EXPLORING THE STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT ON DESIGN DECISIONS IN CITY BRANDING: THE CASE OF IZMIR

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Thesis for the Ph.D. Program in Design Studies

Graduate School

Izmir University of Economics

Izmir

2023

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A Ph.D. Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate School of Izmir University of Economics

the Department of Design Studies

Izmir

2023

ETHICAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have conducted my work in accordance with academic rules and ethical behaviour at every stage from the planning of the thesis to its defence. I confirm that I have cited all ideas, information and findings that are not specific to my study, as required by the code of ethical behaviour, and that all statements not cited are my own.

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ABSTRACT

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Ph.D. Program in Design Studies

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July, 2023

This thesis specifically focuses on stakeholder involvement in city branding in terms of design decisions. The thesis utilizes İzmir, Turkey as the case study. The thesis first explores the relationship between place branding, destination branding, and city branding concepts and provides insight from different cities across the world. Next, acknowledging the role of stakeholder involvement as a crucial component of city branding, the thesis offers an in-depth review on this topic to highlight the fact that city branding is a multi-actor process that requires stakeholders' participation for effectiveness of the city branding vision. In relation to the theoretical framework, the thesis then examines İzmir as a case study. Research methodology employed in the thesis is qualitative research; interviews were conducted with project executives and stakeholders who have been directly involved in city branding efforts in İzmir. The results reveal that the city branding process in İzmir is mainly held through three stakeholder groups: city leaders as the decision makers; collective working team that runs the process; and the in-house design team. The results indicate that in relation to

the vision set and communicated through decision makers and collective working team, the designer(s) becomes the most critical stakeholder in terms of offering the unified vision of branding and disseminating the city branding vision to public. Thus, the main contribution of this thesis is deciphering the black box of the designer as a stakeholder in city branding efforts.

Keywords: City branding, Izmir, stakeholder involvement, designer, qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews.

ÖZET

KENT MARKALAMASI TASARIM KARARLARINDA PAYDAŞ KATILIMINI KEŞFETMEK: İZMİR ÖRNEĞİ

Çeviker Çınar, Gözde

Tasarım Çalışmaları Doktora Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Aslı Ceylan Öner

Temmuz, 2023

Bu tez, tasarım kararlarında paydaş katılımına odaklanan şehir markalamasına yönelik olarak İzmir, Türkiye'yi bir vaka çalışması olarak kullanmaktadır. Tez, öncelikle yer markalaması, destinasyon markalaması ve şehir markalaması kavramları arasındaki ilişkiyi keşfederek, dünyadaki farklı şehirlerden karşılaştırmalı örnekler sunmaktadır. Ardından, şehir markalamasının etkinliği için paydaş katılımının önemli bir bileşen olarak kabul edilmesiyle birlikte, bu konuda ayrıntılı bir inceleme sunan tez, bu kapsamda şehir markalamasının çok aktörlü bir süreç olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Teorik çerçeve kapsamında ise, İzmir'i bir vaka çalışması olarak inceleyen tezin araştırma metodolojisi nitel araştırmadır. Bu doğrultuda, İzmir'de yürütülen şehir markalama çalışmalarında doğrudan yer alan proje yöneticileri ve paydaşlarla görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, İzmir'deki şehir markalama sürecinin temel olarak üç paydaş grubu aracılığıyla gerçekleştirildiğini göstermektedir: karar vericiler olarak şehir liderleri; süreci yürüten kolektif çalışma grubu ve kurum içi (in-house) tasarım ekibi. Sonuçlar kapsamında ayrıca, karar vericiler ve kolektif çalışma

ekibi aracılığıyla belirlenen ve iletilen vizyona bağlı olarak, tasarımcının, markalama için birleşik bir vizyon sunma ve şehir markalama vizyonunu halka yayma konusunda en önemli paydaş olduğu ortaya konmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu tezin mevcut literature temel katkısı, şehir markalama çabalarında bir paydaş olan tasarımcının kara kutusunun çözümlenmesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kent markalaması, İzmir, paydaş katılımı, tasarımcı, nitel analiz, yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary context of a highly competitive global economic landscape, cities worldwide are increasingly acknowledging the significance of deploying effective city branding strategies to enhance their perception, reputation, and overall image. Consequently, a wealth of research has been undertaken to explore the intricate dynamics of place branding, destination branding, and city branding, seeking to comprehend the multifaceted and evolving nature of these branding endeavors. Building upon the existing body of knowledge in this field, this thesis seeks to delve deeper into the domain of city branding, with a particular emphasis on the city of Izmir as a case study.

Also, as cities vie to establish their distinctive identities and capitalize on their unique attributes to attract investment, tourism, and talent, the significance of stakeholder involvement in the city branding process becomes paramount. Understanding how stakeholders engage in the design decisions and strategic direction of city branding initiatives can significantly inform the development of effective city branding strategies and contribute to the overall success and competitiveness of cities in the global arena.

1.1. Objectives

The principal objective of this thesis is to conduct a comprehensive investigation of city branding, with a specific focus on the city of Izmir. A central aspect under scrutiny pertains to the crucial role of stakeholder involvement, with particular emphasis on the distinct significance of the designer in the design process. The research investigates intensively into this aspect to shed light on the enigmatic "black box" of the designer, aiming to disentangle the details of their role and contributions within the city branding context.

Furthermore, the thesis seeks to explore and establish a connection between place branding, destination branding, and city branding by analyzing global case studies, thereby assessing the effectiveness of city branding strategies employed in various contexts. The overarching aim is to acquire an in-depth understanding of the multifarious roles and contributions of stakeholders in the city branding initiatives, offering valuable insights into the interplay between stakeholders and the design choices that shape the city branding landscape.

Moreover, this research aspires to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the realm of city branding practices, highlighting the dynamic interaction between stakeholders and design decisions. By meticulously examining the role of stakeholders and the designer in the city branding process, the study seeks to contribute to the comprehension and refinement of city branding strategies and practices.

The significance of this thesis is further underscored by the limited research available in the existing city branding literature concerning the explicit role and involvement of designers. By unraveling the enigmatic "black box" of the designer and decision-makers and investigating the connections between stakeholders and their influence on design decisions, with a specific focus on the case of city branding in Izmir, this study offers a pioneering and valuable contribution to the city branding literature. The comprehensive insights derived from this research have the potential to inform and enrich the city branding discourse, while providing practical implications for city branding practitioners and policymakers. Ultimately, the thesis seeks to advance the understanding and implementation of effective city branding strategies by illuminating the intricate relationships between stakeholders, designers, and design decisions in the context of city branding initiatives.

1.2. Literature Review

In response to the intensifying global economic competition among cities, there has been an increasing recognition of the imperative to adopt effective city branding strategies as a means to enhance their perception and overall image (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). To provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex phenomenon of city branding, the thesis commences with a rigorous literature review that delves into the interconnected realms of place branding, destination branding, and city branding literature. Through this extensive review, the interrelated nature of these concepts is highlighted, and noteworthy examples of successful city branding efforts on a global scale are presented. Renowned cities such as New York, Amsterdam, Lyon, and Hong Kong are featured, showcasing their exemplary city branding endeavors and their impact on positioning these cities in the competitive global landscape.

City branding, being a multifaceted process, involves a myriad of stakeholders, rendering it significantly more complicated than traditional product branding approaches (Cozmiuc, 2011). Acknowledging the pivotal role of stakeholder

engagement in achieving successful city branding outcomes, it becomes paramount to identify and comprehend the diverse array of stakeholders involved in the city branding process (Riza et al., 2012; Henninger, 2016; Dinnie, 2010). These stakeholders encompass various actors, including city owners, decision-makers, users (comprising tourists and citizens alike), as well as other individuals and entities actively engaged in the city branding initiatives (Klijn et al., 2012; Lau and Leung, 2005). The third chapter of the thesis meticulously emphasizes the profound significance of stakeholder engagement in city branding, substantiating its importance through relevant examples gleaned from city branding literature and real-world city branding practices.

Subsequently, the thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the adopted research methodology, centering on the specific case of Izmir as a prominent and pioneering city in this context. Over the years, Izmir has lacked a unified and distinctive city branding project, making it an intriguing subject of examination. The objective of the thesis is to shed illuminating insights on the various stages and aspects of the city branding project in Izmir, critically exploring the level and nature of stakeholder involvement throughout this process. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to delve deeply into the designer's approach to deconstructing the design process, expertly expressing the essence of the city through symbolisms, and judiciously selecting unique symbols that are not commonly found in conventional city branding literature. In tandem, a comprehensive examination of the decision-making roadmap underpinning the city branding initiatives in Izmir is undertaken, aiming to unravel the intricacies and dynamics of the decision-making processes that contribute to the city's visual identity and strategic direction. The thesis, therefore, stands as a valuable and pioneering contribution to the academic discourse on city branding, offering profound insights into the complex interplay between stakeholders, designers, and decision-makers, as well as shedding light on the city branding practices in the unique context of Izmir.

1.3. Research Questions and Methodology

Recognizing the pivotal role that stakeholder involvement plays in the success of city branding, this thesis seeks to contribute significantly to the theoretical advancement of the city branding domain by closely examining the interplay between city brands and their stakeholders, with a specific focus on the case of Izmir. Consequently, the primary research question that drives this study is formulated as follows: "How does

stakeholder involvement impact design decisions in the city branding process of Izmir?" To address this central inquiry comprehensively, the thesis adopts a qualitative research approach, seeking to gain in-depth insights and nuanced perspectives from key stakeholders involved in the city branding initiatives. Semi-structured interviews constitute the primary data collection method, enabling an exploration of the multifaceted aspects of stakeholder involvement and its influence on the design decisions made during the city branding process. By conducting multiple case studies and delving into three distinct city branding cases/processes in Izmir, the research seeks to capture the diverse and dynamic interactions between stakeholders and the city branding endeavors.

In total, 15 stakeholders participate in the interview process, offering their invaluable perspectives and experiences to illuminate the intricate relationships between city branding and stakeholder engagement. Subsequently, the interview data is meticulously transcribed and subjected to rigorous analysis employing open coding, a well-established qualitative data analysis technique rooted in grounded theory. Through this systematic analytical process, the thesis strives to uncover emergent themes and patterns, providing a comprehensive understanding of h ow stakeholder involvement shapes design decisions within the context of the city branding process in Izmir. The empirical insights garnered from this study are poised to contribute significantly to the theoretical discourse surrounding city branding, offering practical implications for city branding practitioners and policymakers, while also paving the way for further research and exploration in this dynamic field.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This thesis offers valuable insights into the dynamic of stakeholder involvement in the city branding process of Izmir. Through a comprehensive examination of various aspects, including the perspectives of decision-makers, the nature of the design process, and the pivotal role of designers as stakeholders, this study significantly contributes to the understanding of how stakeholders effectively engage in city branding efforts. The findings of this research are expected to hold practical implications for the ongoing city branding project in Izmir, providing valuable guidance for its successful execution.

Furthermore, the knowledge generated from this study has the potential to advance

city branding theory and practice, enriching the existing body of literature in this domain and inspiring further research in the field. Ultimately, this thesis sheds light on the multifaceted nature of stakeholder involvement in city branding initiatives, offering a comprehensive perspective on how various actors contribute to the process, and highlighting the significance of designers' participation in shaping the visual identity and strategic direction of the city branding project.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Place branding has drawn a lot of attention in recent years, particularly from the business, investment, and travel industries. The literature is fuzzy about the usage of terms like destination branding, city branding, and place branding as sometimes they are used interchangeably. This uncertainty leads to conflicting definitions and a lack of clarity on the scope and characteristics of each concept.

As Oguztimur and Akturan (2015) highlights that destination, city and place branding are used in an interchangeable way in the existing literature, although these concepts differ from each other in many ways. Similarly, Anholt (2005) also argues that the clarification and agreement about the terminology and definition of the mentioned concepts are conflicting in literal terms. In the field of place branding, which encompasses place marketing and place promotion, there is a tendency in the literature to use the terms nation branding, region branding, and city branding interchangeably, despite the fact that these refer to distinct geographic entities with varying characteristics and scopes. (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Berglund and Olsson, 2010).

According to Anholt (2010), branding efforts on places, particularly on cities, have been forced to gain momentum by the executives of cities. Herget et al. (2015) explains this trend with the globalization of the world economy. Accordingly, their study highlights that competition between cities has been intensified in terms of tourism, trade, and investments, causing city branding to become a key prerequisite for the success of the perception and overall image of cities by attracting all the assets and attention. Here, place marketers are actively encouraging cities to establish themselves as distinct brands in order to promote themselves to existing and potential target groups and differentiate themselves from other cities, as well as emphasize their individuality from several political, economic, or socio-psychological perspectives (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Besides, revealing a long history in itself prior to the entrance of the mainstream marketing, destination branding can be seen as the tourism-oriented version, again spatially specific to a city, region, or a place (Kasapi and Cela, 2017).

In this chapter, it is aimed to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationships between place branding, destination branding, and city branding. The literature on each concept has been explored and a graphical illustration was provided to demonstrate their interconnectedness. Furthermore, an examination was conducted

regarding the city branding efforts of various cities from around the world.

2.1. Place Branding

Place Branding has been a more general but a precise definition, since it is understood that not only cities, but also regions, and even countries (or nations) can be branded (Kavaratzis, 2005). Unlike branding of products and services, place branding is seen as multidimensional in its nature, as a 'place' is essentially "anchored into a history, a culture, an ecosystem" (Kapferer, 2013), which is then merged into a network of associations by "linking products, spaces, organizations and people" (Bellini and Pasquinelli, 2016). In the literature, place branding can be considered as an umbrella term that covers similar meanings with the concepts of place marketing and place promotion, as well as nation branding, region branding, and city branding (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011).

Place branding refers to the application of brand strategies and marketing techniques by cities, regions, or countries with the aim of fostering economic, social, political, and cultural development. (Kemp et al., 2012). Place Branding is studied in urban studies particularly, as well as travel, tourism and brand management literatures also provide sufficient evidence of the forgoing (Morgan et al., 2004; Bramwell and Rawding, 1994; Wilson et al., 2001; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Kerr, 2006; Oppermann, 2000; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Hanna et al., 2020). As Berglung and Olsson (2010) mentioned that the general use of the concept of place branding made it difficult for the literature to reach an easily understood and widely accepted point.

Place branding, which entered the area of interest in academic studies in the 1990s, has similar features with destination marketing, which is a similar concept used in tourism studies, and these two concepts can be confused with each other. While destination is "a term directly related to tourism", place branding "has a broader perspective expressing all interactions in one place, including politics, foreign investment, trade, immigration, and the media" (Govers and Go, 2009). While the consumer is the tourist in destination marketing and the product is the destination, in the place branding approach the consumer is spread over a wide spectrum from tourists to skilled labor, from students to foreign investors (Aksoy, 2008). Similarly, the product is not as straightforward as the destination and it is the image of the place that

is branded, consisting of cultural, social, and spiritual elements. While place branding strives to increase the attractiveness of a place and reinforce its positive image, the place brand also positions the place as an intellectual property object on an abstract map (van Ham, 2008).

It can be said that the main objectives of place branding are to increase the export potential of a place and the competitiveness of local sectors, to provide development, and to gain a competitive advantage in economic, political, and social terms (Papadopoulos, 2004).

Van Ham (2008) states that there are four main reasons why place branding has emerged and spread in the world. The first is that developing information, communication and transportation technologies make products, services, and places identical in terms of quality and reliability. Henceforth, a place will not be able to continue to be a strong competitive advantage unless its unique features evoke symbolic and emotional connotations in consumers. The second reason is that the emotional bond established between the consumer and the brand provides trust in the brand. Place branding also means regeneration for political programs and ideologies that have lost their credibility, and a new face for consumers, namely citizens and foreign countries. Finally, thanks to the branding concept, higher prices may be charged for the products and services produced in the branded place, and the place itself will become a differentiated brand from being a generic brand (Van Ham, 2008).

The stakeholders involved in the place branding process include local administrations, public and private sector representatives, educational, cultural, and creative art institutions, investors, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and opinion leaders (Maheswari and Lodorfos, 2014). Place branding is an extremely complex and a political activity, and these stakeholders may be in conflict of interest in the place branding process (Hankinson, 2004). This may even negatively affect the place branding process, or this process can also turn into a platform where stakeholders in conflict of interest can communicate. The place branding process is a dynamic one, and many studies emphasize the active participation of stakeholders in this process (Baker, 2007; Atkinson and Campelo, 2011; Hanna and Rowley, 2011). The identity, culture of the place and the imaginary world it evokes are dealt with through a collective process. Therefore, in addition to the stakeholder groups mentioned above, the active groups including residents and tourists, generate their own meanings of the

place brand and spread these meanings (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013).

Place branding is a phenomenon consisting of a history, infrastructure, inhabitants and lives, culture, and many other discrete and concrete elements. The place brand is based on "visual, verbal and behavioral expressions" and is formed in people's minds, so it is a perception (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). In this respect, everywhere can be considered as a brand. Because, when a place is named, associations about that place will appear in the minds of those who are familiar with that place (Boisen et al., 2011). However, place branding is more than just a logo and a catchy slogan for a destination, place, city, or region (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009; Govers, 2013). For places that want to gain a competitive advantage by differentiating themselves from other places on the map in people's minds, the culture of that place is the most original expression of the place brand (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). It should be underlined that this is not a selection of cultural elements of a place and conveying these images through communication channels, but an interaction where the identity of the place is reshaped with internal and external stakeholders in the branding process and multiple perspectives produce new meanings for the brand (Atkinson and Campelo, 2011).

The items used in place branding consist of cultural items, besides social and economic ones, as well as concrete items such as buildings, streets, parks, and natural beauties. These cultural elements range from arts and media activities, youth subcultures and cultural elements of minorities, local history, archeology, dialects, and rituals. The activities in which these are embodied are local festivals, institutions, public areas, universities, local production facilities, craftsmen' and artists' workshops (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007). The place brand can be considered as an umbrella brand that collects, coordinates, and identifies these aforementioned items under one roof (Iversen and Hem, 2008).

Similarly, according to Cai (2001), Place branding involves the strategic combination of various elements to establish and distinguish the identity of a particular place through the creation of a positive image. These brand elements encompass the name, logo, signage, design, symbol, slogan, packaging, and their combinations. However, unlike products and services, the name of a place brand remains fixed and is derived from the existing geographical name of the place. The items forming the subject of the messages to be given within the scope of place branding vary according to the historical and natural characteristics of the country. In place branding studies, the

message that countries want to convey should show integrity with their existing features and should be in harmony. It is necessary to implement a good brand strategy based on the characteristics of a country. Carmen and Ciochina (2014) also state that otherwise, countries will have a mixed image.

An important aspect within the concept of place branding is the role of events hosted by a country. Festivals, special occasions, and various events held in different countries and regions play a significant role in enhancing the international recognition of a country. Sziget music festival organized with the participation of approximately 440 thousand people from 95 countries in Hungary and Oktoberfest, which has been held in Munich, Germany since 1810, are important events that can be exemplified in this context. In addition, hosting events such as the World Cup, the European Football Championship, the Olympics, the Eurovision Song Contest, the UEFA and Champions League Final Matches, the European Capital of Culture Event, EXPO and other important fairs are also available opportunities for place branding (Stancioiu et al., 2011).

In the literature, there are many examples of successful place branding from all over the world (Baker, 2007; Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007; Jansen, 2008; Govers and Go, 2009; Belloso, 2010; Rinaldi and Beeton, 2015). In the literature, place branding can be applied to all spatialities that match the definition of place from towns to cities, from regions to countries. Theoretically, the goals of place and nation branding are similar, and both aim to make the branded place a tourist attraction and attract skilled workforce, students, foreign and domestic investors to the branded place. However, although nation branding derives from place marketing studies, it requires a more holistic and creative approach, since nation brands provide intangible services to a particular country, such as improved reputation (Handayani and Rashid, 2013; Szondi, 2008; Foroudi et al., 2016).

Place branding is an interdisciplinary domain that involves professionals from diverse fields such as urban planning, marketing, geography, architecture, and tourism. The multidisciplinary nature of the concept has caused each of these disciplines to approach the subject within their own paradigms. Nowadays, it has been determined that the concept of place branding is not a holistic field with certain basic principles and theories. Based on this, there are studies to examine the literature on place branding. Some of these studies have been conducted on "place marketing" - with a literary

history dating back to the middle of the 19th century when provinces, cities, and regions are being introduced through the use of public relations tools (Go and Govers, 2010). According to Oguztimur and Akturan (2015), these studies have been classified with regard to terminological literature review (Hanna and Rowley, 2008), conceptual literature review (Kavaratzis, 2005; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002), general evaluation (Dinnie, 2004), and historical development (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2009).

Hanna and Rowley (2008) conducted a terminological literature review and defined the use of the word "place" and related terms. In this research utilizing content analysis, scholars collected data on the usage of the term "place" in academic publications and highlighted the transition of place marketing from the realm of tourism to the domain of business. The findings of the study demonstrate the broad application of place branding terminology in a generic fashion (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) conducted a literature review on place marketing and identified the outcomes of place marketing in terms of both the government and businesses. The study suggests that place-based marketing is frequently not fully utilized or properly implemented due to a lack of comprehensive understanding of the concept of "place branding." (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Kavaratzis (2005) elaborated on how place branding is conceptualized and talked about the similarities of corporate branding and place marketing. Demonstrating the relevance of corporate branding to place branding, the paper discusses and compares two different frameworks from the existing literature for place brand management (Kavaratzis, 2005). Dinnie (2004) made a more general assessment and emphasized the changing nature of place marketing and the pioneer situation of the practitioners in the academic studies. The research characterizes place branding as a domain where academic research has been slow to follow, although high levels of academic interest in the topic are now beginning to materialize (Dinnie, 2004).

