind the biological self-organization concept, which is parallel to the self-organization in social complexity, is closely linked to the notion of the emergence of assemblages.

This indicates the intricate behaviours seen not only in ecosystems but in socio-spatial systems cannot be understood by adding up the behaviours of the individualized

components. Since, looking at the parts that make a whole cannot aggregate the meaning of the whole, yet, grasping the relationships that are collectively emerging it can be a path to do so. The shift which is of consideration for process theorization (Giesler and Thomson, 2016), for this study, is what has been aimed to be understood in terms of branding and gentrification; targeted towards by focusing on not only defining the relevant agents but more vitally, on demonstrating the affect that is born out of relationships within and through the assemblage of the observed reality.

Therefore, benefitting an above-framed process theory of self-organization inspired early on in this chapter by the lifecycle of mushrooms, an overview of the emergence of the gastro-Urla within and beyond the researched data can be delivered as a potential example. Additionally, the exemplification can situate a response to Baudrillard's (2015) call for renewed discussions.

“Disregarding the initial conditions (causes) or the ending conditions (result), the events are hypersensitive to succession, to occur one after another. (...). I am talking about the chain organization of events in clusters in an endless and non-linear way. Until now, events seem to have always followed a certain historical trajectory. Thus, we were able to express them in historical terms. However, since we cannot interpret the clustering of contemporary events in this manner, we have to change our reading method and make it suitable for "clustering" in order to comprehend the movement.”
(Baudrillard, 2015)

The story of mushrooms, used interchangeably with the specie's biological term which is fungi, is here referred to elementally from the Fantastic Fungi (2019) documentary. The reproduction cycle of mushrooms is depicted within the plot of the documentary, by firstly defining the spores as extremely tiny, little lightweight gene-carrying systems, then explaining that they land on something they can eat, they break down the food that they're on and then absorb the nutrients until they are to find another place where there's food (Fantastic Fungi, 2019).

One of the numerous agents within the assemblage of a forest, the individualized mushroom is itself carrying accumulated biological codes seeking emplacement to manifest the mushroom's being, towards primarily yet not an end desire to be, by rooting mycelium into the ground to soak into the necessary minerals for it. Then there come others that singled out mushroom indirectly called for, as itself emerged with spores, due to the successful realization of its being; and so, a troop, not a just group of individual mushrooms, self-organizes upon the inherited resourceful grounds.

From there, both the individual desires to be, as each mushroom needs to protect itself by being the larger one with the mycelium that can soak up the minerals from the far ends of others' roots for itself; as well as the collective desires that link the mycelium of biggest to smallest mushroom below the wider soil of the forest are enacted. That is, amalgamating as a networked system, to a degree, sharing the minerals that all individual mushrooms' mycelium carries.

Hence, what has been created is a self-organizing system; in its internal associations, components have dynamic reciprocities that are not necessarily complementing each other, however, in its external relationships they are encoring bonds for collective benefits. Now being retrieved the merits of the self-organization concept from the natural lifecycle of mushrooms in the context of biology, re-contextualization can be composed.

Reckwitz (2017) said that there are two things that "practices can be said to require the presence of affects: motivation for the practice and the focusing of attention" (p. 119). Akin to, the spores connecting to the substrate, and followingly striking bonds to the underground of the forest, interlocking links not only with other mushrooms but with trees and more; the motivations behind and the attention on the practices emerging the contemporary gentrification phenomena can too be inferred as grown in rhizomatic ways (Figure 20).

The trends carried by the winds of globalization diffuse the spores of the neo-liberal desires onto substrates bountiful in opportunity. The bundling spores of micro desires and the trends of macro waves are arranging themselves co-creatively, noting their influences exposed in not a sequential line but in simultaneous and reciprocal

cycles. Besides from the external dynamics as globalization, there are the internally diffusing spores sprouted by the mature members of the troop, energizing a localized cycle.



Figure 20. Re-contextualizing self-organization in terms of gentrification (Source: Photograph by Scott, 2022).