Lucarelli and Berg (2011) proposed a classification of perspectives and approaches to city branding, building upon Berg's (2009) conceptual context of "place" as a destination, territory, location, or area. The study distinguishes two distinct approaches: (1) the marketing approach and (2) the branding approach. In the marketing approach, Kotler et al. (1993) define marketing as the process of promoting, selling, and distributing a city or its parts as products and services, including the

practice of place marketing (McCann, 2004), selling places (Hall, 1997), place promotion (Young and Lever, 1997), destination product (Murphy et al., 2000), destination marketing (Buhalis, 2000), destination promotion (Sheehan et al., 2007), and town center marketing (Page and Hardyman, 1996). On the other hand, the branding approach defines branding as the deliberate symbolic embodiment of all information associated with a city to create associations and expectations around it (Berg, 2009). Here, branding activities has been addressed in terms of destination branding (Cai, 2002), location branding (Hankinson, 2001), branding territory (Van Ham, 2002), place branding (Anholt, 2008), and rebranding city places (Bennett and Savani, 2003).

Besides the classification approaches, a detailed examination of the recent literature for the years between 1990-2009 with the keywords "place marketing" and "place branding" has been done by Gertner (2011). The results stated that the studies lacked a basic purpose since the articles were mainly based on qualitative research and personal opinions, as well as on non-generalizable cases - rather than a quantitative one. Accordingly, they also emphasize that the researchers cannot be able to produce testable hypotheses or models (Gertner, 2011).

One of the most recent studies conducted by Skinner (2021) attempted to clearly define the relationship between place marketing and place branding. Adopting five different approaches, the study locates these two concepts in various places (See Figure 1).
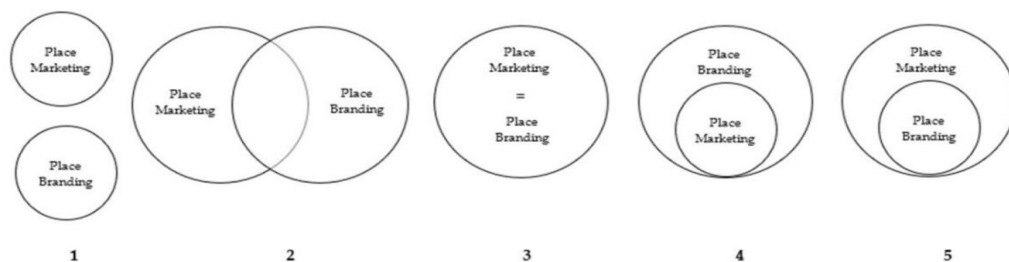
Figure 1. Five approaches to the relationship between place marketing and place branding

According to the research, in the first approach place marketing and place branding are separate and distinct constructs. The second approach handles place marketing and place branding as separate constructs, but they can also overlap. Place marketing is the same as place branding in the third approach. The fourth one argues that place marketing is part of place branding, while in the fifth approach vice versa - place

branding is part of place marketing. Among all these approaches, since place marketing includes more activities than place branding, the paper puts emphasis on place branding as being one of the place marketing activities. Considering this structure, this thesis furtherly widens the approach by locating two more concepts into the picture: destination branding and city branding. The next two sections explain these concepts and demonstrate their relationship with place branding.

2.2. Destination Branding

The pioneering work on the "image of the place", which constitutes the theoretical infrastructure of the concept of branding of cities, started in 1975 with Hunt. He discussed the issue in the context of the relationship between the image of a city and tourism development. The discussion of branding theories within the framework of tourism issues first emerged in 1998 within the framework of "destination branding". Destination branding is approached from a tourism perspective in several contexts: cultural-oriented branding (Murphy and Boyle, 2006; Colomb, 2011; Dragolea and Cotîrlea, 2012), cultural and historical heritage elements (Northover, 2010; Giovanardi, 2011), tourism development and image elements (Lennon and Seaton, 1998; Bramwell and Rawding, 2010; Ning and Hoon, 2011). Hanna and Rowley (2008) state that "... it is the name, symbol, logo, word, or other visuals that distinguish and define a destination from others, and that the mentioned destination promises unforgettable travel experiences". In short, in destination branding, cities are perceived as a type of tourism, as a destination, and compete like a kind of consumer product. Cultural values and historical resources are important tools especially in post-industrialization cities.

Travel and tourism activities have increased because of the decrease in transportation and communication costs around the world and tourism activities with local elements have played an important role in branding the cities. Branding activities carried out for this purpose are analyzed with the concept of "destination branding", which refers to the development of a city or a region in terms of tourism. Due to the origin of the word, destination is defined as "the place where someone will reach something, the destination, the range or the destination". The target audience in the branding created for these areas are the visitors coming to the city for tourism purposes. By introducing the unique qualities that distinguish the potential of a settlement from other competitor areas with destination branding, the aim is to achieve motivation that will enable the

visitors to travel to this area (Morgan and Pritchard, 2004).

Branding models of marketing have been utilized mostly for the explanation of the destination branding process. In this context, it is seen that Caldwell and Freire (2004) adapted the "Brand Box Model" developed by de Chernatony and Mcwilliam (1989) to the destination branding to measure the power of brands in the market. De Chernatony and Mcwilliam (1989) claim that the effectiveness of brands can be examined in two dimensions, as functional and representative, through the "Brand Box Model". In other words, consumers' brand preferences are determined according to both the functional and representative factors. While the functional dimension consists of the qualities of the relevant product, in the case of "destination", the facilities it provides, and objectively measurable elements; the representative dimension consists of the combination of abstract elements such as consumer identification with the brand and social satisfaction.
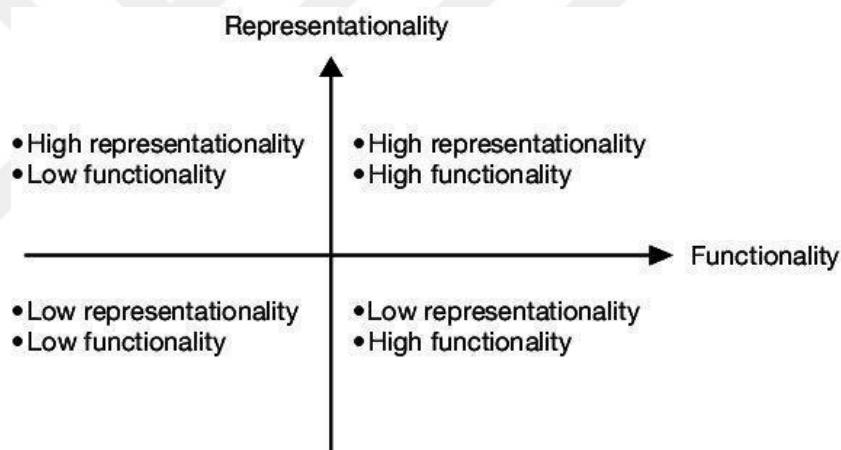
Figure 2. De Chernatony's Brand Box Model for Destination Branding

Four different dimensions consisting of functional and representative elements are presented in the matrix in Figure 2:

High representationality - low functionality: Although the qualities of the destination are less than their competitors, they are brands that have become more known through channels such as logos, slogans, descriptive signs, brochures, media, and the Internet.

High representationality - high functionality: These brands are destinations that both enable the consumers to define themselves and provide significant benefits to the user due to the characteristics and quality of the destination.

Low representationality - low functionality: These types of destinations lack neither

the promotional elements nor the quality that their competitors can achieve. These brands are preferred because their prices are lower than their competitors rather than symbolic and functional features.

Low representationality - high functionality: These are the brands that do not have strong abstract and symbolic elements but contain qualities that will enable users to prefer the destination.

Caldwell and Freire (2004) also claimed that functional and representative elements of brands can also apply to destinations. According to this idea, cities that contain functional and representative components in their bodies become brand cities by developing their potential over these two dimensions. Utilizing these two dimensions, their study also attempted to measure how destination branding differs in terms of a city or a country, as well as a region.

The research by Caldwell and Freire (2004) comprises six countries (France, Czech Republic, USA, Germany, Turkey and Spain) and six regions/cities (French Riviera, Prague, Miami, Berlin, Istanbul and Ibiza). Confirming the usefulness of analyzing destination brands, the study underlines again two different dimensions: representationality as a value-expressive aspect, and functionality as the performance of the place. The results showed that cities and regions have been recognized in terms of their functionalities, while countries, being larger in scale, are distinctive with the representational parts of their brand identities. This also proves that city branding efforts need to emphasize functionality manners while targeting tourists. For instance, considering the choice of the cities, preferences of people lay down on the functionality matters such as weather, beaches, mountains and sky, museums, shopping malls etc. rather than value expressive aspects.

2.3. City Branding

As the forces of globalization reshape the world economy, cities have introduced a fresh array of concepts that have subsequently made their way into existing literature. The evolving roles of cities are reflected in their articulation to the global economy and emergence as "the most basic functional engine of the economy" and have compelled them to adopt new paradigms and arguments as they strive to establish their presence in the global market. One of these concepts is competitiveness. Globalization and its impact on cities are expressed in numerous academic studies in the literature.

Competitiveness is not only for firms, since it exists between countries, regions, and cities. Competition has been urbanized and is gaining importance contrary to the views such as "non-location economy" and "the end of geography". It is seen that production is concentrated in a specific place throughout the world, while regional and/or local specialization are taking place. The most important spatial scale in increasing economic development and competitiveness is that there have been cities that shine with their unique qualities and specialties.

Lovering (1997) states that the process of restructuring cities necessitates ideological and cultural manipulations. As part of this restructuring, the concept of "city branding" was introduced into the planning agenda, borrowing from the language of business. The aim was to ensure the survival of cities in a competitive environment and enhance their performance and competitiveness. Marketing of cities is important for increasing the competitiveness capacity, since cities have become a commodity packaged, advertised, and marketed like any commodity in today's world (Paddison, 1993; Goodwin, 1993).

Lucarelli and Berg (2011) expressed city branding as a purposeful shaping of all information about a city in a symbolic manner. Kavaratris (2004) and Balakrishman (2009) highlight that city branding can serve as a strategic tool with political, economic, and cultural implications. On the other hand, Björner (2013) a argues that city branding functions as a tool to articulate the competitiveness, spatial quality, history, lifestyle, and culture of a city.

Cities have been marketed like many other products since the 19th century (Kavaratzis, 2004). Since the 1980s, interest in this issue has increased considerably both in the academic community and in public administrations. The work of academics and professionals in the field of city branding has increased significantly in the last three decades and the interest in this field seems to continue in the near future. The most important reason for this is that cities all over the world are involved in marketing and branding efforts in order to be competitive and not to stay away from such a hot topic. (Hospers, 2010a, 2010b). One of the elements in the journey of cities to become brand cities is that the movement of goods, capital and people is facilitated with globalization, cities have ceased to be only a touristic destination for a while (Hanna and Rowley, 2011), and are also centers that try to attract the workforce and investors (Zenker 2011, Zenker and Martin 2011).

It is observed that the interest in city branding is increasing not only in academic literature but also in practice too. Gertner (2011) points out that these research and studies are generally not based on a conceptual framework, testable models, and hypotheses. Kavaratzis (2007), who has pioneering works in this field, underlined the same point and pointed out the difficulties of theoretical development and gaining clarity in practice.

City branding is also an area where city administrations seek answers on how to design and position their cities as a brand (Merrilees et al., 2013). Today, cities are competing in meeting the needs of their target audience (investors, tourists, citizens etc.). Cities are defined as the "Multinational enterprises of the 21st Century" (Borja and Castells, 1997), and struggles to rapidly adapt to a dynamic, global, and competitive environment (Sáez et al., 2013). The aim is to increase the investments and tourism revenues in the cities and to develop the society. In this case, cities tend to brand and aim to position themselves as a brand in the minds of their target audience (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2009).

A brand is a name, word, symbol (symbol), design, sign, shape, color, or various combinations of these that are used to define the goods or services that a seller or a group of sellers put on the market and to differentiate them from their competitors (Kotler and Armstrong,1989). As a product, the city has both concrete (buildings, roads, etc.) and abstract (values, image, identity, etc.) components. These components may be perceived positively or negatively by target audiences (Sáez et al. 2013). Since several interest groups, institutions and perceptions of target groups are involved in the city branding process, city branding becomes much more complex than marketing of products or services. This confusion has revealed the necessity to be based on the principles of corporate branding, not product or service branding in the city branding literature (Kavaratzis 2004).

There are a limited number of literature review studies on city branding (Kavaratzis, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2007; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). In these studies, it is mentioned that there is a confusion of concepts and lack of a theoretical basis (Kavaratzis, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2007). Lucarelli and Berg (2011) conducted a comprehensive literature review on city branding, employing content analysis to analyze articles published between 1988 and 2009. They chose 1988 as the starting point because it marked the beginning of the first studies on city branding and marketing in the literature. Despite

the relatively limited number of these studies, the review aimed to identify common approaches and shed light on the perspectives of different disciplines in city branding, as well as the variables investigated and the reasons behind their examination. One significant criticism of the field of city branding is its inability to develop its own theories, primarily due to its multidisciplinary nature. Additionally, another critique is that cities cannot be simply reduced to commodities. According to Harvey (2012), competition between cities and regions has been promoted by free movement of foreign capital through the neoliberal policies for decades. Here, place marketing becomes a necessary and organic feature of the new urban governance. Though, because of globalization, as well as neoliberal policies, the idea of city branding has been commodified.

In recent years, the concept of City Branding has become an important topic that has been studied by scholars from different disciplines, especially business, tourism, and urban studies. City Branding - a concept that has been in the literature for many years - has evolved from the concept of "City Marketing" (Kavaratzis, 2007). Similarly, besides the literature, city branding is also a field of study known with lots of up-to-date applications and practices around the world.

Since city branding studies and applications adopted mainly a participatory approach, it is said that "this stream of research and practice remains isolated and disconnected from urban planning theory and ethics" (Bonakdar and Audirac, 2020). Besides, the book of Dinnie (2011) has highlighted that there are two separate literature on City Branding concept: one related with marketing discipline, another related with urban studies. He also underlines a parallel movement rather than an interdisciplinary perspective on both approaches. While the concept of branding was previously a definition of companies and products on a global scale, it has then become a concept that shapes the urban reality (Greenberg, 2008). An important part of the literature in urban studies focuses on the "Creative City" concept and the studies aiming to bring "creative class" to the city (Zenker, 2009). The concept of the creative class, as discussed by Richard Florida (2005), has been closely associated with the interplay of urban images, branding, and culture. The notion of the creative city serves as a theoretical framework for examining the dynamics between urban branding and urban development planning. Landry (2000) emphasizes that fostering place-based creativity enhances the uniqueness and distinctiveness of a location, while Vanolo (2008) argues

that the success of a creative city also relies on a well-designed vision for creativity, supported by strategies such as city branding, quality enhancement, and the creation of an appealing urban image.

There are also different criticisms about the city branding issue. An important example of these is the concern of difference between image and reality, which stems from the limited understanding of branding and its confusion with promotion. Here, the theory of Baudrillard (2001) refers reality and image as "representation" and "simulation", and explains the difference between these two as follows:

> *"Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent. Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence."*

Kaneva (2018) asserts that when the simulation model of communication becomes the predominant mode of signification in society, the concern shifts from false representations of reality (ideology) to concealing the fact that reality itself has lost its authenticity. This serves the purpose of preserving the principle of reality. Baudrillard (2001) offers the example of American popular culture, epitomized by Disneyland, as an illustration of a social realm where simulation dominates.

On the other hand, in reality the cities all over the world actively choose to engage and invest in city branding (Kavaratzis, 2007). That's why researchers are seeking the right way of doing it. Kavaratzis (2007) also describes the so-called right way of doing as follows: 'Doing it right' first implies an understanding of what city branding is and how it is done. Second, it implies understanding of the environment in which cities are operating and having increasing effort on branding activities. In this regard, this thesis will focus on city branding distinctively within the framework of design discipline.

Branding is a potential process to impose desired merging and acquisition movements and/or relationships on a city, place, or destination. Successful cities create a circle of success by attracting new businesses, new investments, investors, and foreign capital. Branding is a holistic development that affects the entire city. Therefore, the effort to increase the attractiveness of the city depending on its image is essential (Rainisto, 2003).

More products can be promoted in global markets with a clear brand that the city has. A precise selection of a city brand adds value to the product. Common branding strategy, which is frequently used in corporate marketing, also shows itself in cities. For example, Swiss quality watches, high quality cars of Germans, Geneva's Rolex, Paris's Chanel perfume and Sweden's Absolut Vodka can be given as examples. (Rainisto, 2003).

Dinnie (2011) defines city branding as a comprehensive set of activities and endeavors aimed at transforming a city into an appealing living environment. The objective is to shift the perception of the target audience from viewing the city as a typical residential area to a place where people would desire to work, invest, receive education, and visit. This transformation is achieved through the strategic application of branding strategies and techniques.

City branding can be understood as the application of product branding strategies to a city. As a field of study, city branding draws insights from brand strategy and communication to enhance the development of a city and generate tangible economic, social, and cultural value within it (Kavaratsiz, 2007). It is a holistic and comprehensive process that aims to create effective tools for showcasing the city's strengths, positive aspects, and unique characteristics to the intended audience. Successful city branding requires expertise from both the planning and marketing disciplines, combining their respective knowledge and skills (planning expertise and marketing expertise) at a professional level (Peker, 2006).

A city brand is a project undertaken by a city to establish its development, recognition, and image. It involves integrating the city's cultural, historical, natural, and social characteristics and creating a distinct identity through a unique symbol or sign to differentiate it from other cities. The city brand encompasses a collection of distinctive beliefs, combining rational and emotional elements, which set the city apart and represent the opportunities it offers in comparison to other cities (Banger, 2006).

Being a brand means being preferred by the target audience against its competitor in case of a decision by differentiating from its competitors and thus gaining a higher perceived value. Similarly, the branding of a city refers to the transformation of all resources of the city into a high value in the minds of the target audience in terms of cultural, commercial, and political (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Similarly, according

to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006b), a city needs to be able to show its presence first, then to have a superior place in the memory of the target audience than its competitors, and finally, it must be recognized with a brand that has never been before. These viewpoints highlight the portrayal of place marketing as a novel form of marketing. Kotler, on the other hand, suggests that the place marketing process involves analyzing marketing opportunities, devising marketing strategies, planning marketing programs, and effectively managing the marketing efforts (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Furthermore, Kotler asserts that successful place marketing entails designing a place that meets the needs of its target markets. It achieves success when residents and businesses are satisfied with their community, and the expectations of visitors and investors are met (Kotler, 1997). Kotler's opinion supports the theory that place marketing creates sustainable development and advantage both for the community and for investors, as well as for visitors.

Today's world also forced cities to become a brand due to several conditions. Hanna and Rowley (2008) attribute the emergence of city branding as both a necessity and a phenomenon to several conditions primarily influenced by globalization processes. These conditions include: (1) the increased influence of international media, (2) the reduced cost of international travel, (3) the rise in consumer spending power, (4) the threat of place parity, (5) a limited pool of international investors, (6) competition for skilled and professional immigrants, and (7) the growing consumer demand for diverse cultural experiences fueled by low-cost global communication media.

There is also an ongoing discussion about the elements of city branding. Teller and Elms (2010) determined that the city branding process consists of ten dimensions including accessibility, parking conditions, retail store mix, commercial value, product variety, sales personnel, mix of non-retail stores, environment (atmosphere), maneuverability and orientation and infrastructure facilities. Also, Ilgüner (2006) outlines four fundamental elements that a city can utilize to establish itself as a brand. These elements can be summarized as follows:

- Cultural heritage: All physical-tangible human-made things and all non-physical and intangible features inherited from past generations; traditions,

- Natural structure-environment: Natural charm and care for the environment,

- Original output: Products grown specific to that location and products obtained

from natural sources,

- Established skill: Retrospective skill, best job.

Since the city brand includes many concrete and abstract features such as the natural resources, nature, tourism potential, infrastructure, institutions and organizations of the city, and the characteristics of the inhabitants of the city, the process of creating a city brand is a much more difficult and more complex process compared to branding products and services. Also, defining or contracting the elements needed for city branding is not as easy as seen. Thus, it is observed that successful city brands with suitable conditions (climatic conditions, geographical and natural resources, etc.) could grow economically and solve the urban transformation and infrastructure problems to a great extent (Fan, 2006).

The branding of the city is the process of creating awareness about the city by arousing curiosity in the minds of the target audience, creating a center of attraction to enable living in the city and creating positive associations about the city by differentiating from other cities (Aaker, 2010). For instance, "I love NY" and "iamsterdam" are the two most well- and widely known city branding efforts that are attracted attention by utilizing the mentioned processes.

The branding activities of cities and countries include the long-term development plan and development-growth strategy of that city and country. At this juncture, it can be concluded that the branding strategy extends beyond a mere marketing activity or the process of shaping the city's brand image in alignment with its development plans. Instead, it encompasses long-term planning that enables the identification of the city's identity, values, vision, and mission. In addition, along with the changing dynamics in the 21st century, the promotion of cultural and touristic values, as well as the determination of dynamic marketing strategies, the development of global and local economic relations, and the establishment of a sustainable dynamic structure of the culture industry and culture management could be emphasized among the branding efforts of cities. In addition to all of these, the brand city means to create psychological and emotional associations about the city to the residents of the city in question (Kavaratzis, 2004).

The relationship between all these three concepts, namely Place Branding, Destination Branding and City Branding are illustrated in Figure 3:
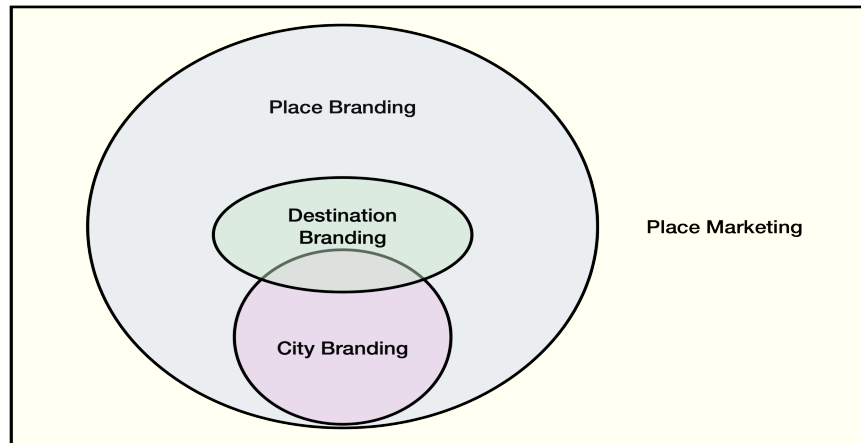
Figure 3. The new approach

The Figure visualizes the interconnected relationship among three distinguishing levels of branding, as well as emphasizing the position of place marketing as the nested targets. Regarding the hierarchical relationship, putting place branding at the top, the Figure also highlights the overlapping relation between destination branding and city branding concepts. From this point of view, this new approach makes a distinctive contribution to the branding literature.

2.4. City Branding Efforts of Other Cities

Due to the increasing competitiveness of markets, cities also create and brand their visual identities and present themselves to the world's attention more strongly, likewise the products and services. This not only makes it possible for cities to gain strong positions in tough competition conditions, but also will increase their awareness all over the world and make them attractive to people. It is also crucial for city brands to adapt their fast-changing environment to survive since they become living organisms in today's world.

Cities are places that live, develop, and transform into the existence of modern people. Just like people and communities, cities have identities formed by the interaction of their historical, social, cultural, and geographical conditions and manifested by the collective efforts of those living in that city. Within the last decades, visuality, image, representation, and advertisement are among the most effective tools of city branding. Logos also undoubtedly have a foremost importance than ever on determining the identity of cities and branding these cities for the reason that logos reflect the unique character of the city, as well as the historical, cultural, and symbolic values of each city too.

Being one of the most compelling communication features, a logo seen as critical in terms of developing positioning and identity profiles that the target groups recognize and value (Lelis et al., 2020). Thus, city branding efforts has recently been evolved in terms of developing a "brand identity system"[1] rather generating a "logo – just a single mark". Depending on where and how the brand has portrayed, identity systems must also allow for different iterations. There are multiple key issues to consider in today's branding such as time, variability, flexibility, and dynamism. To meet those needs of evolvement and adaptation of the brand identities, a new transition has recognized, namely "Dynamic Icon-based Brand Identity" which puts the earlier static branding activities into a more dynamic, modular, and flexible way of doing.

The growing fascination with evolving brand identities has captured the attention of both researchers and practitioners. There has been a significant increase in research and analysis focused on dynamic brands, their evolving visual identities, and logos, conducted from diverse perspectives and in various locations. The following section provides detailed examples of renowned city branding initiatives and brand identities from different regions around the world.

City branding efforts of New York, Amsterdam, Lyon, and Hong Kong are among the most famous and well-known city branding examples from the world, in terms of their static-type logo designs (Figure 4). They all consist of a city logo and this logo has used everywhere in an equivalent manner. However, considering several more recent examples, it will be realized that city branding movements have been started to evolve.

Designing the logo in 1976 and using it since 1977 to promote tourism, the slogan of "I Love New York" is also the official state slogan of New York. Despite its humble beginnings, the logo has become an iconic symbol for New York, and its straightforward design has subsequently been adapted to express love for a variety of different cities across the world. Here, an explanation might be that according to Bendel (2011), the necessary requirements for building a city brand include:

"a prepared industry, an unmistakable wake-up call (some people might say

---

[1] According to the Iconic Fox Brand Agency (2018), a brand identity system has identified as *"the visual representation of a brand. It is a collection of cohesively designed elements that work together to form how you see that brand visually"*.

crisis...), credible research, adequate funding, and the right people, in the right place, at the right time"

and, in New York City's campaign, all of these elements came together.

Launching in September 2004, the campaign to re-brand Amsterdam was one of the first examples of city branding in Europe and today stands among the longest-lived ones. This rebranding package includes a shared brand called "I Amsterdam" - the new slogan for the city and the region - as well as a logo designed for city promotion, institutional bodies, and partners. The slogan was chosen based on the evaluation that it is clear, concise, powerful, and memorable. The main idea behind the new branding campaign was to establish a sense of community among the city's residents, as well as an appealing image for the millions of tourists who visit each year. (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006a) The success of the campaign has been achieved through being the 6th city on the ranking of world's most successfully recognized city brands, only after one year from the launch event. (Anholt City Brands Index, 2005) Being more than two meters tall and 23.5 meters wide, the massive letters of "I Amsterdam" have also become a local landmark and a popular photography exhibition in two distinct locations today: Schiphol Airport and the Sloterplas lake in West.

Figure 4. Logos of four cities

The other two logos of Lyon and Hong Kong were also among the ones with static logos as just a single mark.

To promote Lyon's international ambitions, for instance, ONLYLYON became already a state of mind and an action plan rather than being just an official brand. The high-impact logo and its roaring anagram also seen as a reflection of the ability of the city to unite all stakeholders (onlylyon.com, 2023).

Regarding to the evolution of brand Hong Kong, the official website of the government (brandhk.gov.hk, 2023) has summarized the campaign as follows:

> *"A year of extensive research and consultation was carried out among opinion leaders in Hong Kong and overseas. The findings concluded that the positioning as "Asia's world city" best reflected the city" best reflected the city's unique features – Hong Kong as a natural, vital, and multicultural gateway not only to and from China but also to the rest of Asia and beyond."*

So, it can be concluded that each of these countries above present its city image to the target through slogans that represent the identity of the city image, such as Hong Kong's 'world level business hub' and 'I love New York' (Lee and Marijnissen, 2008).

Beside the so-called static logos, the contemporary branding activities has attracted attention in terms of their dynamic icon-based identities. Here, Melbourne, Helsinki, Porto, and Baku are among the most prominent city examples.

Since a place brand's design identity is the most visible element of the brand, by doing it in a correct way, it has the power to bring all stakeholders together behind your idea. Being the second-most populous city in Australia, and a global center for street art, live music, and theatre, flexible design identity of Melbourne aimed at "building greater long-term identification and align with best practice around the world", according to the former Lord Mayor Robert Doyle, announced at the launch of the new identity. Becoming an icon, the new "M" design (Figure 5) actually delivers growing gross regional product, increased number of over-night visitors and higher value of tourism, as well as a jumping to the top in several global city rankings right after the following years of the rebranding (citynationplace.com, 2023). The key to the success of this rebrand has been identified by Landor, the design consultant responsible for designing and implementing the new brand (landor.com, 2023), are as follows:

> *"Melbourne is a progressive city, so representing it visually required a forward-thinking approach. Our client and team wanted something as multifaceted as the city itself. We built a degree of flexibility into the city of Melbourne's identity system, leaving room for initiative and creative interpretation. The brand system resists the traditional thinking about identity design, instead embracing the idea of modulation and adaptation."*

Figure 5. The new "M" design logo of Melbourne.

In August 2017, Werklig, a Scandinavian design company, was assigned the responsibility of developing a new brand identity for Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, which has a population of 1.4 million people and 751,000 job opportunities. The objective was to create a cohesive visual system that would unify the fragmented representation of various government services, ministries, and development projects catering to a diverse range of individuals. The target audience encompassed locals, national and international visitors, individuals seeking to settle in Helsinki, as well as asylum seekers. While each institution had its own logo, the city's coat of arms often served as the weak link connecting them. This marked the beginning of an extensive and all-encompassing identity program (bpando.org, 2023; brand.hel.fi, 2023; behance.net, 2023a).

Werklig also highlighted that the historic Helsinki crest was used to create the Helsinki logo, which is the city's most identifiable slogan. The new logo was created to be adaptable and responsive to a variety of different types of content. The graphic wave theme (and its modifications) was also inspired by the coat of arms. The reform makes the City's and its services' marketing and communications more intelligible and resident-oriented for inhabitants and tourists. Helsinki's uniform identity also helps it stand out from other cities and regions.

The project was also huge in scope—the City of Helsinki brand renewal was the largest of its kind ever undertaken in Finland. The Werklig Team (2023) highlights the goal of the City's visual identity as building a uniform and recognizable image for Helsinki,

and added:

"The City of Helsinki had no uniform brand identity and city departments and projects had their own varying identities and logos. The only consistent identity element was the Helsinki coat of arms, but it had its own restrictions and challenges in terms of usability. The rebranding of Helsinki sought a fresh new brand identity that respects the past and is both modern and timeless. The identity needed to be adaptive, responsive, and versatile."
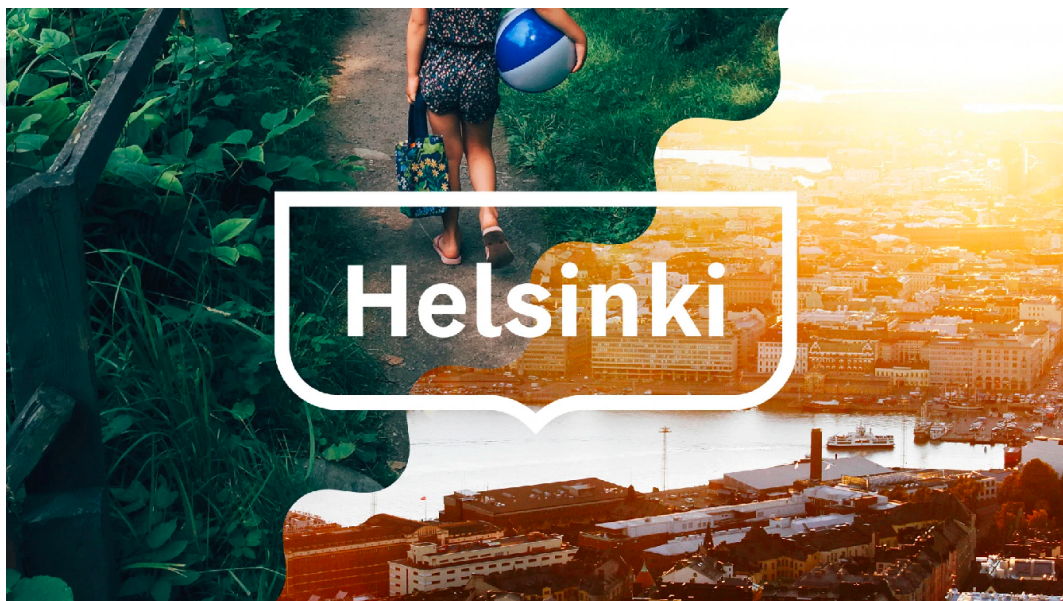
Figure 6. The Logo of Helsinki

Porto, the second-largest city in Portugal, is also another example in terms of constructing a successful city identity. The city needed a visual identity that could organize and streamline communication with inhabitants while also defining a clear hierarchy that tied the city and city hall together. White Studio, a multidisciplinary design studio based in Porto was invited to design this new visual identity of the city in June 2014 (onlygraphicdesign.com, 2017; behance.net, 2023b).

The designer of the project was Eduardo Aires. He takes the approach of involving as many individuals as possible in the concept stage, particularly those who are familiar with and passionate about the city of Porto. To this purpose, he prefers to work with multidisciplinary teams, frequently incorporating poets, painters, geographers, and sociologists.

"The most difficult thing is not representing the city by an icon or something physical. It's more translating an abstract idea into something visual; that's the most difficult thing. Every city has a unique cultural, geographic and architectural landscape. Unless this can be identified and brought to the fore, then the result will be a wishy-washy banality."

Besides being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, he transformed Porto into a design icon and a city of the future by developing a feeling of ownership for each citizen in Porto. In his own words, he explains that (eduardoaries.com, 2023):

"We felt like we needed to give each citizen their own Porto. Porto needed to be much more than a single icon, much more than a single logo. It needed complexity. It needed life. It needed stories. It needed personality. So, we added a dot to the name of the city to give the logo the strength and the affirmative nature of its people and character."

Regarding the iconic system, he also argues that the inspiration comes from the blue tiles that cover so many historical buildings in Porto and stories are told in those "azulejos".

"We created a system of icons that every person living (in) Porto could be and feel represented with. New icons can be added to the system and old ones can stop being used. We wanted the image to be just the perfect mirror of what the city is."

His final answer is a series of simple yet striking graphics that highlight the city's distinct gastronomic, architectural, cultural, and geographical features. A grid structure is overlaid on top of the photos, which helps frame how they are presented and elucidates the inter-relationships between the various themes. (Figure 7)

Figure 7. The Logo of Porto

A great effort on designing brand identity of Baku has been rewarded as being named "Creative City of Design" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2019. As the capital of Azerbaijan and the largest city situated on the Caspian Sea, this city is renowned for its vibrant creative scene and its role as a hub for innovative projects and startups in the design field. With a population of 2.26 million, it has established itself as a thriving center for creativity and a hotspot for design-related ventures (UNESCO, 2023b).

Mehman Mammadov, the creator of Baku's city branding identity project, described the design process of the logo as follows:

> *"Baku is not only a city with deep history and values, but also with its modernity and development. I think it is expedient to have a dynamic logo in a style that is true to the values of a modern city.*
>
> *We combine the logo of the city with its national values, historical patterns, and the nature of the city.*
>
> *I created a collection of icons that can be reproduced from geometric forms and easily adapted to any form by combining the "nature" of the capital, "known places", and important "communication symbols" to help navigate the logo. Each of these icons can be turned into a pattern by repeating them separately."* (behance.net, 2023c) (Figure 8)
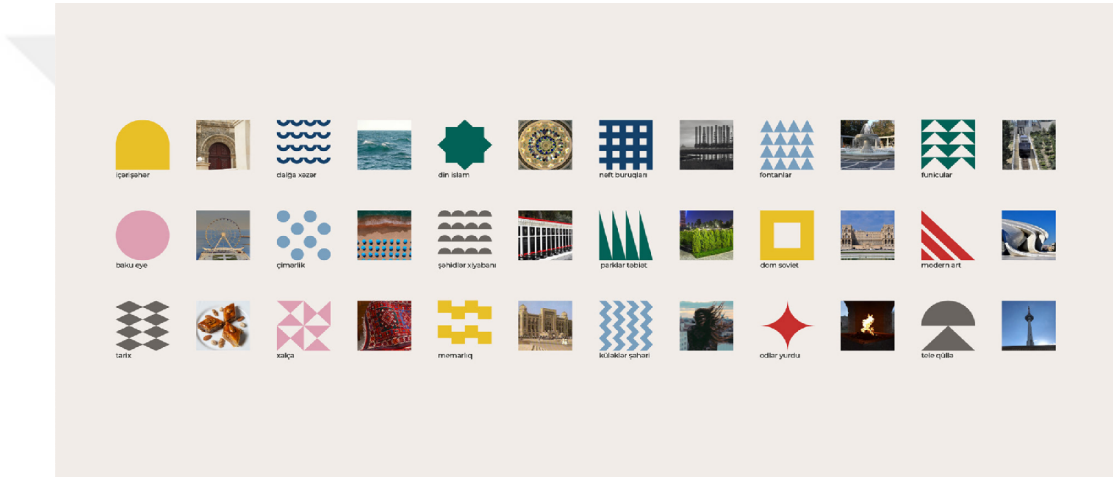
Figure 8. The Logo of Baku

To summarize, it can be obtained from the chapter that several studies in the literature have revealed different components in the success of a city in terms of branding process. It seems that there is no one single approach or a rule / an element /a dimension for a successful city branding. Hence, selected city examples have been investigated by accentuating the ever-changing process of their city brand identity. Also, it has been noticed that city branding efforts focusing mainly on the evolvement of the selected city's logos as a key element of a brand's visual identity. Within this context, it can be concluded that, although cities are utilizing different theories of branding, in fact, each city walks this path by melting distinctive features in its own pot and determining its own dynamics in its branding story. Within this context, in the following sections, the thesis will examine the unique branding story of Izmir in detail.

CHAPTER 3: STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN CITY BRANDING

In today's dynamic and interconnected world, cities recognize the significance of engaging various stakeholders in the branding process. In other words, stakeholder involvement is crucial in city branding as it ensures a deep understanding of the local context, fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, and leverages the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders. By embracing stakeholder engagement, cities can create a compelling and resonant brand that truly reflects their unique identity and aspirations.

3.1. City branding vs. Product Branding

City branding differs from a traditional product branding process, since it is a more complex, multifaceted, and collaborative process. It encompasses a broader range of stakeholders, emotional and symbolic attributes, long-term perspectives, and requires coordinated efforts across various sectors to shape the identity and perception of a city. Specifically, involving multiple stakeholders, including residents, businesses, government entities, community organizations, and tourists leads the process of city branding to be more complicated than product branding from several aspects. According to Cozmiuc (2011), city branding and product branding differs in terms of six characteristics, namely offer, benefits, image, purpose, owner and targets. As illustrated in Table 1, for instance, although the target is well segmented in product branding, it is mentioned as hard to define in terms of city branding. Similarly, the two processes differ in terms of the image. Although city brand image is determined as diversified and complicated, product brand image, form other side, is said to be simple, as well as clear. Also, stakeholders are seen as the owner of the city brand, whereas product brands have only one owner. Moreover, since both branding efforts are sharing emotional benefits, product branding also includes functional ones, according to Cozmiuc (2011).

Thus, there is a need to identify different stakeholders in a precise way by emphasizing who the owner, the decision maker and the user is, while pointing out tourists, as well as citizens. Accordingly, stakeholder relations should be analyzed in detail since the stakeholder involvement is among the key factors for the success of the city branding process. To do this, a conceptual framework is needed to be examined to be able to

answer a key question: How (in what ways) the stakeholders will be involved in the city branding process? Thus, the rest of this section will justify the importance of the stakeholder engagement through city branding literature by also supporting the idea with selected city branding examples.

Table 1. Differences between city brand and product brand

Characteristics	City Brand	Product Brand
Offer	No tangible offer: places, tourist attractions, natural resources, people, history, culture	Product or a service
Benefits	Emotional	Functional and Emotional
Image	Diversify, complicated	Simple, clear
Purpose	Promoting the city image	Increase sales, developing new relations
Owner	Stakeholders	One owner
Target	Hard to define	Well segmented

3.2. Literature Review

Going back in history, the issue of stakeholder involvement has first been theorized through the notion of "the Right to the City". A French sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, was the one who first came up with the idea in his book. He describes the Right to the City as the right of urban society to participate in the traits and benefits of city life (Lefebvre, 1968). Lefebvre's concept was adopted in the domains of geography and urban planning during the 1990s, and it became a slogan for many social movements. In addition, the demand for the Right to the City, is a way of request for all city residents, according to the social theorist David Harvey. He also argues that:

> *"The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city."* (Harvey, 2008).

For the last decade, a well-established body of literature has arisen regarding stakeholder theory and management, as well as stakeholder analysis which is among the most important duties throughout strategy making. Stakeholder analysis has gained importance and become a popular method for understanding policy making and policy implementation in a variety of disciplines, for instance place branding (Kavaratzis, 2012; Stubbs and Warnaby, 2015; Hanna and Rowley , 2015; Warnaby, 2009; Aitken and Campelo, 2011; Jernsand and Kraff, 2015), urban transformation (Höijertz, 2013; Song et al., 2016), urban renewal (Zhuang et al., 2019), sustainable city projects (Zhan et al. 2017), and environmental marketing (Cronin et al., 2011; Polonsky, 1995).

3.2.1. The role of stakeholders in city branding

Kavaratzis (2012) discusses the role of stakeholders in the formation, development, and ownership of place brands in the field of place branding. The article acknowledges the growing debate on the significance of stakeholders and highlights the urgent need to reconsider place branding in order to foster greater participation. Similarly, Stubbs and Warnaby (2015) examine the importance of stakeholders in the development of place branding strategies, emphasizing the value of understanding their perspectives and opinions about the location being branded. Hanna and Rowley (2015) conduct a literature review that encompasses various studies on applying branding concepts to different geographical entities, including countries and towns, and explore the challenges of branding the multifaceted notion of "place," particularly in terms of stakeholder involvement. Warnaby (2009) presents an emerging idea of place branding that adopts a stakeholder approach and emphasizes co-creation. Aitken and Campelo (2011) propose a research perspective advocating for a bottom-up, co-creation paradigm to establish a place brand, asserting that brand ownership is determined by how well the depiction of the location aligns with the community's experiences. They argue that such an approach is crucial for achieving brand authenticity, stakeholder commitment, and brand sustainability. Examining the case of Dunga Beach in Kisumu, Kenya, Jernsand and Kraff (2015) highlight the necessity of involving a wide range of stakeholders to secure long-term commitment and legitimacy in place branding efforts. They stress the need for novel approaches to the process itself, allowing it to be interactive and adaptable. The article provides a detailed description of how a place branding process can be implemented in practice and illustrates how design can be utilized to foster community engagement.

Even though Morgan et al. (2003) argues that city branding may likely to be a tough process due to the participation of different stakeholders, it is still especially underlined that the main stakeholder groups, as knowledge partners from both public and private sectors, should be more involved in the city branding process by several scholars, namely Buhalis, (2000) and Bisani et al. (2021). Hence, Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015), and Kavaratzis (2017) are among the advocates that all places and their brands can be regarded of as the result of social interactions between stakeholders.