For the context of gentrification; touristification and capitalist place-making spreading into suburban and underdeveloped spaces can be considered as the macro trends, whereas, the profit orientation of commercial and governmental agents can be regarded as the micro-meso desires. These agents can initiate applicable versions of innovated production capacities within the occupied lands, like establishing creative commercial clusters within post-industrial hubs. Meanwhile, the wellbeing orientation of the newcomer dwellers and the regional-progress orientation of the local dwellers can also be accounted for as relevant desires of such flux.

On top of the production, these diverse groups of agents trigger privileging consumption capacities as well. In deliberate or unintended ways, both the strategic and

mundane practices of the pioneering gentrifier agents of commercial, governmental, newcomer or welcoming dwellers, affect the relational process of gentrification. Withal, once the profit margins of pioneers have proven economically sustainable, more of these agents pour into the gentrifying sites.

In other words, indirectly or openly partnering agents (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2020) can be interpreted as heterogeneously affecting their surroundings in line with their individualistic goals, whereas energizing a hype within the socio-spatial society collectively; maintaining the independence of their motivations yet acting in interdependence, as they are participating in the transforming capacities that emerge gentrification.

6.3. Self-organizing gastro-Urla

For the specific context of gentrification observed within the case of Urla, the upscale touristification of the locally known agricultural area grasped within the implications of the data, was connected to the globally spreading gastro-tourism trends. Meanwhile, the group of cultural creatives, which in this case, originally consisted of fine-dining chefs and gastro-brand entrepreneurs, were seen as open about their desires when declaring their neo-liberal self-interests motivating their premium brands. These interests not only were profit-oriented, as these are aspirations of contemporary creative people to prosume meaning, value, and excitement through entrepreneurial projects which culturally link to their capitals and internalized neo-liberalization as well.

It was interesting really, within the purposeful checks upon the data sources after the completion of the formal netnographic data collection, to see that the creatives of the brands that were closely observed during this study, began to be invited to the gastronomy and tourism conferences outside İzmir. For the promotions of those events, these creatives were together called “team Urla” as the ones making gastro-Urla worthy of attention, giving similar inspirational speeches in the same panels they participate. In addition, the Michelin starred chefs and the international gurus of gastronomy being the

ultimate gastro-enthusiasts, were seen as hosted by these brands, in the exclusive fine-dining events that they collaboratively organized and held at Urla.

On the other side of these apparent fine-dining clustering, various and more diverse clusters were encountered during the informal revisits to Urla done after the ethnographic data collection. The clusters of art-based shops, local food stores, fusion street food restaurants, live music and wine bars, parallel to different clusters of consumers and producers pouring into the local area, were namely noted as began to assemble. Through the consumer perceptions that are continuously manifested in their actions, the positioning of such clusters tightly comes together.