According to Hankinson (2004), place branding is essentially a system of relationships amongst stakeholder groups. Presenting a model of place branding as a relationship with consumers and other stakeholders, the paper also emphasizes behaviors rather than messages and reality rather than image.

International researchers also support the idea that stakeholder involvement plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of city branding. Drawing on the governance literature, which suggests that stakeholder involvement increases the likelihood of successful governance processes, Klijn et al. (2012) assert that place branding exhibits strong governance characteristics due to its involvement of various actors, including government entities. Consequently, their study aims to investigate whether stakeholder involvement contributes to a clearer brand concept and increased effectiveness in attracting target audiences for city brands. The results indicate that incorporating stakeholders does make a difference and enhances the clarity of the brand concept.

Moreover, according to the research conducted by Riza et al. (2012) and Henninger (2016), stakeholder involvement strengthens the competitive advantage to some extent. Riza et al. (2012) claims that the image of a city or a place has a significant impact on people' and tourists' well-being and satisfaction. Similarly, Henninger (2016) examines the role of stakeholder engagement in the city branding process, focusing on two post-industrial cities, Sheffield in the UK and Essen in Germany. Through a multi-case study approach that includes semi-structured interviews and semiotic analysis, the preliminary findings of this qualitative research highlight the importance of involving willing stakeholders in the branding process. The study suggests that excluding stakeholders may lead to the loss of elements related to a heritage-based identity.

3.2.2. Integration of stakeholders into city branding

Some scholars argue for a more comprehensive integration of place branding with other policy interests. Eshuis and Edwards (2013) explore the concept of branding as a governance tool for managing perceptions. They address concerns regarding branding being perceived as spin that hinders citizens' understanding of government policies. The article specifically examines the democratic legitimacy of branding in urban governance. Also, Zenker and Erfgen (2014) aims at proposing a collaborative approach to place branding by provides guidance on how to incorporate a participatory place branding strategy into place management practice.

Kavaratzis (2012), and Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) are another two articles that supports the development of more inclusive, bottom-up, and participatory governance techniques which allow for better stakeholder participation (Zenker and Petersen, 2014; Gonzales and Gale, 2020). The most important findings of Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) highlights the need for "a collective understanding and appreciation of place marketing, the achievement of wide cooperation and clear role allocation, the implementation of marketing as a long-term process and the expansion of marketing understanding to fields other than tourism development".

City branding concepts also seem to be enriched and deepened through stakeholder engagement by introducing new perspectives and ideas, as well as opinions (Dinnie, 2010). For example, the study by Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) attempts to rethink place branding by looking at how people build them in their minds in detail.

Moreover, certain scholars emphasize the importance of involving experts in city branding and adopting a more instrumental approach. On the other hand, others argue that a citizen-centric, inclusive, and socially oriented branding approach is more suitable for urban governance. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach to describe the multidimensional character of territorial branding and citizen involvement, Hereźniak (2017) explores various approaches and tools for involving residents in place branding are examined. The research views place branding as both a public policy and a governance process, and emphasizes the concept of participatory place branding. The study by Joo and Seo (2018) also demonstrates the transformative role of city branding in the formation of a global city's local identity, in the case of Seoul. The results suggest that the existing "external–internal" city-branding paradigm be expanded to

include a "transformational-enhancing" dimension. In a study conducted by Paganoni (2012), an analysis is conducted on the websites of 12 British city councils using a socio-semiotic approach and insights from urban studies. The objective is to understand how web-mediated communication, aligned with the modernization agenda promoted by local authorities, can effectively represent and amplify the voices of diverse urban communities, including multicultural and migrant populations. Ma et al. (2021) conducted a recent study that highlights the increasing sophistication in the progression from city promotion to city marketing and ultimately to city branding, taking into account the objectives and unique attributes of various city branding strategies. The research suggests a positive correlation between the level of urban development in cities and the adoption of branding strategies.

3.2.3. Classification of key stakeholders in city branding

Considering city branding efforts from a broader perspective, besides the citizens it is obvious that the city also needed strong and visionary stakeholders who are able decide to become a brand city such as Governorship, Provincial-District Municipalities, Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Development Agency Representatives, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Deputies, Consulates, District Governors, Civil Society etc. In his book, Kavaratzis et al. (2014) defines the so-called various stakeholders as follows:

- o Residents

- o Politicians

- o Governmental Organizations

- o Promotion Agencies

- o Infrastructure And Transport Providers

- o Cultural And Sport Organizations

- o Business

- o Academic Organizations and Schools

- o Religious Organizations

and they also underlined the importance of stakeholder involvement in the city branding process as follows:

"Finding a common vision and brand positioning is not always easy, and it takes time and energy, but can be an extremely valuable way of uniting a group of disparate stakeholders' goals."

Another study conducted by Beckmann and Zenker (2012) has classified key stakeholders of place branding under four core groups, namely visitors, residents, public and private, and media. The researchers have also distinguished several subgroups, each with their own set of interests. The first group consists of business and leisure visitors, as well as professionals like archaeologists and architects. The second group comprises individuals who reside and work within the area, including both internal and external residents. Public services, commercial industry, and non-governmental organizations make up the third category of stakeholders. The media make up the fourth group. Figure 9 illustrates the matrix of key stakeholder groups in detail.
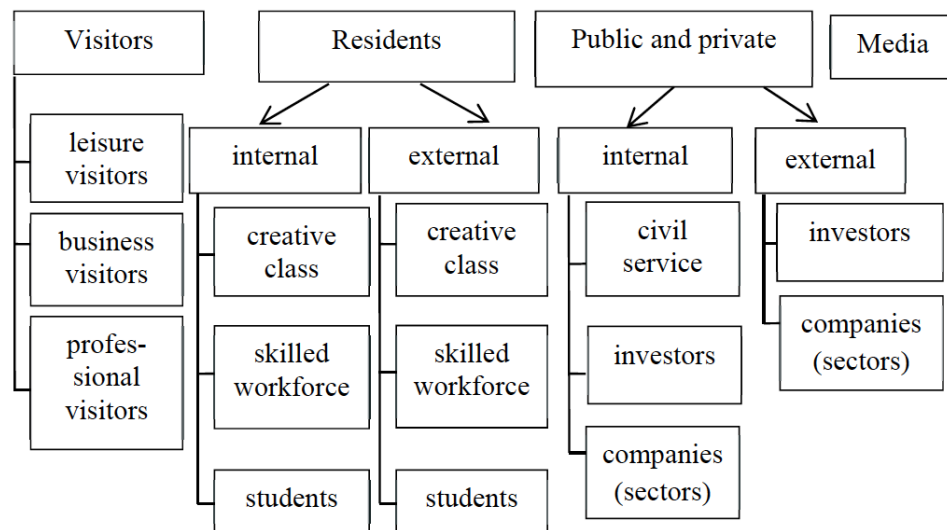
Figure 9. Stakeholders in Place Branding

Considering the place branding strategy for Saint Petersburg, another study also recommended a categorization for the target audience of place branding, since the researchers contend that neither of the techniques offered can fully represent the full range of potential stakeholder groups (Kulibanova and Teor, 2017). In the classification, tourists (both leisure and commercial) and business (large or small), for instance, are not said as homogeneous. In addition, the media plays a crucial and

distinct role in the communication process, as it serves as a platform through which direct or indirect engagement with target audiences can occur. It is regarded as both a means and an objective in the overall communication process. Also, each group has divided into subgroups, each of whose interests are thoroughly investigated in the study (Figure 10).
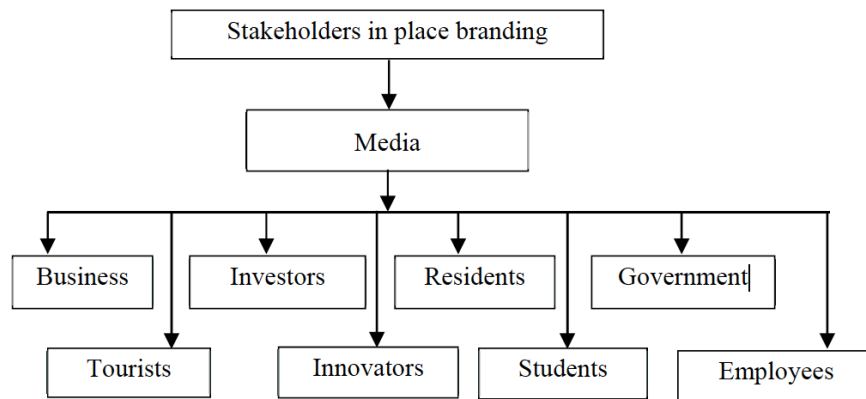
Figure 10. Target Audience of Place Branding

The study of Bisani (2019) allocated stakeholders in the case of Northampton into two groups: institutional and community. Institutional stakeholders refer to individuals who hold administrative or executive positions within place governance institutions. They possess the authority to directly impact the allocation of resources and decision-making processes in order to achieve their institutional objectives. On the other hand, community stakeholders are individuals who actively participate in civic, social, or volunteer activities within their community. They have a deep sense of pride and belonging to the community.

3.2.4. The involvement of residents

Among those, specifically residents are highlighted as active participants and co-producers of public products, services, and policies in place branding, not merely passive beneficiaries, or place customers (Freire, 2009; Hospers, 2010; Olsson and Berglund, 2009; Jernsand and Kraff, 2015). As a result, they are increasingly demanding a more active involvement in place branding strategies (Braun et al., 2013; Kavaratzis, 2012).

A well-structured approach for the residents has identified in the research conducted by Braun et al. (2013). Considering residents as the target group of place branding, the study identifies the three-fold role of the residents as follows:

1. Residents as Integrated Part of a Place Brand

2. Residents as Ambassadors for Their Place Brand

3. Residents as Citizens

In the first approach, residents are an integrated part of a place brand. Here, a city could have made more attractive to visitors, new residents, investors, and companies through the residents' characteristics and behavior, as well as reputation. As mentioned before, the participation of stakeholders in the city/place branding process is one of the most crucial elements in ensuring strategic success. In numerous studies, it is stated that the presence of stakeholders and a collective cooperation in the process of creating a city brand will increase success. (Yusof and Ismail, 2015; Campelo et al., 2013; Konecnik and Go, 2008; Choo et al., 2011; Houghton ad Stevens, 2011). Similarly, according to İlgüner and Asplund (2011), there are five basic elements that shape success in a city branding process. One of them is that people living in that area are responsible for these branding efforts, that is, decisions have made at the local level.

The second perspective suggests that residents have the potential to serve as ambassadors for their place brand. They have the ability to lend credibility to any message conveyed by city authorities, which can significantly influence the image and reputation of their city. In essence, residents play a pivotal role in shaping and upholding the brand of their city. Studies in the literature also argues that one of the prominent concepts in city marketing and city branding studies is the city brand ambassadors. The support of city residents is essential to deliver a consistent brand promise (Choo and Park, 2009). Also, according to Braun et al. (2010), the process of building a successful city brand is not sustainable without the participation and support of city residents, who are the city's brand ambassadors. Residents can become brand ambassadors of their cities to attract new visitors through positive word of mouth (Ambroise et al., 2014). City brand ambassadors are considered a cost-effective method of promoting a city, as they make a valuable contribution to enhancing the city's distinctiveness and appeal through word-of-mouth communication. This approach relies on the reliability and authenticity of these ambassadors in promoting the unique qualities of the city (Andersson and Ekman, 2009).

Within the third and the last approach residents are also citizens and are vital for the political legitimization of the whole marketing endeavor. According to Zenker and

Efrgen (2014) this 3-stage process encourages a strategic approach to citizen involvement. Moreover, Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) seems the citizens as a necessary requirement to ensure effective stakeholder involvement.

3.2.5. Citizen involvement

Being a brand consists of a vast amount of long-term and continuous activities and the benefit of city branding efforts are twofold: it will benefit the city as well as economically and socially for the public. From this point of view, it is important that the public sincerely support branding activities and adapt to change. Citizens also play an important role through the city branding process. In a globalizing world, as cities become more compatible not just to draw the attention of tourists to visit or to invest but also to create a positive reputation (Bastaman, 2018; Alaux et al., 2019), in order to be a brand city, it is important for city residents to embrace their unique values. It does not seem possible to make a city a brand by adopting only a top-down approach without the cooperation of citizens. Working in a coordinated manner with the residents, their expectations should be noticed, as well as their needs should not be neglected. So, at the end, every successful city branding should have these elements: It should be about citizens, not just about city leaders.

According to Bassler et al. (2008), a process that engages citizens can also:

- o Increase the likelihood that projects or solutions will be widely accepted.

- o Create more effective solutions.

- o Improve citizens' knowledge and skills in problem solving.

- o Empower and integrate people from diverse backgrounds.

- o Create local networks of community members.

- o Create several opportunities for discussing concerns.

- o Increase trust in community organizations and local governance.

3.2.6. The role of the design & designer

Moreover, in the recent literature there are also several studies that emphasize the importance of the designer as a stakeholder in the city branding process. Lau and Leung (2005) assert that the integration of graphic design, architecture, interior design, product design, and design strategy has given rise to a multidisciplinary approach to

city branding. This approach enables cities and nations to leverage expertise that was traditionally limited to corporate clients, leading to the creation of new synergies and supporting cultural, economic, and social development. The authors emphasize that design plays a crucial role in achieving the objectives of city branding, and the success of city branding initiatives can be directly attributed to the contributions of all design disciplines.

A recent study conducted by Wiratama et al. (2020), for instance, identifies the design role as a dominant actor through mapping and evaluating the city brand logo design models of Indonesia. By doing this, the study aimed that both designers and city governments would benefit from mapping and assessing the city brand logo design approach, as it will help them grasp the critical role of graphic design, as well as designer, in city branding and avoid the "common mistakes" of city branding cases. Thus, the results highlight some weaknesses such as society dysfunction as designer in one method, while also emphasizes that design experts had fill in their role in design process in another method. Also, a valuable recommendation has been made considering the involvement of all stakeholders such as government, experts, designer, society, to increase a sense of ownership of a city brand in the city branding process.

Likewise, Dinnie (2011) argues that in order to foster a more effective design approach and stimulate creativity, designers should not merely act as visual composers, but should also be engaged as stakeholders from the early stages of research. This involvement allows designers to have a deeper understanding of the project and its context, enabling them to contribute more meaningfully to the overall design process. By integrating designers as active stakeholders, their insights and expertise can be harnessed to shape the direction and outcomes of the project, leading to more impactful and successful design solutions.

It was obtained from the recent literature that there is a gap in research regarding the role of designer as a stakeholder in city branding process, led to draw attention to the need for examining the subject comprehensively.

3.3. City Branding Case Studies That Utilized Stakeholder Engagement

There are city branding examples in the literature related to the stakeholder engagement that supports the idea of citizen involvement.

A significant portion of the brand analysis and conceptualization endeavors have

primarily relied on engaging the community through various research methods such as surveys, social consultations, voting, and other interactive platforms like websites, discussion forums, and mobile applications (crowdsourcing). An intriguing illustration of this approach is the B-Berlin project, which seeks to identify the values, impressions, and associations that the residents of Berlin hold towards their city. The project posed a series of questions to the community members to gather their insights and perspectives:

(i)   What are the three fundamental traits of Berlin?

(ii)   How do you recognize that you are in Berlin?

(iii)   When do you feel like a Berliner?

Social media and internet polls are used to assist this campaign, ensuring an extensive involvement. Furthermore, it takes place in public settings, with residents' writing down their ideas on B-shaped boards located across the city.

After the campaign in 2008, a fresh mission statement was created with the intention of revitalizing the city, identifying its core values, and showcasing its unique strengths. The objective was to reignite the passion that Berliners have for their city. In order to foster a sense of unity among the residents, a platform was established called the Berlin shared living communities. This platform provided an opportunity for all Berliners to engage in discussions about the mission statement and the new attributes that define their city. Through these shared living communities, Berliners could come together to exchange ideas and perspectives, contributing to the ongoing development and evolution of their beloved city. (Figure 11).

Six diverse Berlin communities brought together individuals from different backgrounds, including newcomers and native Berliners, influencers and entrepreneurs, and musicians and founders of refugee networks. Within these communities, participants engaged in discussions about the most pressing issues related to cohabitation in Berlin. They delved into the core principles that define the city, such as freedom, tolerance, and individualism, and explored how these principles can be integrated into a collective identity. Despite the varying perspectives within the communities, there was unanimous agreement on one crucial point: Berlin's success as a city and its ability to maintain its pioneering spirit relied on collaboration and cooperation among its residents. The participants recognized that the city's unique

qualities should not be viewed as obstacles to a shared identity, but rather as integral elements that contribute to its vibrant and inclusive nature. Through these discussions, the participants highlighted the importance of unity and collective efforts in fostering a thriving and cherished home for all Berliners. Their shared goal was to work together to ensure that Berlin continues to flourish and uphold its reputation as a city that embraces diversity, innovation, and cooperation (wir.berlin, 2023).

Figure 11. Berlin's shared residential communities

One of the most well-received projects in terms of brand expression/experience is "Curators of Sweden", in which the government gave over control of the official Swedish Twitter account to citizens (curators). On a weekly basis, a Swedish individual is selected to serve as a representative of their country on Twitter. This person shares content related to their personal life, profession, and interests, providing a glimpse into their unique experiences and perspectives. The experiment, which has been running since 2011, has helped Sweden achieve a large number of Twitter followers, created significant media coverage without the need of advertising, and motivated other countries to follow the same model (Reuters, 2012).

Figure 12. Curators of Sweden (Source: adforum.com, 2023)

An interesting illustration can be found in the small Spanish city of Jun, where each individual possesses their own Twitter account, enabling them to engage with the mayor and other government officials directly. Through these accounts, residents address a wide range of topics, including everyday issues like broken streetlights, as well as sharing personal thoughts on social media and discussing broader civic challenges. This unconventional approach to governance, although not immune to criticism, has fostered community integration and propelled the international recognition of Jun, despite its modest population of 200,000. Remarkably, the city has amassed a substantial following of 400,000 Twitter users, showcasing how non-traditional place management strategies can generate external impact even without substantial investments in conventional city branding initiatives (The Guardian, 2015).

An illustrative case of citizen involvement in public engagement is "Neighborland," an interactive platform developed in the United States. This project serves as an

example of how city agencies can connect with residents, fostering meaningful relationships. Through the Neighborland website, approximately 200 businesses have engaged with over 750,000 citizens thus far. The platform allows residents to contribute their own suggestions and ideas to contribute to the transformation of their communities in various aspects, including infrastructure, science, and social development. Subsequently, these projects are evaluated by fellow citizens, who determine their viability and worthiness for further pursuit. The Neighborland initiative empowers residents to actively participate in shaping their neighborhoods and promotes a sense of collective decision-making (Neighborland Website, 2021).
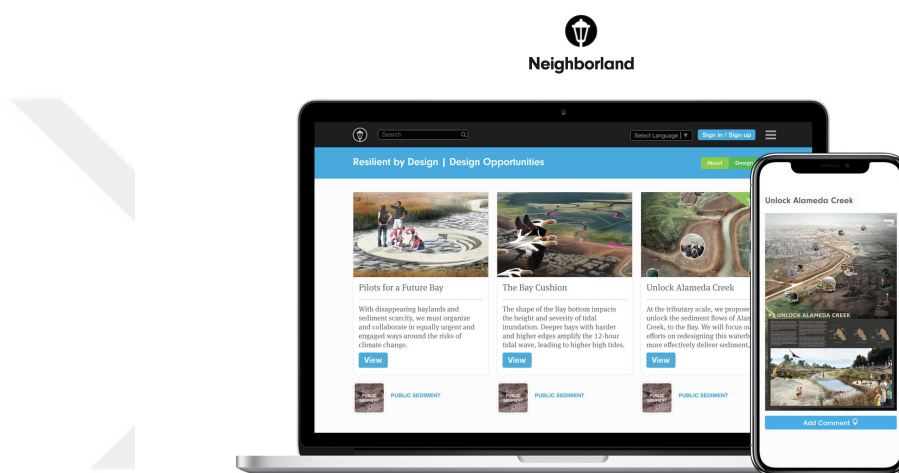
Figure 13. Neighborland Website (Source: neigborland.com, 2023)

The city of Łódź in Poland has embraced citizen involvement by establishing a dedicated website that enables residents to access information and participate in decision-making regarding bottom-up projects from various neighborhoods. This innovative platform also allows residents to vote on the projects that will receive support from the city budget. By involving citizens in this process, Łódź aims to empower its residents, promote transparency, and ensure that the city's resources are allocated in accordance with the community's needs and aspirations. This approach encourages active participation and fosters a sense of ownership among residents, ultimately leading to a more inclusive and responsive urban governance model. (Hanzl, 2011).

"Play Melbourne" is an innovative initiative driven by citizens, aimed at enhancing the international brand of the city. It utilizes state-of-the-art technology to engage with

audiences and promote Melbourne as a vibrant destination. At the center of the campaign is the "Play Melbourne Live" device, which takes the form of a ball-shaped device equipped with a phone capable of using Periscope, a live video streaming platform. This experimental approach to destination marketing allows for real-time interactions and immersive experiences, enabling people around the world to virtually explore and engage with the city of Melbourne. By leveraging cutting-edge technology and citizen participation, "Play Melbourne" seeks to create a dynamic and compelling brand image for the city, showcasing its unique attractions and fostering global awareness and interest (campaignlive.com, 2016). This ball is carried around Melbourne by local city residents who serve as tour guides for an interactive live tour of the city. The audience has also the opportunity to ask questions and instruct the guide too (Hereźniak, 2017).