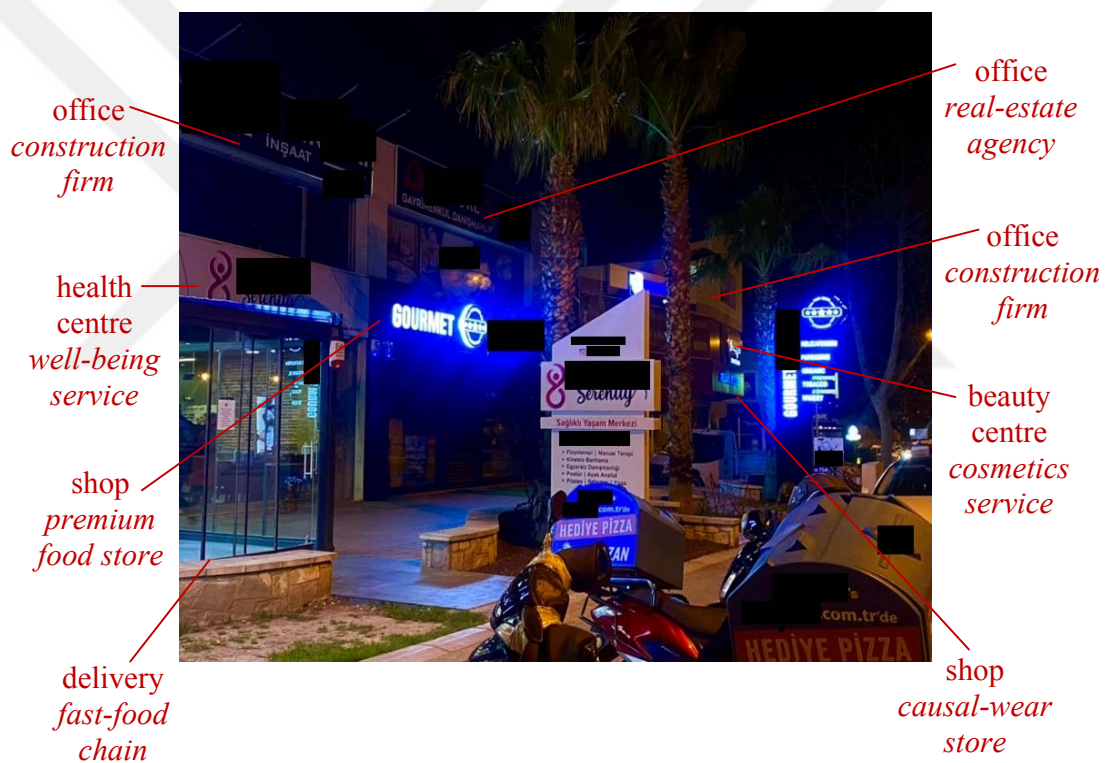


Figure 21. Commercial clustering upon the entrance to the central Urla (Source: Photograph is taken by the researcher at 18.03.2022).

In practice, these clusters can be separately observed as receiving the visits of the consumers of Urla in different combinations, for each time they interact with this

expanding consumptionscape. The Figure 21, for instance, is a capture from the very entrance of central Urla, taken upon the Main Avenue, even just by itself informs the future of transformation that is experienced within the case of Urla; gentrification through the multifaceted clusters emerging within the area brought by more of the construction, commerce, consumerism, and gastronomy.

The flux of new profiles of consumers and habitants to Urla visibly accelerated, even during a limited time such as the two years overall dedicated to this study. Within this period, as gastro-Urla organizes itself initiating internal bonds, numerous external ties also have been knotting. In line with the promises by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (KTB) given on the Gastronomy Festival in 2021, the increase in the numbers of documentaries producing content on Turkey's food heritage, fusion cuisines, brands of young chefs, aired not only country-wide channels but in the state-managed multimedia channels for foreign affairs too.

Hence, it can be pointed here again, that, the stories of both gastro-Urla, and the contemporary gentrification, indeed are ongoing. Thereof, the research on Urla is a case of spatial and perceived change of a local area, which has been taken under a lens as being a rhizomatic occurrence. Recalling Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.12), a rhizome:

“always has multiple entryways [and so] a map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back to the same”

Hence, there is no right or wrong place to start questioning the change within a local or urban area, as everything is in relation with each other in either closer or further ties, and, as everything has already started is yet to come to an end.

While this study looks at the changes in Urla focusing on brand communications, it also enables external linkages of the phenomenon. For the case of Urla, it was interpreted that ambiguous processes happening in Urla was resembling the phenomena of gentrification (Glass, 1964; Ley, 1994) but instead of taken for granted or top-down understanding of the abstract concept, a novel approach has been introduced

(Billingham, 2015). Engaging with data through multiple theories, helped such a landing on generative abduction.

Overall, this chapter situated that; the self-organization theory of gentrification provides a reading of the phenomena which shifts the emphasis on the variables (causality) to the processes (emergence), as reasons are practically to be found being embedded in the happenings. Conversation on such an approach, although within the scope of this study that is limited in data and time only a doodle of it was drawn, is of value. Mainly because, it is usually the situation that Tavory and Timmermans (2012, p. 177) stated;

“puzzling through the data not only will create a new puzzle but may actually construct a new game with new rules for thinking about the relationship between different pieces”

Various approaches to complexity have presented valuable contributions to marketing, especially in transformative, critical, and alternative manners (Silva and Sauerbronn, 2020; Brychkov, Domegan, and McHugh, 2021; Padela, Wooliscroft, and Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, 2021).

Therefore can be argued; a reading of self-organization inspired by the mushrooming lifecycle akin to the one postulated here can elaborate the understanding of not only contemporary gentrification, but, the coming together of market ecosystems, occurrences of societal shifts, and transformations of unintended spaces into places by the drive of diverse objectives as well. All proceeding in a sense, that, the collective aspirations can possibly be highlighted through locally linking with the individual targets, while offering an insightful standpoint that straightforward begins with multi-level dynamic systemic structures and behaviours (Layton, 2019). Hence, the principals of a theoretical approach that are humbly presented here, are, for now contracting a comprehensive proposal for the future discussions that can develop the self-organization theory of gentrification based on extended empirical work.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1. Summary

The research initiated around the question of how does branding practices of brands with particular purpose affect Urla; and for this, a map of the phenomenon drawn inductively from the data. This analysis was conceptualized as "assemblage analysis" as in the first phase of the analysis. This phase implemented by looking throughout the data, and territorializing the information. At this point, researcher's interpretation worked towards linking the assemblage theory to the brand communication practices. As an outcome of the first phase, information demonstrating that within the course of branding brands take and give meanings from and to Urla was derived. With such information at hand, there came a moment of reflection, which conceptualized as a rupture. This was enabled by looking throughout the data, and de-territorializing the information.

At that breaking point, question of how this particular way of branding affect Urla occurred. Continuing with the emergent question; the meanings traced deductively from the data. This analysis was conceptualized as "thematic analysis" as in the second phase of the analysis. This phase implemented by again looking throughout the data, and re-territorializing the information. At this point, researcher's interpretation worked towards linking the branding and gentrification literatures in a synthesis. As an outcome of the second phase, knowledge constructing the way in which the brands under observation are gentrifying Urla was generated.

Upon this interpretation, there came another moment of reflection, again a rupture. This was enabled by looking throughout the findings, and de-territorializing the knowledge. At this breaking point, question of why these brands are gentrifying Urla erupted. Pursuing the background of the phenomenon; the motives were underscored by utilizing an abductive stance. This was the main discussion, the last part of this study. The discussion was reached by looking throughout the findings, and re-territorializing the knowledge. At that point, researcher's interpretation worked towards linking the gentrification by branding to the self-organizing organisms. Finally, as an outcome of

the integrated analysis and synthesis, the way in which gentrification of brands are self-organized is offered as a discussion.

This research used practice theory and assemblage theory in designing the fieldwork and analysis, to understand how seemingly mundane branding activities, consumer choices, municipal interventions, and global trends are relevant to the emergence of gentrification within a local area. As it has been laid out in detail within the scope of this study so far, in addition to managing everyday consumerist life through the continuous encounters with brands, as a representative of a multiplicity of market agents, the brand communications, or broadly branding, was pictured to be a key practice in understanding the dynamics of the lived changes of the postmodern society (Firat and Dholakia, 2006); even beyond the scope of influencing bottom-up processes of gentrification (Wilkinson, 2016).

Instead of positioning an abstract social class of consumers as the direct cause of gentrification, this project took branding and engagements it triggers into consideration as multifaceted cultural-prosumption that affects gentrification through creating rhizomatic linkages (Askgaard and Kjeldgaard, 2010; McCracken, 1986). Way beyond the segregation of culture to its tangible and intangible elements, the currently happening experiences of culture are underlined in this study as they are continually and responsively material and expressive.

The very premise of this research is inspired by the focused observations of Urla and these are offering integrations with a variety of other phenomena of gentrification. So, how can a self-organization theory of gentrification contribute to improving the insights on the global phenomenon of gentrification? Gentrification is seen as one of the many sins that globalization-capitalization processes create, and branding is often perceived inherently as an ally in creating those sins. Therefore it would not be hard to apply an “against-gentrification” perspective as a critique onto the case of Urla and put the blame on the touristification, by, within the case of this study let's say, fine-dining brands and governmental agents in power. It would also be as easy, honestly easier than raising even a most basic criticism, for the boosters that are “pro-gentrification”; to promote authentic branding activities and celebrate the high-end gastronomical

experiences tailored for food enthusiasts ensured by the foolproof tactics of neo-liberal regional development.