Figure 14. Play Melbourne

In Kalandides' (2011) work, the author emphasizes the emergence of a shared vision for Bogotá that arises from collaborative focus group workshops. This shared vision can be described as a collective utopian aspiration, representing the idealized future state that Bogotá has the potential to achieve. Through the engagement and participation of various stakeholders, a common understanding of the city's potential and possibilities is formed, inspiring a shared dream of the city's transformation. This vision serves as a guiding force, motivating and mobilizing efforts towards realizing a more desirable and prosperous Bogotá.

Hamburg has implemented a notable approach by establishing a dedicated website (http://marketing.hamburg.de) to provide a public service for city branding. This website offers a wide range of press materials, images, and promotional material

templates that can be freely accessed and utilized. By providing these resources, Hamburg ensures a shared pool of reliable and validated materials that effectively capture the core elements of city branding, such as showcasing Hamburg as a "city on the water" through a diverse collection of photographs. This approach stands out as an exemplary model of providing assistance and guidance to participants without imposing limitations on their ability to shape and promote their own location's brand. It allows for flexibility and creativity while ensuring access to high-quality branding materials that align with the city's overall brand image.

Bisani (2019) conducted research on region brand management and presented a model that highlights the significance of stakeholder management and collaboration in the context of Northampton. The study emphasizes the importance of providing all stakeholders with opportunities to participate in the place branding process. Through a two-phase study involving semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the research explores three types of relationships and examines the theory of stakeholder engagement. The preliminary findings provide valuable insights into the perspectives of various stakeholders regarding their engagement in Northamptonshire. The research sheds light on the importance of stakeholder involvement and offers valuable information for effective place branding strategies in the region.

Maheswari et al. (2014) conducted a study that investigates the relationship between stakeholders, place branding, and sustainable business development in the City of Liverpool. The research examines the roles and interrelationships of different stakeholder groups involved in the development of place branding. This study makes significant contributions to the place branding literature by firstly identifying key stakeholders and categorizing them into brand creators and brand drivers. Secondly, it analyzes the link between these stakeholder groups, place branding, and the development of businesses in a comprehensive manner. A visual representation of these relationships can be observed in Figure 15, as presented in the research. Overall, this study offers valuable insights into the dynamics between stakeholders, place branding, and sustainable business growth, particularly in the context of Liverpool.
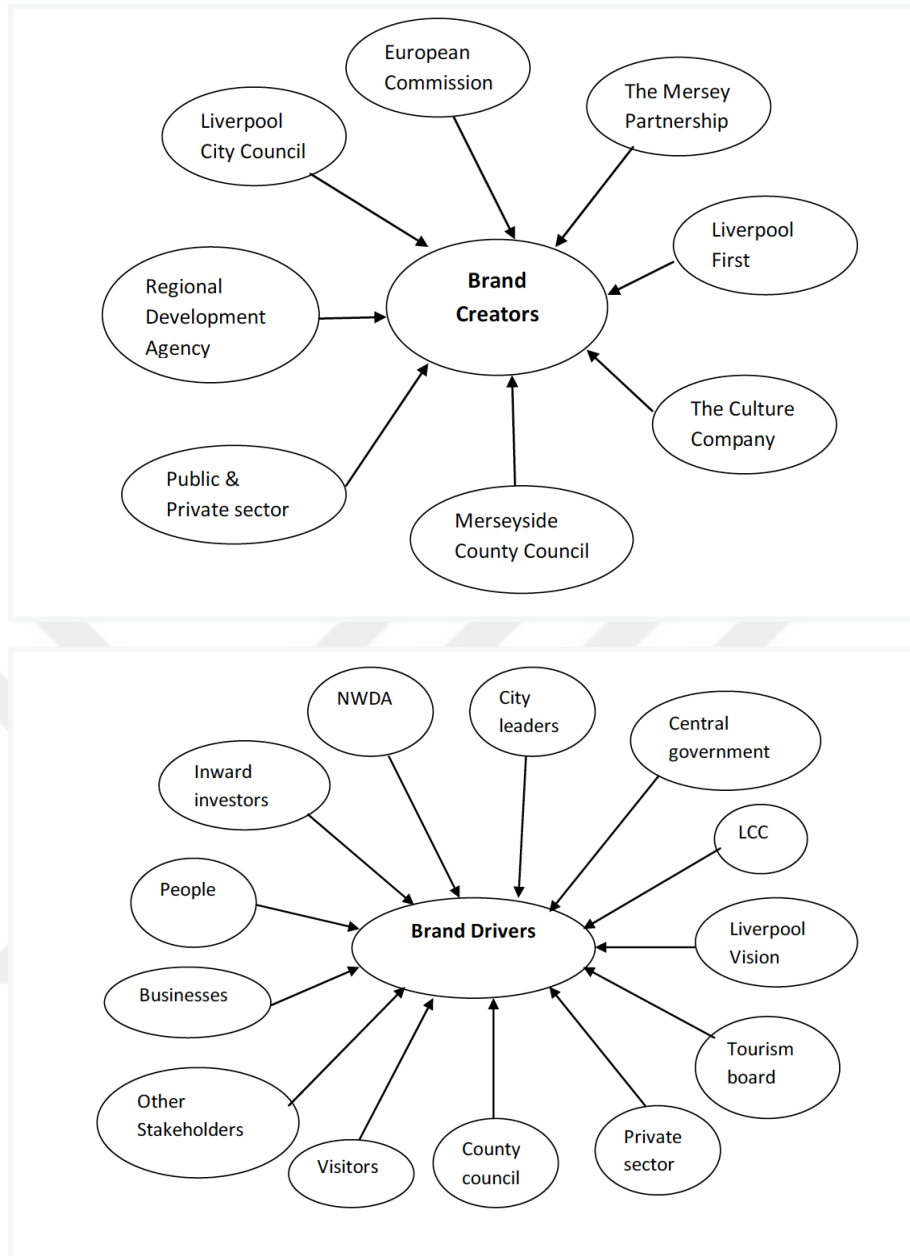
Figure 15. Brand Creators and Brand Drivers

The study conducted by Maheswari et al. (2014) involved conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from various key stakeholder groups. These interviews aimed to explore the perspectives and roles of these stakeholders in the context of place branding.

As a result of this research, a relationship framework was developed, illustrating the dynamic and interconnected roles of different stakeholders in the process of place branding. This framework serves as a platform for understanding and facilitating business development within the context of place branding.

Accordingly, Figure 16 illustrates the stakeholders involved in developing and shaping a place brand, categorized as brand creators and brand drivers. The brand creators are divided into initiators (segment A) and shapers (segment B), responsible for the initial development and ongoing refinement of the place brand. The brand drivers are also divided into followers and carriers. Followers are stakeholders closely associated with the initiators and are responsible for enhancing the exposure of the place brand image. They work to drive the brand's image effectively and create the desired level of brand exposure. On the other hand, carriers are stakeholders focused on expanding the place brand into new markets beyond the regular ones. They ensure global exposure rather than just a local, regional, or national focus. The relationship between the stakeholder groups indicates that the creation and shaping of a place brand require active participation from specific groups of stakeholders (brand creators), followed by the involvement of a separate group (brand drivers) that often works independently. The frameworks developed by the brand initiators and shapers provide guidance to the brand followers and carriers for enhancing the place brand. In summary, Figure 16 shows that the development and shaping of a place brand involve brand creators (initiators and shapers) and brand drivers (followers and carriers) who work together to establish and promote the brand image, with each group having distinct roles and responsibilities.
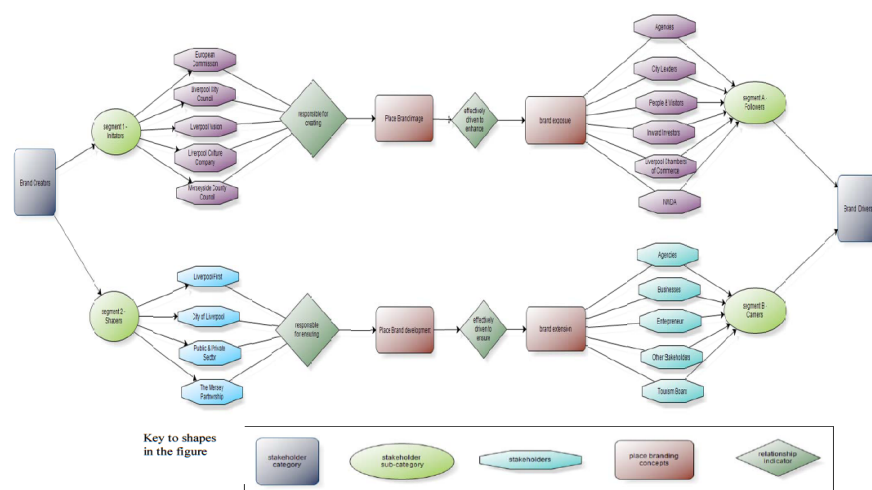
Figure 16. A Relationship Framework

In the case of Portugal, more symbols were created as a result of brand presentation of Porto, with many of them arising from stakeholder involvement in the brand's

development. As a result, the citizens engaged in the brand development process, although in a different way than the literature indicated. Only a few citizens were involved in the development of the brand, while the remaining only took part in the brand design after it had been fully envisaged (Silva Monteiro, 2016).

Figure 17. Porto City Identity – Graphic Design

Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) conducted a study to examine the concept of place brand identity from the perspective of the supply side. The research focused on Slovenia's country brand as a case study, which represented the country's first comprehensive branding strategy. The study proposed a new model of place brand identity that drew from principles of marketing, tourism, and sociological theory. To construct their research program, a holistic approach was adopted, involving key influencers and enactment stakeholders. This included specialists and opinion leaders from various sectors such as commerce, tourism, culture, science, sports, government, and civic matters, as well as the residents of the country. These individuals not only

played a role in shaping the brand identity but also held significance in the delivery of the brand. The research aimed to gain insights into the perspectives and contributions of these stakeholders in developing and promoting Slovenia's country brand. Their participation was crucial in aligning the brand identity with the aspirations and values of the nation, while also ensuring effective communication and implementation of the brand.

In the study, a theoretical model for destination brand identity has been proposed, which can be used to surface, communicate, and perform the features of a place identity brand (Figure 18).
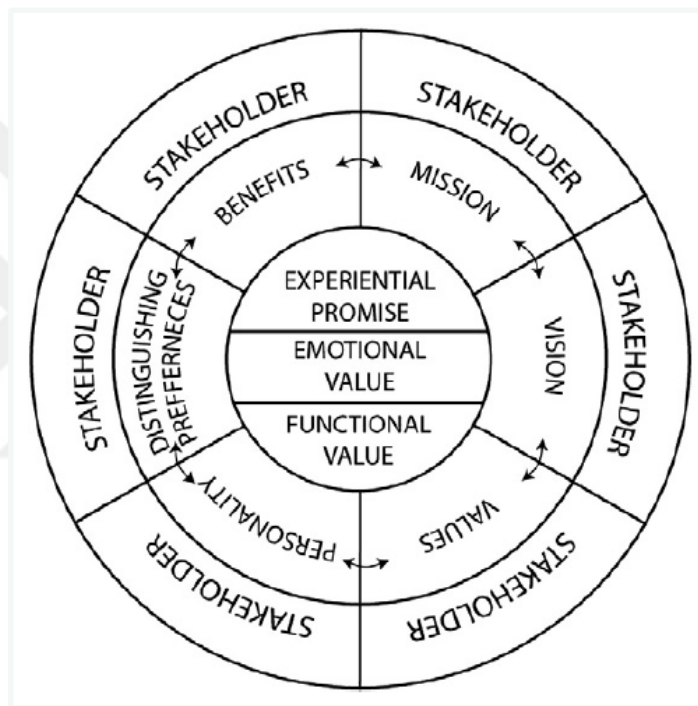
Figure 18. Destination brand identity model

In terms of methodology, the study conducted by Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) utilized a multi-step approach to collect primary data, following the review of secondary data. The data collection process involved three distinct groups of respondents, each representing a different stage of the study. In the first step, a qualitative study using the Delphi method was conducted. This involved engaging opinion leaders from key areas. The Delphi method is a structured communication technique that seeks to achieve a consensus among a panel of experts through a series of iterative questionnaires or interviews. Moving to the second step, a quantitative study was conducted with representatives selected from specific areas related to the

country brand. This step aimed to gather more structured and measurable data from a broader sample of participants. Finally, in the third step, a web-based survey was administered to the general public. This quantitative study aimed to collect data from a larger and more diverse sample of respondents, allowing for a broader perspective on the perceptions and attitudes towards the country brand.

By employing this three-step approach involving different groups of respondents, the study was able to gather comprehensive insights and perspectives on Slovenia's country brand, incorporating the opinions of opinion leaders, representatives from key areas, and the general public.
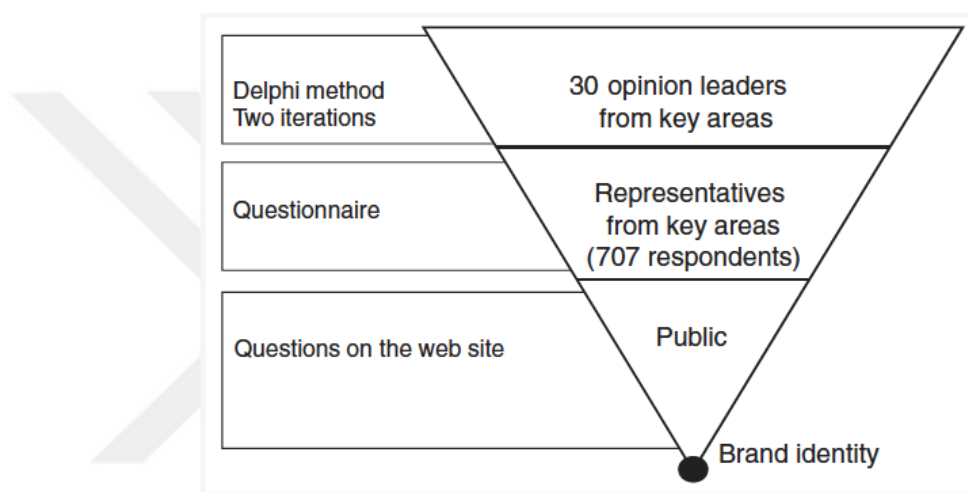
Figure 19. A three-step approach

During each step, the consultant and researcher team choose to include all stakeholders who would be involved in the brand's implementation. Based on the information gathered, the researchers also develop a brand identity in the end. An iterative method allowed stakeholders' comments to be used to change the brand's identity at each of the steps of the model.

Creative Dublin Alliance (2012) also publishes a discussion paper for the delivery of a roadmap for branding Dublin in 2012. Objectives for the Dublin Brand are to:

- "continue to attract investment,

- grow our tourism markets and increase tourism numbers to Dublin,

- ensure that Dublin remains a location of choice for top global talent,

- become a leading destination for international students,

- become a place where entrepreneurs want to set up a business,

  o raise awareness of Dublin to our export growth markets."

To achieve this Dublin, one of the key actions of the project was engaging with the citizens and residents of Dublin in the process. Accordingly, over 5,000 people have engaged in the Dublin Branding Project through more than seventy key interviews, two surveys and five workshops aiming at gathering primary data. Figure 20 illustrates selected context from stakeholder interviews. Within this context, the project also emphasizes that Dublin's main "brand assets" are its people as being the strongest ambassadors of a city's brand, and their potential for creativity and innovation.

Moreover, a touring exhibition has performed, namely Discovering Dublin's Identity. Also, over 100 publications and books have reviewed to obtain secondary data. Conducting a comprehensive city research, the paper further determines several selected indicators and delivers a benchmarking program from global to local for the city.

"People don't understand how good the Dublin package is."

"We undersell ourselves as a city."

"The small size of Dublin and the ability to make connections makes us unique."

"Dublin is a 'lifestyle' place – it's a personality – creativity is in our DNA – we have an aptitude to succeed in business."

"Dublin's strong performance puts Ireland Inc on the global map"

"Dublin is a gateway to Ireland and the world."

"Dublin has so much potential, however there is a need for greater engagement, interpretation, energy and effort to realise this"

"This is the time and opportunity for Dublin – we need to get out there and articulate Dublin's uniqueness in the global context."

Figure 20. Selected Stakeholder Interviews

In light of these examples, it can be concluded that the city branding process should be a communication-oriented and an interactive process created together with sustainable stakeholder engagement. As Braun et al. (2013) highlighted that the

residents are the ambassadors for their place branding, the need for the word-of-mouth marketing methods has emerged. Customizable social media campaigns and public interventions interacting with the target audience should reflect the city's shared experience and vision from the past. Moreover, city branding efforts need to incorporate with the organizations and related events revealing the stories and differentiating experiences of both the city and the citizens, as well as organic, long-term, and diverse stakeholder campaigns should be conducted. To sum up, the main notion regarding the city branding is that it is an integrated process of common experiences based on social relations existing in a place that is affected by historical, cultural, locational, natural, and economic aspects.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will identify research and methodology of the thesis in detail considering the case of Izmir. Izmir, Turkey has had many branding efforts throughout years as will be explained later in this chapter. However, it can be observed that these efforts have not been continuous or sustainable. Various branding initiatives have been undertaken in different periods, and even within the same period, different institutions have carried out distinct efforts in this field.

On the other hand, in recent years, branding efforts have gained momentum, making İzmir an excellent case study to examine from a contemporary branding perspective.

4.1. City Branding Processes of Izmir

Although Izmir has been involved in various city marketing and city branding activities since the early 2000s, there are still individual attempts rather than a coordinated and an integrated plan for the city. The city branding studies of Izmir have been managed by several institutions. As a matter of fact, there is only one comprehensive city branding project among various marketing attempts proposed by several key stakeholders such as Izmir Development Agency, Governorship, Municipalities and İzmir Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, there were a number of promotional activities in different fields such as UNESCO sites, Urla Gastronomy Branding, Wine Road, fairs, festivals, and alternative tourism (Pırnar and Kurtural, 2017). Yet, these branding efforts are lacking to aim at gathering them under one roof.

It is also understood from the brand identity of Izmir that there isn't any integrated and embedded campaign so far. Currently, we can mention three different logos used by three leading institutions of the city. These three logos below have been used by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Izmir Chamber of Commerce, and Izmir Development Agency, accordingly (Figure 21).

1)

2)

3)

Figure 21. Different Logos of Izmir (Source: hurriyet.com.tr, 2012; Youtube, 2018; izto.org.tr, 2023)

The most long-lasting and comprehensive logo among these three of them was the one with the Evil Eye (No.3), which was designed by the Izmir Development Agency within the scope of the Governorship. At first sight, it is remarkable that the design process of this logo is distinctive from others in terms of its methodology, since it started with perception research, and goals were determined based on these results.

The results of the perception research also led to prepare City Marketing Strategic Plan of Izmir (Izmir Development Agency, 2010)   accordingly (See Figure 22). Initially, a situation analysis was performed, and the perception research of Izmir was conducted. Next, through this perception, goals were set, and a marketing strategic plan for the city was created. The aim of Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan was to increase Izmir's recognition and reputation, as well as its income by adding value to the products and services produced in Izmir and increasing the number of the visitors /or tourists). A roadmap has also been prepared to attract more investors and tourists, and to improve the quality of life in Izmir. In this plan, for the years between 2010-2017, the main message was determined as "Izmir provides unforgettable experiences with its hidden gems"[2]. In addition, while the brand essence was determined as relaxed,

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[2] For details, see:
http://www.izka.org.tr/upload/Domain/izka/files/marka_kent/kentsel_pazarlama_ozet.pdf

warm, and modern, in the new plan, "Being Mediterranean" has been added to it and the key principle of the future brand has been created to be achieved.
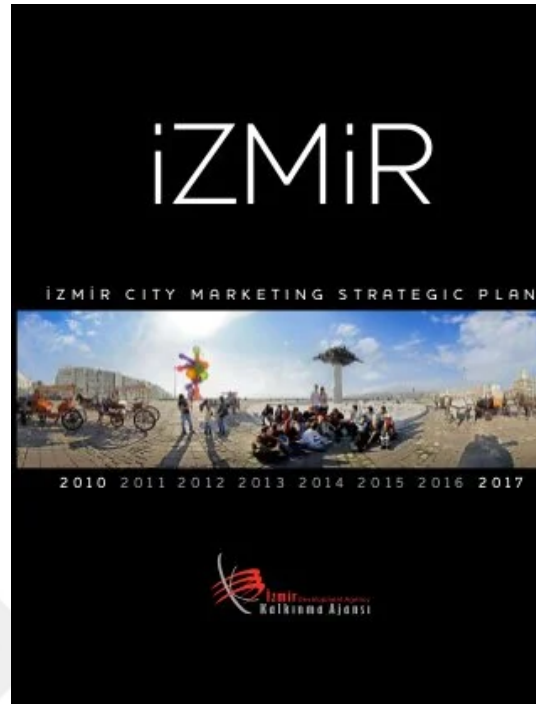
Figure 22. Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan

One of the most important parts of the report was creating an action plan. The action plan was prepared based on the vision including around 170 creative and innovative actions that will accelerate the standard of living and increase the number of tourists and the volume investments in Izmir. Within this context, several attempts have been made to achieve the success of the plan such as creating an investors' network, constructing monumental buildings, and hosting international events.

The plan also aimed that all citizens and the city lovers, as well as all institutions and foundations operating in the fields of advertisement, tourism and investment will be incorporated with this project to be able to reach the goals of the City Marketing Strategic Plan of Izmir. Unfortunately, it did not work out like that. As a result, the need for city branding of Izmir has been emerged through a visual identity study. Accordingly, "I Mean It" was decided as the design agency to establish brand identity for Izmir.

It must be said again that there has not been any effort for a general brand identity other than the "Evil Eye" logo. However, within this process and afterwards, the performance of the city in terms of advertisement and branding efforts has experienced

a decline due to the discussions between institutions, institutional conflict in terms of ownership, and long-term planning deficiencies. These difficulties also lead the plans not to be put into action (İzmir Foundation, 2021).

Later, the Izmir Tourism and Promotion Foundation was activated by the city leaders to undertake the task of branding Izmir. With the city alliance, branding activities for Izmir have started soon again. Based on the previous City Marketing Strategic Plan, "You Can't Get Enough of Izmir" (İzmir'e Doyamazsın) and "City of Izmir" campaigns have been implemented (Figure 23). However, it is important to note that none of the logos that were designed before having been used in both campaigns.
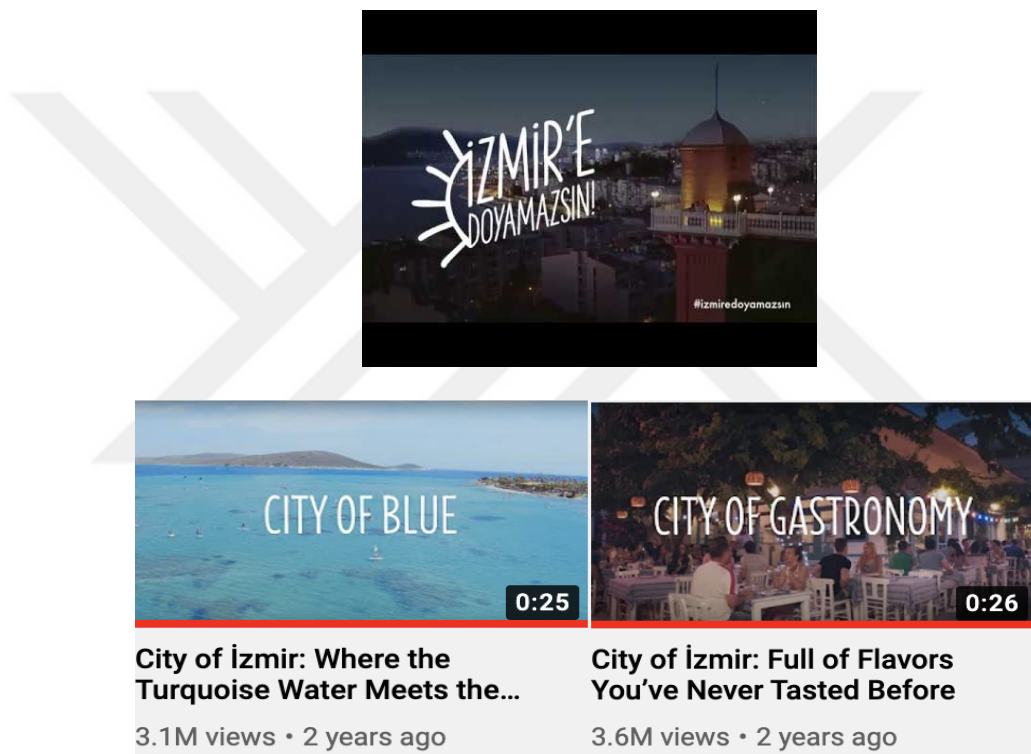
Figure 23. Visualization of Izmir City Marketing Strategic Plan (Source: Youtube, 2023)

As of 2019, the change in the local administration and the management of the Izmir Tourism and Promotion Foundation caused a vision change within the institution, and it was announced that the city branding studies for İzmir were started again. (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2021c)

In 2020, some visual presentations in the city started to attract attention and it was learned from the interviews with the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) that this is the first application of a city branding project (haberturk.com, 2020).

Figure 24. Izmir Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2024 (Source: Izmir Foundation, 2021)

Branding efforts of Izmir have been built upon the city's "Tourism Strategy and Action Plan" for the period of 2020-2024 (Figure 24). The Visit Izmir website and mobile app, which serves as the first component of the stated branding vision, provides access to textual and figurative information on all of Izmir's attractions by listing them in point form. The second step is to create all the tourism brands that will be used to promote Izmir over the following five years. To do so, it is aimed to build new brands that will appeal to potential tourists by drawing on the strengths of established brands

like UNESCO and Blue Flag. This strategy also calls for the deployment of Izmir-specific tourism brands like Fuar Izmir, Izmiras Routes, Made by Izmir, and the Orange Circle (See Figure 25).
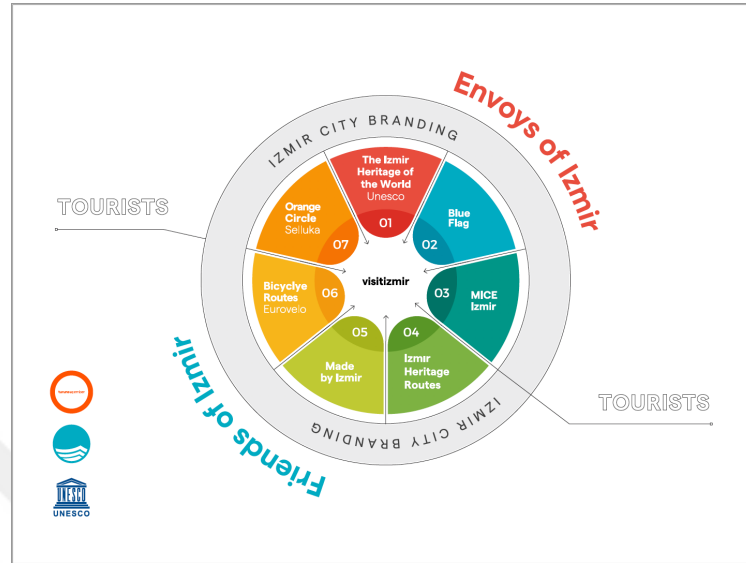
Figure 25. İzmir-specific tourism brands (Source: İzmir Vakfı, 2021).

These are the tourism brands and İzmir city branding covers all other efforts and activities. Several of these brands, as such Blue Flag, UNESCO, and EuroVelo, accredited with the international branding standards, while others have been recognized as providing only the local/regional standards.

The Blue Flag program is internationally renowned for recognizing marinas, beaches, and sustainable boat tourism operators for their commitment to certain standards. (Figure 26) To qualify for the Blue Flag, these entities must meet and maintain strict requirements related to environmental preservation, education, safety, and accessibility. The program aims to engage the public and encourage them to develop a deeper understanding of their surroundings and the environment. It serves as a means of connecting people with their natural surroundings and inspiring them to further explore and learn about the environment (blueflag.global, 2023; mavibayrak.org.tr, 2023). In the case of Izmir, Blue Flag is a brand used to acknowledge the sea tourism of the city. Aegean waters off the coast of Izmir stretch over 629 kilometers, 101 of which are occupied by natural beaches. A total of 52 Blue Flag beaches and 3 Blue Flag marinas have been found in the area since 2019.

Figure 26. The Blue Flag (Source: Instagram, 2021)

A World Heritage Site refers to a landmark or area that receives legal protection through a global agreement administered by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). These sites are designated by UNESCO based on their exceptional cultural, historical, scientific, or other significance. The assessment considers sites that possess cultural and natural heritage from various parts of the world, deemed to hold extraordinary value for humanity (UNESCO, 2023a). A World Heritage Site is selected based on its distinctive characteristics that are easily recognizable in terms of geography and history, as well as its exceptional cultural or physical significance. These sites can encompass a wide range of landmarks, including historical ruins, buildings, towns, deserts, forests, islands, lakes, monuments, mountains, and wilderness regions. World Heritage Sites are highly valued assets for cultural tourism, attracting visitors who seek to explore and experience their unique cultural and natural attributes. Having two areas, namely Bergama and Efes, been recorded in the UNESCO World Heritage List, İzmir is the province with the most UNESCO heritage sites in Turkey. Besides, Izmir has also three areas in the tentative list and two areas in the candidate list. (Figure 27) Thus, it can be concluded that Izmir has an important place in the tourism promotion strategy.
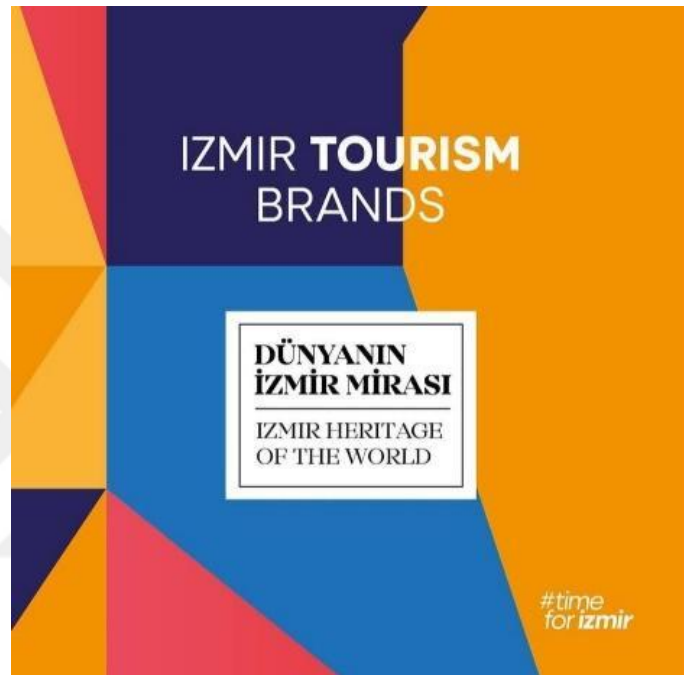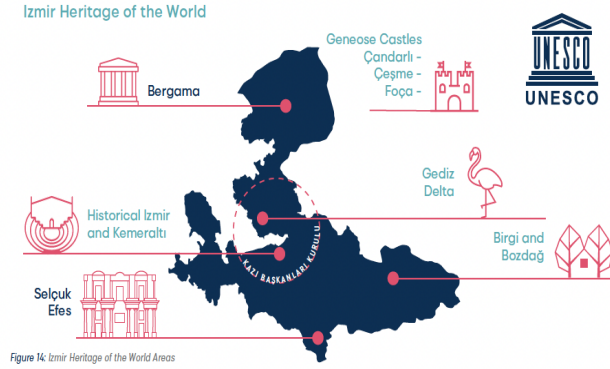
Figure 27. Izmir Heritage of the World Areas (Source: Instagram, 2021)

A system of 17 long-distance bicycle routes totaling over 90,000km of cycling itineraries known as EuroVelo connects and unites the whole European continent. The aim of the EuroVelo project, one of the most important projects of the European Cyclists Federation (ECF), is to promote and coordinate the creation, support, and operation of a sustainable Trans-European Transport Network throughout the European Continent (eurovela.com, 2023). As of July 2017, the application of Izmir has been reviewed and also been approved for the participation in the EuroVelo Cycling Network via route 8 (Figure 28). The EuroVelo 8 Mediterranean Route is suitable for the development of the Mediterranean Route by making use of the network relations it has established with the Mediterranean cities, which is one of the visions adopted by the Municipality of İzmir. The physical and social accessibility of the Mediterranean Route is also easy for İzmir, and the Mediterranean Route itself is

highly attractive due to its features and dynamics considering Cycling Network (veloizmir.org, 2023).

Figure 28. EuroVelo Routes in Izmir (Source: Instagram, 2021)

The Orange Circle certificate was introduced in İzmir with the aim of assisting businesses and airline companies in adapting to the post-pandemic normalization process and ensuring a safe environment for visitors. The certificate's objective is to establish İzmir as a trustworthy and hygienic tourism destination. It will be granted to businesses that meet the criteria defined by the Izmir Tourism Hygiene Board and successfully complete the required audits in accordance with relevant regulations. The Orange Circle certificate not only facilitates the adjustment of businesses and airlines to the current epidemic situation in İzmir but also strives to distinguish İzmir as a destination known for its cleanliness and reliability. Moreover, it seeks to recognize accommodation, food, and beverage establishments licensed by the municipality, as well as airline companies, that contribute to İzmir's status as a healthy city. By promoting these businesses on both domestic and international platforms, the Orange Circle aims to support and enhance İzmir's tourism sector (turuncucemberizmir.com, 2023). (Figure 29)

Figure 29. Orange Circle (Source: turuncucemberizmir.com)

Being one of the most important port cities of the Mediterranean, since the earliest times, Izmir has a unique location connecting the world trade routes. As a city where products from all over the world flow, the city has gathered everything in humanity's cultural repertoire along with goods and wealth. It brought cultures, beliefs, and ideas together, and formed a civilization of its own. The Izmir Foundation's Made by Izmir project traces the 8,500-year-old history and ancient nature of this city. It re-discovers each trace from the past to the present, explores its meanings, brings it together with the present and carries it to the future. Made by İzmir immortalizes the ancient design culture of İzmir. The Made by İzmir project took its first step with the inspiration it received from Bergama carpets. The uniquely beautiful Bergama carpets of Anatolian abstract art with their patterns and narratives took on a new form on the plates of Made by İzmir (visitizmir.org.tr, 2023a).

Figure 30. Visit Izmir (Source: Instagram, 2021)

Considering congress tourism - MICE İzmir, the city, which started the tradition of fair organization in Turkey, is known as the city of fairs and congresses. The ease of transportation to İzmir, the diversity of transportation possibilities, and the presence of road, air, sea and railway connections make the city stand out in terms of fair and congress tourism. Festival enthusiasm spreads throughout the year in İzmir. Numerous festivities, festivals and special day events are held in the center and districts of İzmir throughout the year. Visitors from all over the world have the chance to get to know and experience the traditional values of the region in these activities, which are held in many fields such as culture, agriculture, and sports (visitizmir.org.tr, 2023c). (Figure 31)

Figure 31. MICE Izmir (Source: Instagram, 2021)

A project called IzMiras Routes has been started in conjunction between the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and the Izmir Foundation. With five cycling and hiking routes beginning in the city center, IzMiras Routes aims to connect the city's edges with the nearby natural areas. (Figure 32) The İzMiras Route is a comprehensive and interconnected tourism initiative that links the city center of İzmir with its surrounding rural areas through a continuous walking path complemented by green infrastructure. This route offers a unique travel experience for both local and international tourists, allowing them to explore and engage with the rural communities, their way of life, cultural heritage, and local produce. By providing a high-quality travel experience, the İzMiras Route aims to preserve the ancient culture of the region, raise awareness about the natural surroundings, cultural heritage, historical sites, gastronomy, and rural areas of İzmir. It serves as a platform for visitors to experience and appreciate the rich diversity and authenticity of İzmir's rural areas while promoting sustainable tourism practices and fostering a deeper connection between travelers and the local communities (visitizmir.org.tr, 2023b).
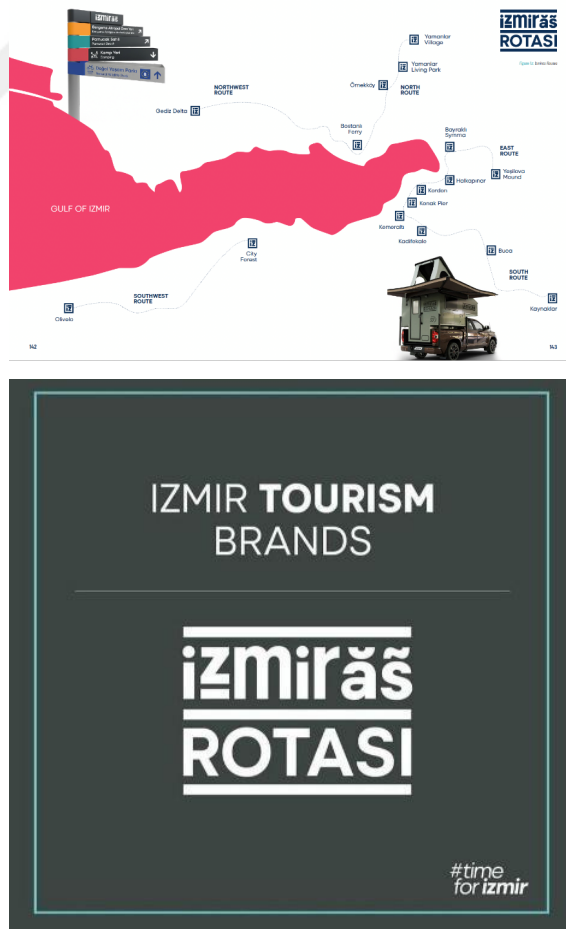
Figure 32. IzMiras Routes (Source: Instagram, 2021)

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Living Parks, large-scale green areas connected to the city center by IzMiras routes, where it is aimed at protecting and promoting the rural and natural areas in the city periphery. Living Parks brings together the protection of the ecosystem, agricultural production, and recreational use, which are considered separately. In Living Parks, functions such as meeting the recreation needs of the citizens and tourists, supporting ancient production methods in agriculture and branding local products, promoting, and protecting the natural flora and fauna are aimed to be built by 2024 in 35 Living Parks throughout İzmir (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2022). (Figure 33)

Figure 33. Living Parks (Source: Instagram, 2021)

As it can be noticed that, not only the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, but also the other efforts have also an effect on city branding and marketing activities of Izmir. Hence, the touches of the changing vision of Izmir can simply be followed, those efforts also need to be identified in detail.

Being the first and only municipality in Turkey to accept green infrastructure as an infrastructure issue, the strategy of living in harmony with nature, prepared by the Municipality of Izmir, is among the most significant examples. The main aim of the strategy is: to develop two basic features of the city: ecological richness and economy. Thus, to ensure that Izmir is a city resistant to natural disasters. Also, it is aimed at protecting the right to life of people and all other living things in our city. The essence of this strategy, which we have developed to eliminate the contrast between ecology

and economy, is to plan urban and rural areas as a whole, contrary to the conventional wisdom (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2020b).

The Cittaslow metropolis project, which supports the strategy within the scope of Transition to Nature-Based Living, is one of the most attractive projects in İzmir recently. During the Cittaslow 2021 General Assembly, İzmir was designated as the world's first pilot city for the Cittaslow Metropol initiative. This pioneering project aimed to integrate the concepts of urban living and the "slow life" philosophy, while prioritizing the well-being of its residents and upholding the city's values. The Cittaslow Metropol model focused on creating a people-centered, sustainable, and high-quality living environment. It consisted of six main themes: "Society," "Urban resilience," "Food for All," "Good Governance," "Mobility," and "Cittaslow Neighborhoods." Each theme encompassed specific criteria that guided the development and implementation of projects in İzmir over a one-year period. The ultimate goal was to enhance the overall quality of life in İzmir by promoting community engagement, fostering resilience, ensuring food accessibility, practicing good governance, improving mobility, and creating vibrant and sustainable neighborhoods (cittaslowmetropolizmir.org, 2023). (Figure 34)

Figure 34. Logo of Cittaslow (Source: cittaslowmetropolizmir.org, 2023)

On the other hand, steps are also being taken towards internationalization in order to introduce Izmir to the world. The United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) Summit held in the city is one of the most important examples of such effort. UCLG is the most comprehensive local and regional government network representing 240 thousand cities from different regions of the world and approximately 5 billion people in terms of population. Headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, UCLG provides a

worldwide representation ground for local governments. Izmir Culture Summit aimed at creating policies suitable for cultural values for cities. These policies have shown as the source of development, general welfare, happiness, and the future. At the summit, plans for the future have been revealed with innovative and solution-oriented approaches, and an effective roadmap created for the success of local governments for the coming years. According to the Declaration of Izmir (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2021a), the 4th UCLG Culture Summit hosted by İzmir was held in Kültürpark in September 2021 with the participation of cultural producers from 65 countries. The cultural summit, which had a total of 864 speakers and participants, 346 of which was online, lasted a total of three days. This year's theme was "Culture: Building Our Future" (Figure 35).

Figure 35. UCLG Culture Summit - Izmir'21 (Source: uclg-culturesummit2021.org, 2023)

Another key effort promoted the vision through the city's internationalization is the Izmir World City Society (Figure 36). This society founded to bring together the world city vision deriving from the colorful and multilingual history of Izmir with the demands of the twenty-first century. It aims at:

- "engaging in and enhance civil society activities and to encourage and support individuals and organizations working on this issue,

- carrying out urban and public diplomacy activities between Izmir and the other European cities,

- supporting local values and globally recognized social values such as Sustainable Development Goals,

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- supporting economic, social, cultural activities and relations,

- coordinating, developing and strengthening ecological, technical and technological developments at the city scale between Izmir and all other European cities." (dider.net, 2023)

Even as providing these objectives, the main goals are also to expand these projects, to build city-to-city relationships through partnerships and projects, and to create partnerships and model applications with universities, professional chambers, commercial sector, and non-governmental organizations both at home and abroad. Within this perspective, also opens Izmir offices in different several parts of the world.