This study has taken the challenge to discuss an approach in the grey area in-between these “for” and “against” positions. This is in line with the very concept of the assemblages, leading the research towards not defining apparent ends, but opening up to the possibility of the unexpected beginnings (DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Hence, this study sheds light on how brands as active agents impact contemporary society at large, in addition to providing an original interpretative lens. In sum, it can be articulated that, this study specifically contributed to the conceptual literature in assembling brands, and a case of emergence of change through marketing was empirically investigated via questioning the practical affect of brand communications. Moreover, interpretations of branding as a gentrifying capacity was also offered as contributions to the recent literature on gentrification which encourages putting the emphasis on illuminating the quasi-causality in complex processes.

As it has been argued at the beginning that any being is a process, an incompleteness, a middle. So, issues arising within the gentrifying areas also should not be seen as caused by the unbreakable dark magic of the invisible hand of globalization, or overall gentrification should not be accepted as a soon-to-come tumble to a dead end of the local space. Components of the assemblages have the capacity to disassemble from the assemblage or can work in multiple directions and energizing agencies that have never embraced their capacities before is an up-and-coming strategy. Thus, deriving from this inspiration, it can be argued from the ongoing case of this study that the brand communications can take the role of a capacity enhancer for the collective aspirations of Urla's heterogeneous agents, and become an influential component of a movement that directs to a common ground.

7.2. The Uncharted Map of Urla

This thesis project does not aim, nor can do so, to erase every problem regarding the negative side of reality but it aims to offer something to be considered in the name of

coping with some of them. Although the theoretical understanding of gentrification can be tackled from any other perspective, on the practical level, problems that emerge with the gentrification of local areas in the standards of global consumerism are a common point of different processes of gentrifying. And here, the assemblage theory approach to the project comes extremely useful for planning a bottom-up strategy for the improvement of the societal issues that arise simultaneously with gentrification. At this point, it is possible to make future claims through DeLanda's (2016, p. 185-186) suggestive question:

“what capacities to affect and be affected would be exercised when interacting with other assemblages that it has never interacted with [?]”

For Tsing (2010), mushrooms are an unmatched mentor for a hand-in-hand action in name of resolving the issues that matter indirectly and indirectly to all members of the troop. Withal, via utilizing the reading of the self-organization of gentrification but in a manner that can light up a critical, participatory, and transformative research colliding human and non-humans of the gentrifying contexts; it is possible to make them come together to formulate a comparatively meaningful process for all-inclusive elements.

Paying attention to the heterogeneous agents relevant to the transformation of the Urla (Bonakdar and Audicra, 2019), the research reveals these various agents' capacities to become components working collectively towards a better, participative, conscious transformation process in Urla. This may not create a unified commercial interest within the area as some case studies suppose (Johansson and Comebise, 2010), but it may deliver the fair shares of the local human and non-human societies linked to Urla, besides the shares of the brands (Romao, 2017). Such acknowledgment could benefit empirically grounded studies asking alternative questions on systems theorization by reflecting on the interlocking nodes of marketing practices, societal change, environmental sustainability, and linking economic potentials (Gonzalez-Padron and Nason, 2009; Varey, 2010).

NOTES

All figures are originally designed by the researcher, hence proper citation should be given for permitting the fair use of the figures as open source. Only open source icons and maps have been used for the special designs in the Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 15, Figure 16, and Figure 17, and Figure 18.

All photographs used for the visuals in Figure 6, Figure 11, and Figure 21 are taken by the researcher. Sources of the photographs used in the making of Figure 19 and Figure 20 can be found in the references. Proper citation should be given for permitting the fair use of these original figures as open source as well.

All social media content used for the visuals are ethically sourced as a part of the data collection designed for this study, hence proper citation should be given for permitting the fair use of the data examples as open source.

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