Figure 36. The World City Izmir Association (dider.net, 2023)

With the support of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, the Foundation of Izmir implemented a project called directizmir.com, in line with the expectations of the aviation industry, airline companies, and other stakeholders. The primary objective of this project was to enhance direct transportation opportunities in Izmir by air. It aimed to achieve this by introducing new destinations through direct flights from Izmir, increasing the frequency of existing routes, extending seasonal flights throughout the year, and raising awareness among Izmir residents about the available direct flight options. The project's website served as a platform where users could access comprehensive information about all the cities they could fly to directly from Izmir. Initially launched with tariff details for a total of 49 different domestic and international destinations, the website underwent updates for the summer season, leading to the addition of new flights. Consequently, the total number of cities offering direct flights from Izmir increased to 69, further expanding the range of travel options for passengers. By facilitating convenient and efficient air travel connections, directizmir.com aimed to contribute to the growth of tourism, business, and overall connectivity in Izmir, while providing residents with increased accessibility to a wider range of destinations. (Figure 37)

Figure 37. Title (Source: directizmir, 2023)

Digital applications are among the innovations in the city branding efforts of Izmir. While directizmir.com lists the places you can fly directly to İzmir, on the other hand, all cultural and creative activities in Izmir have gathered in a single portal with İzmir.art project. (Figure 38) Izmir Art has been implemented by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Culture and Art Department and incorporates Izmir's comprehensive and contemporary art inventory. Being designed as an interactive platform, Izmir Art features an event calendar, art map, virtual exhibition platform, articles, reviews, reviews, interviews, art routes and online events. All art producers, institutions and venues can create their own space within İzmir Art by becoming members of the system. In this way, each artist will have the opportunity to share their works and activities from a single point. Izmir Art not only carries İzmir's art agenda to the national and international arena, but also brings art events around the world to İzmir (izmir.art, 2023).

Figure 38. Title (Source: izmir.art, 2023)

However, one of the city's greatest tourism investments in the recent period is the VisitÎzmir project, which brings the current events and innovations in the city to its users. It is also known as Turkey's first digital tourism encyclopedia since it includes all the tourism inventory of the city. The purpose of VisitÎzmir mobile tourism application is to increase the welfare of the city as a whole in the metropolitan and rural areas. All content of VisitÎzmir can also be accessed on the visitizmir.org website. (Figure 39) VisitÎzmir was also designed as a social media platform where users can comment on the touristic values of İzmir and share their ideas with other users and also a branding channel which is constantly updated as an infrastructure that is

constantly developing and growing in interaction, not a static software (Izmir Foundation, 2021).
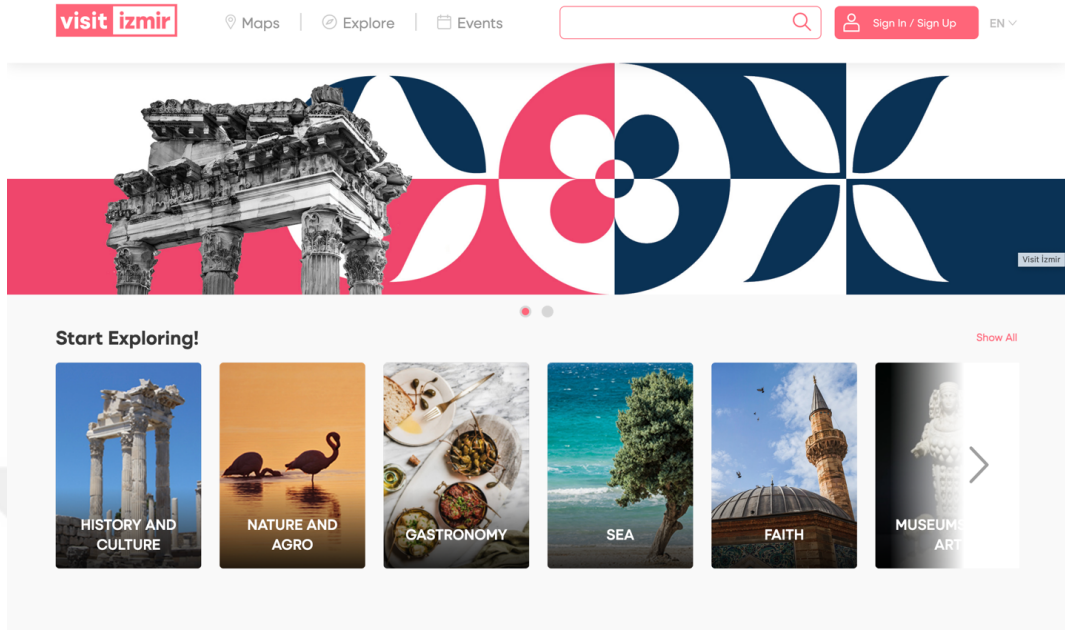
Figure 39. Website of Visit Izmir (Source: visitizmir, 2023)

One of the remarkable features of Visitİzmir application is its visual identity. This application is also among the examples that the thesis has focused on the Izmir City Branding project. The same patterns are also seen on Talatpaşa Boulevard, one of the busiest spots in the city, and on the ferries, one of the urban transportation vehicles. This visual identity, which is also one of the Izmir patterns, is the application of the new branding project prepared for the city. (Figure 40)
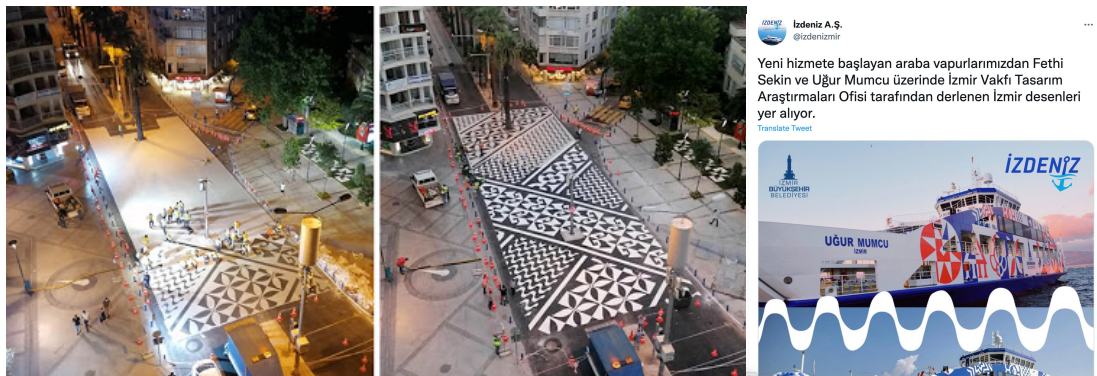
Figure 40. The patterns of Izmir (Source: Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2021b)

As it has been seen and explained so far, no branding work has been conducted in which all the marketing activities carried out in the city so far have been gathered under the same roof, and the latest work has not been used in the whole city. This branding

study, which was initiated by the Izmir Foundation to meet this need has also forced the way for the city's visual communication efforts by creating the unique identity of the brand of Izmir. Rather than creating a brand-new symbol for the city, they choose to use the inherited culture and symbols designed through an interdisciplinary based dialogue. İzmir City Branding project is being prepared in detail and quality to respond to all national and international promotional activities of İzmir. The patterns are expected to color several surfaces by contributing both to the brand of Izmir and to the aesthetics of the city thanks to the symbols and textures prepared.

One of the sections of İzmir City Branding Project is Izmir Typeface. (Figure 41) The Foundation of Izmir, working on the layout systems, designed a large font family suitable for this project and produced a font belonging to İzmir. The Izmir font has been designed for the needs of the city, reflecting the culture of Izmir from the past, its humanistic, colorful, contemporary character and serving in many media. Izmir Font, besides making Turkish writing and reading easier, also includes some special characters specific to our language. There are special fonts produced for many cities, countries and even institutions in the world. However, it is a first for a city in Turkey to produce a corporate font and to make it available in the world under the city's own name. In addition to the fact that this font is unique to İzmir and oriented to the visual design needs of the city, an important feature is that the font itself can be used as a promotional medium (Izmir Foundation, 2023a). Since a variety of components that collectively make up the visual identity system (Lelis et al., 2020), Izmir Typface can also be seen as an important tool while creating the city's visual identity.

Figure 41. Visualization of Izmir Typeface Launch Meeting: The Izmir Font (Source: Izmir Foundation, 2023b)

However, it can be observed from these implementations that contemporary İzmir's

branding strategy has moved beyond just the logo and stands apart from all previous efforts. While in the past, all efforts focused on a single logo, today, with the application of various elements such as İzmir typeface and symbols and patterns applied on different surfaces throughout the city, İzmir has developed a brand identity system similar to well-known examples like Porto and Baku.

This differentiation in İzmir's current brand efforts suggests that it has evolved into an ongoing effort that goes beyond the conventional approach. The city's branding strategy has expanded to encompass a more comprehensive and versatile brand identity system. This shift may lead to İzmir's branding efforts becoming more sustainable and enduring.

The project is also said to be attracted the attention of the researchers because it is a branding study that has been expected for years in İzmir and could monitor and analyze in real time since it is in the implementation phase. In this way, this project is expected overcome several problems highlighted in the study conducted by Pırnar et al. (2017). These six weaknesses denoted in SWOT analysis of the study are as follows:

- "Not having efficient innovative branding projects which are specific to Izmir,

- Not being creative and applying tailor-made marketing strategies which are unique to Izmir,

- Not having successful organizational coordination, cooperation, and communication,

- Existing of inconsistent marketing and brand messages for promoting,

- Lacking cooperation in the public and private efforts in brand promotion efforts of Izmir,

- Needing to focus on the long-term projected master plans on city branding and positioning."

Thus, the thesis will also shed light on the following stages of this city branding project by additionally exploring the level, as well as the type of stakeholder involvement. In addition, it is expected to reveal many details such as how the designer decided to deconstruct the design process, his way of thinking, how he decided to express the city with symbols, and how he chose the symbols, which are not encountered in the city branding literature. On the other hand, it is planned to examine the road map of the

decision makers in detail.

4.2. Research Design and Methodology

It is obtained from the surveyed literature that stakeholder involvement is of particular importance for city branding efforts to fulfill their targeted goals (Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Houghton and Stevens, 2010). Thus, there is no "one-size-fits-all" city branding theory, as well as no collectively generated place branding theory, rather than contrasting assessments and perspectives. This is also said to be a sign of a clear inconsistency between theory and practice (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). So, this thesis attempts to contribute to the theoretical advancement of city branding by examining the link between city brands and its stakeholders involved by revealing city branding efforts in the case of Izmir.

Since there are an excessive number of stakeholders in cities, that leads the process of city branding to be more complicated than product branding from several aspects (Cozmiuc, 2011). Hence, it is important to differentiate the owner, the decision-maker, and the user/target groups of the city brand. The "best" success of city branding can be achieved by adopting a bottom-up approach while also identifying the close relationships among the stakeholders, as well as exploring various mechanisms for the stakeholder involvement.

Since a brand-new city branding project is currently ongoing for Izmir, it is important to investigate the process for stakeholder involvement, due to its critical role in the city branding process that has been highlighted through the existing literature. Accordingly, the main aim of this thesis is to examine the stakeholder involvement mechanism during the city branding process of Izmir. The thesis will also identify who these stakeholders are and what their roles are. A particular interest will also be attracted to an important group of stakeholders, namely designers.

4.2.1. Research Questions

Within this context, the main research question of this thesis is as follows:

- How does the stakeholder involvement impact design decisions in the city branding process of Izmir?

Accordingly, the first sub-research question is:

- How are the city branding efforts in İzmir disseminated through visual

communication?

To be able to answer this question, the thesis will specify the branding efforts and campaigns of Izmir, as well as several activities in terms of visual communication will also be investigated.

Hence, considering the historical background of the branding efforts of Izmir explained in the previous section, this thesis also aimed at answering further sub-research questions considering two separate processes:

A. The process of decision-making:

- Who are the key stakeholders in the city branding process of Izmir?

- How are these stakeholders selected?

- What are the different roles of these stakeholders?

- What is the degree of involvement of various stakeholders?

- Is public a stakeholder? If so, how?

- In what ways long-term stakeholder commitment to city branding activities of Izmir can be ensured, considering mainly owning and using the city brand?

B. The process of design / Designer as a stakeholder:

- Who are the main actors in the design process?

- How was the designer selected?

- What were the stages in the design process?

- What is the design strategy of city branding of Izmir?

o How does the designer approach the design process?

o What is the medium of distribution of the end design?

4.2.2. Methodological Framework

4.2.2.1. Research Approach: Qualitative

To be able to have an answer for the sub-research questions considering the processes of both decision making and design, the thesis will utilize a qualitative approach and research design. Both the traditional approaches and characteristics evident in the evolving definition of qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) are as follows:

> *Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.*

According to the definition provided by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is characterized by an interpretive, naturalistic approach that aims to make sense of phenomena based on the meanings people attribute to them. In the context of this thesis, it would be appropriate to utilize qualitative research methods since it is aimed at investigating complex, multifaceted phenomena of "stakeholder involvement in city branding" that require an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in. In other words, since this thesis aims to investigate stakeholders' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives, qualitative research can provide a nuanced understanding of these subjective aspects by providing valuable insights.

Moreover, according to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is typically suitable when the nature of the problem or research question cannot be adequately addressed through quantitative measures and statistical analysis. For instance, interactions among people are difficult to capture with existing measures. Since the thesis aiming at exploring the stakeholder involvement by identifying their relations through the city

branding process of Izmir, qualitative research has been selected as the type of research.

One of the reasons for this thesis to conduct qualitative research is also emerged from the need for a complex and detailed understanding for the issue of stakeholder involvement in city branding efforts of Izmir. As this feature can only be recognized by communicating directly with people, this thesis proposes unique research by performing semi-structured interviews with several project executives and stakeholders to collect primary data. It is also observed that, the qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups have also been used widely within the stakeholder involvement literature (Bisani, 2019; Maheswari and Lodorfos, 2014; Kalandides, 2011). That also approves the validity of qualitative research strategy of the thesis.

Gathering qualitative data from a total of 15 stakeholders via semi-structured interviews, the preliminary results of this thesis are expected to serve for an analysis of the current situation of stakeholder involvement in city branding. A representative scheme for the research methodology which identifies the decision-making process in terms of city branding of Izmir has been illustrated in Figure 42.

| Theoretical Framework | → | Formulating Research Questions | → | Data Gathering: Semi-structured Interviews | → | Results and Discussion: Situation Analysis |
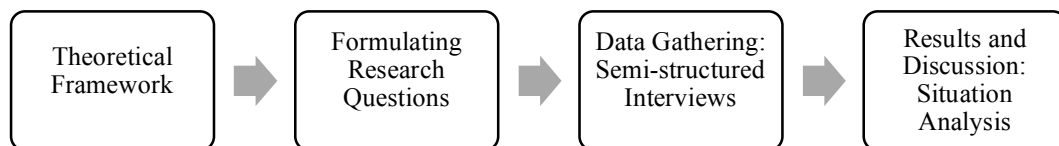
Figure 42. Representative scheme of research and methodology.

4.2.2.2. Research Strategy: Case Study

According to Creswell (2003), when utilizing a qualitative approach, researchers often adopt advocacy/participatory perspectives or constructivist viewpoints to establish knowledge claims. They employ various investigative techniques such as case studies, phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, and narratives. The primary objective of this approach is to uncover themes within the collected data, which is typically obtained through open-ended and comprehensive data gathering methods.

Conversely, the case study is a widely recognized and extensively employed research strategy within the qualitative approach of scientific research. It involves an in-depth examination conducted by the researcher of a particular plan, event, activity, process, or individual(s). In case study research, researchers employ various data collection methods over an extended period to gather comprehensive information on the case(s) under investigation, which is typically limited by time and scope (Stake, 1995).

Considering the use of case study method through the design research, Teegavarapu et al. (2008) argued that case studies are becoming more and more common in design research. Case study applications, particularly in the context of classroom design and exploratory studies, are often overlooked or undervalued. However, there has been a recent push to integrate social science methodologies into design research. Despite being disregarded in favor of other empirical techniques, case studies offer more benefits than statistics-based research methods like questionnaires. Unfortunately, case study methodology is often met with criticism. Nevertheless, the defenses against the case study method have been proven unfounded. At a higher level, the case study approach aligns with the standard procedures followed by design researchers. However, strict adherence to the design of the case study is often lacking. To ensure the validity of case study findings, it is essential to apply specific methods at each stage of the investigation. Given the goals and unique characteristics of design research, the case study technique is more appropriate than surveys, questionnaires, or experiments. It is particularly well-suited for theory development, which is a current requirement in design research. Formal integration of case study methodology into empirical design research is a possibility. It could help fill the gap caused by the absence of a formal approach for systematic research in design. For these reasons, it was decided to use the case study as a research strategy to deeply examine the İzmir city branding project. In order to properly analyze the case study and assess the impact of stakeholder involvement, it was determined that interviews should be conducted with stakeholders who were engaged in the city branding process from beginning to end.

As a starting point, expert opinions were gathered through the municipality and İzmir Foundation, the leading institution for the branding project, to identify the involved stakeholders. Instead of conducting interviews with all stakeholders using the same format, it was decided that dividing stakeholders into three groups and conducting separate interviews would be more effective. The first group consists of collective

team members, the second group includes decision-makers, and the third group consists of designers as described in Table 2.

Table 2. Research methodology of the thesis

Groups of Interviewees	Research Approach	Research Strategy	Research Method/Technique (Data collection Procedure)
Collective Team Members	Qualitative	Case Study	Semi-structured Interviewing
Decision-Making Process	Qualitative	Case Study	Semi-structured Interviewing
Design Process	Qualitative	Case Study	Semi-structured Interviewing

4.2.2.3. Research Method: Semi-structured Interviews

As the research method, the thesis will utilize interviewing technique within the context of the data collection procedure. Interviewing is among qualitative research techniques and involves asking and answering questions of participants to elicit information from them. Interviews may be organized or unorganized. Unstructured interviews are qualitative, but structured interviews help in the collection of quantitative data. Interviews call for individual sensitivity and adaptability while adhering to established procedural parameters. The observer has the chance to offer follow-up questions during interviews (Teegavarapu et al., 2008).

Interviewing is also in demand among the methods used for research in design. As mentioned in the table above, the thesis follows a semi-structured interview protocol which is also a data collection process that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. When designing the interviews, separate sets of questions were prepared for each group, and their structures were designed individually. The interviews with the decision makers took almost 30 minutes, while with the working collective team took 45 to 60 minutes to complete. Also, the interview designer being at the heart of the project was the most detailed and comprehensive one with almost 120 minutes to complete. The researcher also requested permission to record the interviews, in order to make the data analysis process more efficient. After the semi-structured in-depth interviews were finished, all audio data was transcribed, and the Turkish interviews were translated into English.

An over 120-page corpus of transcriptions from 15 in-depth interviews served as the basis for the data analysis. The researcher thoroughly reviewed and analyzed every transcription and detailed notes in order to examine the perceptions regarding city branding process of Izmir and the stakeholder involvement in this process. The analysis was completed through open coding. The process of linking concepts (codes) to observable data and phenomena during qualitative data analysis is referred to as open coding in the grounded theory technique. It is a procedure described by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) for handling text. The objective of open coding is to develop comprehensive codes that accurately describe, label, or categorize the phenomenon being studied. This is achieved by breaking down the data into meaningful phrases and describing them using single words or short word sequences. These expressions are then annotated and associated with relevant ideas.

4.2.2.3.1. Groups of Interviewees

The first group of interviews were organized with the representatives of the following institutional members of the board of directors of the Izmir Tourism Promotion Foundation (İzmir Vakfı), the leading organization of the ongoing city branding process of Izmir.

- o İzmir Fair Services Cultural and Art Affairs Trade Inc.

- o İzmir Chamber of Commerce

- o Aegean Region Chamber of Industry

- o Association of Turkish Travel Agencies

- o Çeşme Touristic Hotels' Association

- o Swiss Hotel Grand Efes Izmir

The Foundation is a joint venture formed by 71 institutions, e.g. public institutions, chambers, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, aiming at shaping the future of Izmir. Established in 2000, its ambition, as well as its mission is to create cooperation networks between public institutions, civil society, and the private sector by promoting Izmir on a global scale and keeping its cultural and natural heritage alive while also enriching it. Actually, the Izmir Foundation's board of directors consists of 11 members, but some of these members replaced their positions with their colleagues due to the change of duties in their institutions while the branding process continued.

In order to get accurate information, it was planned to interview only the board members who were on duty from the beginning of the process to this moment.

Besides the Foundation of Izmir, there are also two important strategic partners in the city branding process of Izmir, namely Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and Izmir Development Agency (IDA). Representatives from these institutions will also be interviewed accordingly. Also, an additional interview will be conducted with the general manager of the project team as well.

Examining the managerial roles in the city branding process of Izmir, further interviews were performed with the collective working team. Accordingly, two meetings are planning to be executed among the team affiliates of Historical Kemeralti Construction Investment Trade Inc. (TARKEM) and City İzmir Association (Kentimiz İzmir Derneği).

After identifying all stakeholders, they were divided into three main groups to enable a proper analysis of the thesis. Interviews were conducted with team members to gain insights into the entire process and gather detailed information. Decision-makers were interviewed to delve into the details of the decision making process, while designers were engaged to decode the "black box" of the design process. Table 3 below outlines the institutions and individuals included in each group:

Table 3. Semi-structured in-depth interview characteristics

Interview Coding	Position	Stakeholder Level	Institution
DM1	Chairman of the Executive Board	Decision Maker	İzmir Fair Services Cultural and Art Affairs Trade Inc.
DM2	Vice Chairman of the Executive Board	Decision Maker	İzmir Chamber of Commerce
DM3	Board Member	Decision Maker	Aegean Region Chamber of Industry
DM4	Board Member	Decision Maker	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies
DM5	Board Member	Decision Maker	Çeşme Touristic Hotels' Association

Table 4 (Continued). Semi-structured in-depth interview characteristics

DM6	Board Member	Decision Maker	Swiss Hotel Grand Efes Izmir
DT1	Designer	Design Team	İzmir Foundation
TM1	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Foundation
TM2	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Foundation
TM3	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality
TM4	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism
TM5	Member	Collective Working Team	Kentimiz İzmir Association
TM6	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Chamber of Commerce
TM7	Member	Collective Working Team	TARKEM
TM8	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Development Agency

4.2.2.3.2. Interview Questions

Highlighting the difference between the structure of the ownership, decision, and governance mechanisms, the following questions will be inquired through the semi-structured interviews under three sub-headings. Below, the interrelation with the existing literature related to city branding for the selected interview questions has also been explained in detail.

The first group of questions, "Case of İzmir," was directed towards "collective team members" to understand the details of the İzmir case and observe the impact of stakeholder involvement. The second group of questions, "Decision Making Process," was addressed to city leaders as "decision makers" to gain insights into their decision-making process. The final group, "Process of Design," involved in-depth interviews with designers to uncover the intricacies of the design process.

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1) THE CASE OF IZMIR

    1.1. What is the city branding efforts in Izmir?

    1.2. Who is leading the project?

    1.3. Are there any partners involved in this process?

    1.4. Did you test the new visual identity before its launch?

    1.5. Who has chosen / approved the end design?

    1.6. What were the stages of the project?

Here, the visual identity is the key focus of the question. Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) highlights this new concept of place brand identity from the supply side perspective by introducing a novel model with roots in sociological theory, marketing, and tourism. Also, According to Yusof and Ismail (2014), the prevailing focus on a tourist destination's brand identity is primarily based on the user's viewpoint, neglecting the understanding of stakeholders' perceptions in relation to image formation, subsequent destination branding, and their overall influence. This knowledge gap highlights the need for a deeper exploration of stakeholders' perspectives and their role in shaping a destination's brand identity. Accordingly, for the case of Izmir, this question aimed at having a better understanding of the city's visual identity particularly from the stakeholders' perspective.

2) DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

    2.1. Who is/are leading the city branding process in Izmir?

    2.2. Who is the owner and/or decision-making body of the city branding of Izmir?

Within these questions, it is important to clarify the decision maker of the city branding process of Izmir. For instance, according to Bisani (2019), institutional stakeholders who have executive or administrative positions within governing bodies have direct control over resource allocation and decision-making to accomplish the institutional objectives.

    2.3. Are there joint or single decision mechanisms in Izmir?

Since decision making mechanism can be found as joint or single, the question here aimed at revealing how the decision mechanism of the city branding effort of Izmir

works. Considering the existing literature, it can be thought that most of the city branding efforts all around the world like B-Berlin Project, Curators of Sweden, City of Jun, Neighborland, Play Melbourne, Bogota, Dublin, and Northamptonshire utilizes joint decision mechanisms. For example, in the project of City of Jun, everyone has a Twitter account they can use to communicate with the mayor and other government representatives. Also, in Neighborland, citizens evaluate the branding projects and determine if they are worthy to develop. Related to the city branding efforts for Melbourne, locals from the city who act as tour guides for an interactive live tour of the city carry a ball around the city. Here, the audience has the chance to advise the guide and ask questions. Considering the case of Bogota, focus group workshops led to the creation of a shared vision for the city. Moreover, the city branding processes of city branding for both Northamptonshire and Dublin emphasizing the engagement/involvement of all stakeholders particularly citizens and residents of the cities as one of the key actions to achieve the goals of the projects as well.

2.4. How do you identify the stakeholders? Who are the stakeholders from your perspective?

Identification of the stakeholders from the point of view of the decision maker is another significant argument in the city branding literature. Kavaratzis et al. (2014) defines various stakeholders for instance, while Beckmann and Zenker (2012) classified key stakeholders of place branding under four core groups, namely visitors, residents, public and private, and media. Also, in their study Kulibanova and Teor (2017) made a categorization for the target audience of place branding.

Considering the case studies of city branding, numerous stakeholders have been highlighted such as residents, citizens, city locals, curators, city agencies, mayor, government officials, businesses. For instance, three types of relationships have been acknowledged for the case of Northamptonshire in order to enlighten the theory of stakeholder engagement through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Also, the key stakeholders within the case of City of Liverpool have been divided into two groups, namely brand creators and brand drivers. In the case of Slovenia, key specialists and opinion leaders from commerce, tourism, culture, science, sports, state, and civic matters, as well as city residents have been selected as stakeholders in city branding efforts.

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2.5. Have the stakeholders been involved in the city branding process of Izmir?

Besides defining the stakeholder in the city branding processes, it is also vital to evaluate whether these stakeholders have been involved in the ongoing projects or not. Because many scholars highlighted that success will be increased through stakeholders' participation and a team effort in developing a city brand (Yusof and Ismail, 2015; Campelo et al., 2013; Konecnik and Go, 2008; Choo et al., 2011; Houghton ad Stevens, 2011).

      a. If yes, at what stage?

      b. If not, in what ways can they be involved?

Considering the stakeholder involvement perspective, the next step is to find out the degree of involvement. That is, for instance, in the B-Berlin Project six Berlin communities brought together Berliners from various backgrounds, and it is stated in the project of City of Jun that this method of engagement encourages community integration, notwithstanding some criticism. Also, in Neighborland, it is stated that contact between city departments and citizens, acting as a model project for citizen involvement. Play Melbourne is another campaign that promotes active stakeholder involvement by utilizing a "Play Melbourne Live" ball-shaped device with a phone that allows Periscope usage. City branding efforts of Bogota also emphasizing stakeholder involvement by forming focus group workshops, while in Dublin Branding Project, with the goal of obtaining primary data, over 5,000 people has been involved to the project through more than 70 interviews, two surveys, and five workshops. Besides, for the case of Slovenia, key influencers and enactment stakeholders were included in the research program that was built using a holistic strategy.

2.6. What are the roles of the stakeholders in İzmir's city branding process?

Several studies in the city branding literature have explored the differing roles of the stakeholders. For instance, in order to create place branding for the City of Liverpool, Maheswari et al. (2014) examines both the roles and interactions of key stakeholder groups. Also, the study conducted by Braun et al (2013) defines the three roles that residents play when they are considered the place branding target audience.

- Are they decision makers? Do they put an effort into the city branding process? Were they informed regarding the city branding process?

Some of these studies that already explored the role of the stakeholders also highlight the efforts they put on the city branding processes. In the B-Berlin Project- for instance, the participants of Berlin's shared residential communities put forward their ideas and talk about the values that make Berlin such an exceptional place to live, including freedom, tolerance, and individualism, and how these may be blended into a shared identity. In the context of the City of Liverpool, on the other hand, a relationship framework has been developed to depict the dynamic roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the process of place branding. This framework serves as a platform for fostering business growth. To construct this framework, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from diverse key stakeholder groups, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and contributions to place branding initiatives. Also, in Slovenia, the people are crucial to delivering the city brand since they not only have a voice in its development.

2.7. According to your opinion, what is the expected contribution of the stakeholders?

It can be obtained from the literature that the expected contribution of the stakeholders differs in several ways. For instance, Bisani (2019) argued that institutional stakeholder is seen as having direct control over resource allocation and decision-making, whereas community stakeholders define as persons with a strong sense of pride and belonging. Likewise, Bassler et al. (2008) extended and divided the expected contribution of stakeholder engagement into seven:

  i. "Increase the likelihood that projects or solutions will be widely accepted,

  ii. Create more effective solutions,

  iii. Improve citizens' knowledge and skills in problem solving,

  iv. Empower and integrate people from diverse backgrounds,

  v. Create local networks of community members,

  vi. Create several opportunities for discussing concerns,

  vii. Increase trust in community organizations and local governance."

2.8. How do you define the role of the citizens in particular?

There is an abundant number of studies in the city branding literature that extends the definition of the citizens' role particularly. For instance, by envisioning place branding as a public policy and a governance process and elaborating on the idea of participatory place branding, Hereźniak (2017) analyzes a variety of methods and tools used to include citizens. On the one hand, in his study Kavaratzis (2012) puts emphasis on the role of stakeholders considering place brand formation, development, and ownership. Also, Beckmann and Zenker (2012) has classified key stakeholders of place branding under four core groups, as visitors, residents, public and private, and media. Similarly, Braun et al. (2013) categorizes the three-fold role of the residents assuming that they are the target group of place branding. Moreover, in several research considering place branding literature, residentss are emphasized as active contributors and co-producers of public goods and policies, not just as passive recipients or place customers (Freire, 2009; Hospers, 2010; Olsson and Berglund, 2009; Jernsand and Kraff, 2015).

Considering case studies, Hamburg can be seen as an exceptional model since it offers assistance and guidance to participants without limiting their ability to brand their own location. Besides, the project of Dublin also underlines that the city's most important "brand assets" are its residents, who serve as a city's best brand ambassadors and have the capacity to be innovative and creative.

2.9. Are there any stakeholders whose opinions were received?

Besides the engagement in the city branding efforts, it also questionable whether the opinions of the stakeholders were received or not. At that point, in his research Dinnie (2010) supports the idea that through the introduction of new perspectives, ideas, and opinions, stakeholder engagement seems to improve and deepen city branding concepts. Kavaratzis and Kalandides (2015) also looks closely at how people construct places in their thoughts in detail to rethink place branding.

Selected case studies in the literature also emphasize the importance of the stakeholders' opinions through several tools. In the B-Berlin Project, for instance, through the Berlin shared living communities, which aim to bring Berliners together, all Berliners have the chance to talk on the city's mission and its new features. Moreover, this campaign uses social media and internet surveys to help, guaranteeing widespread participation. Additionally, it occurs in public spaces with citizens posting their thoughts on B-shaped boards scattered throughout the city.

- If yes, has the city branding process changed in line with these opinions?

Again, B-Berlin Project gives an exemplary intuition for this question too. Following the campaign in 2008, a new mission statement was created to keep the city on its toes, identify what makes it tick in terms of values and principles, promote its positive aspects, and work to reaffirm Berliners' love for their own city.

2.10. What do the stakeholders think of the new logo of Izmir? Do you think that they will be able to own this logo?

To further explore the role of the designer as a stakeholder, an additional interview will be conducted with the creative director/designer of the project team. This interview aims to delve into the designer's unique combination of divergent and convergent thinking, as well as their expertise in creativity, visualization, and prototyping. Through this interview, insights will be gained into how the designer contributes to the generation of innovative ideas and solutions within the context of the project (Källström and Siljeklint, 2021). The thesis will be then a unique one since there isn't any related study/research in the existing literature considering the field of city branding. The interview questions for the designer will be as follows:

3) THE PROCESS OF DESIGN

3.1. How were you involved in the project of Izmir city branding?

Dinnie (2011) emphasizes the importance of involving the designer as a stakeholder from the early stages of a project, highlighting their role beyond being a visual composer. This approach aims to foster a better design mindset and inspiration throughout the city branding process. With this in mind, the main objective of the following question is to explore the specific ways in which the designer is involved in the city branding project of Izmir.

3.2. In what ways, do you think that you and/or your personal experiences / achievements fit well with the city branding effort of Izmir?

Since there are various ways that design can be used to achieve place branding objectives and a project's success can be directly attributed to all design disciplines (Lau and Leung, 2005), both personal experiences and achievements of the designer also needed to be questioned whether they fit well with the city branding efforts or not.

3.3. Who are the other actors that take an integrant part in the design process?

According to Lau and Leung (2005) a multidisciplinary approach to city branding has been created by combining graphic design, architecture, interior design, product design, and design strategy, allowing cities and countries to access expertise previously only available to corporate clients, creating new synergies, and promoting the cultural, economic, and social development of cities and nations. Therefore, the question is asked to identify the numerous actors taking part in the process of design.

3.4. What are the roles of different actors?

After identifying several actors in the design process, next step is to define their roles. As a recent study, for instance, by mapping and analyzing Indonesian city brand logo design models, Wiratama et al. (2020) determine the design role itself as a dominant actor. On the other hand, as mentioned before, Lau and Leung (2004) argue that today design plays a bigger part in municipal branding strategies than just coming up with a cool logo and a catchy poster. And also, adopting a multidisciplinary approach city branding efforts now bring together people from different backgrounds like designers, architectures, interior designers, product designer, and design strategists. Moreover, within the case of Portugal, few citizens participated in the brand's development, while the remaining ones only contributed to its design after it had been fully envisioned.

3.5. How can you identify the design process?

Several studies in the literature classifies the process of design in several ways. For instance, Gregory (1966) argues that "The process of design is the same whether it deals with the design of a new oil refinery, the construction of a cathedral or the writing of Dante's Divine Comedy." Also, an extended point of view brought into the literature by Cross (1982) in his well-known book "Designerly Ways of Knowing". What the book meant by design is summarized in three points:

      i.   "the phenomenon of study is the man-made world.

     ii.   the appropriate methods are modelling, pattern-formation, synthesis.

    iii.   the values are practicality, ingenuity, empathy, and a concern for appropriateness."

Accordingly, this thesis also aimed at determining the identification of the design process in detail when considering the designer's point of view.

3.6. What are the phases/steps of the design process?

Drawing inspiration from the design thinking approach, various theoretical models have been developed to outline the different stages of the design process. For instance, Lawson (2005) presents a categorization of the design project into six phases, including Enthusiasm, Disillusionment, Panic, Search for the guilty, Punishment of the innocent, and Praise for the non-participants. On the other hand, the IBA Architectural Practice and Management Handbook from 1965 divides the design process into four phases: Assimilation, General Study, Development, and Communication. In the context of place branding, Moilanan and Rainisto (2020) propose a five-stage systematic approach to designing the branding of a place, which includes Start-up and Organization, Research, Forming Brand Identity, Making, Executing, and Enforcing the Plan, and Implementation and Follow-up. Additionally, Källström and Siljeklint (2021) conduct a more recent study that creates and evaluates a framework inspired by the principles of Design Thinking. Their research focuses on the participation of stakeholders in the place branding process and the value derived from such an approach, drawing from the principles of participatory action research. Furthermore, a Destination Brand Identity Model was developed in the case of Slovenia, analyzing secondary data through a three-step approach. This model, constructed by an unknown source, aims to provide a theoretical framework for understanding and assessing the brand identity of a destination.

3.7. How can you represent the relationship between these design stages?

After defining the design steps for the city branding project of Izmir, it is also important to figure out the relationship between these stages. For this question, Lawson's (2005) map of the design process according to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) plan of work may be convenient in terms of visualizing the interrelationship between stages of the design process as illustrated below:
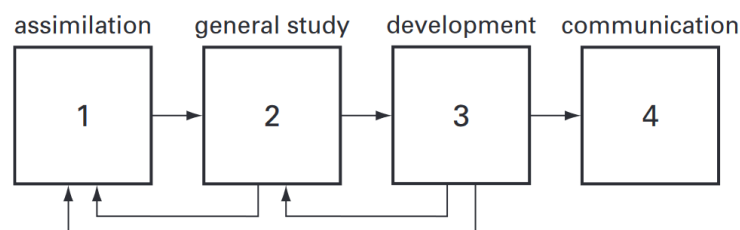
Figure 43. Map of the design process according to the RIBA plan of work

The same study also illustrates another map of the design process namely Markus/Maver map as a more complex example. (Figure 44)
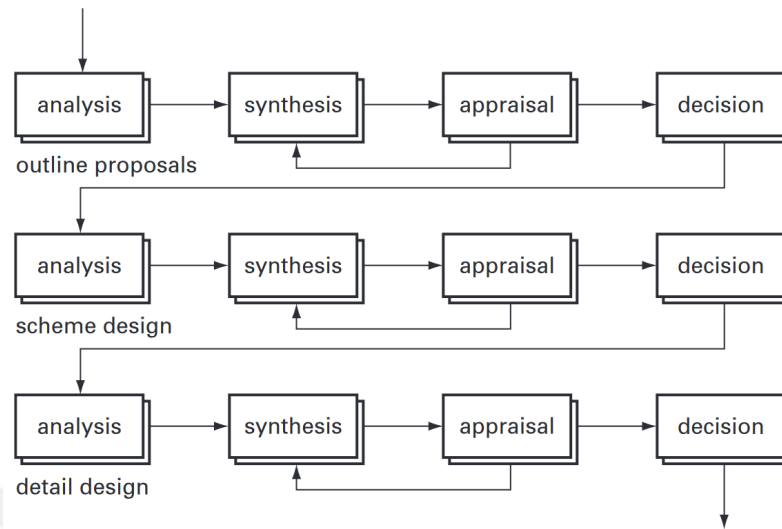
Figure 44. The Markus/Maver map of the design process

3.8. What was the design strategy?

Considering the design strategy, the study by Wiratama et al. (2020) closes with three approaches to creating a city brand logo based on the prominent actors involved: (1) competition, (2) professional collaboration, and (3) government-expert-society partnership. As an exemplary case, a different way of design strategy in terms of citizen engagement rather than the literature indicated has been utilized in the case of Porto's brand presentation, since new symbols were developed, many of them as a result of stakeholder involvement in the brand's creation.

3.9. How would you match the design strategy with the needs of the targeted stakeholders?

Highlighting the needs of the targeted stakeholders is another important fact while matching with the design strategy. In the case of Slovenia, in the third phase of the design process, an iterative approach, for example, made it possible to modify the brand's identity at each stage of the model in response to stakeholder feedback.

3.10. What are the long-term goals of this design strategy?

Lawson (2005) also mentioned that the long-term goal of the game is to win, according to the Markus/Maver map of the design process, but at this specific stage, the relative importance of attack versus defense, and immediate versus long-term benefit must be

determined.

On the other side, Lau and Leung (2004) claim that by enhancing awareness through efficient communication tactics, generating economic value through cultural tourism, and boosting demand for local products through improved form and function, design may directly enhance the value of a location. Even a complete industry of commercial activity that boosts GDP and employment might emerge from the creative industries. The quality of life for both locals and visitors is improved through better city and facility design. Similarly, in the study conducted by Wiratama et al. (2020) it was highlighted that a city branding logo can foster emotional desires, change attitudes, and quicken people's perceptions of a city.

Accordingly, this question aimed at focusing on the long-term goals of the design strategy for Izmir and revealing the expected result of the city branding efforts.

3.11. Which approaches do you use in the design process of city branding of Izmir?

3.12. How do you use different approaches to enhance your creativity?

Different approaches in the design process of Izmir and their differing usage are asked in the two questions. Here, theories of thinking, as well as the concepts of both productive thinking and creative thinking are in the scope of the question. Lawson (2005) commented all these three themes in his study extensively. When considering theories of thinking, three options are appearing as the Behaviorists, The Gestalt school, and the Cognitive science approach. He also mentions convergent and divergent thinking as productive thinking approaches, while illustrating the popular five-stage model of the creative thinking process too. (Figure 45-46)

a convergent task:
complete the sequence

a divergent task:
what might this
represent?
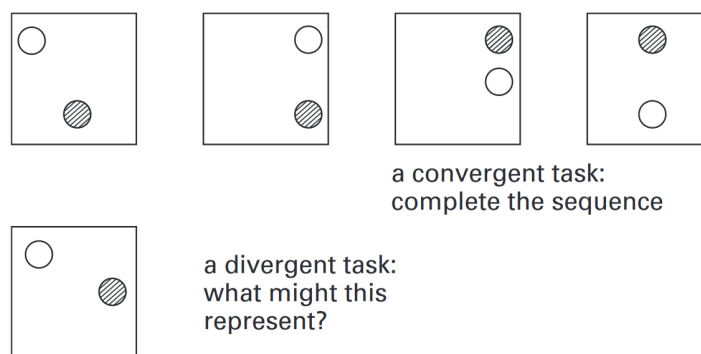
Figure 45. Convergent and Divergent Thinking

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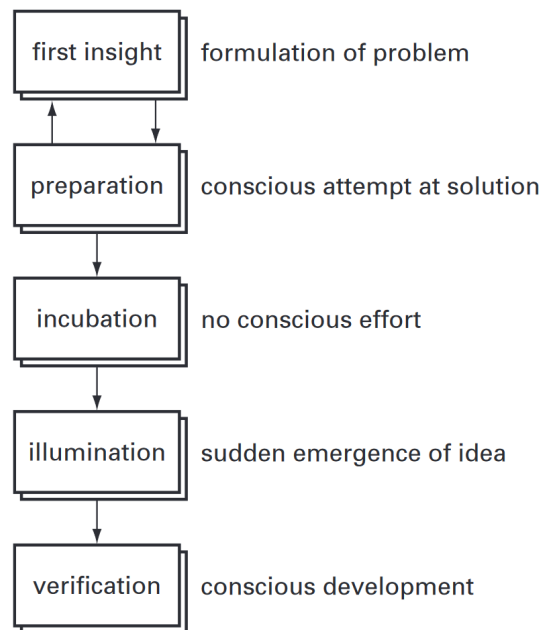
Figure 46. The popular five-stage model of the creative process

On the other hand, Cross (2001) elucidates design as a process based on conversation and perception. In essence, this refers to the conversational process that designers use to comprehend challenges and provide ideas for solutions. It is also a method that entails "talking it through" in order to alter how the problem is perceived.

    3.13. What is the medium of distribution of the end design?

    3.14. Where will we see this new visual identity of the city?

Considering the new visual identity of any city and its distribution channels, the literature and case studies shows numerous alternatives. For instance, in the case of Porto, the visual identity was distributed through trains, billboards, walls, police cars, t-shirts (Pereira, 2015), while the Branding Dublin campaign used Dublin.ie website. Similarly, in Abu Dhabi, the city boosters and government entities employed the visual identity in their promotional campaigns, as highlighted in the research conducted by Alamira (2011). This demonstrates the utilization of visual branding elements to enhance the city's image and attract visitors. Furthermore, the Chao-shan area serves as another example where packaging and product design were explored specifically for a tea and biscuit set, which was intended to be used as a souvenir product. Lau and Leung (2004) discuss this case, emphasizing the significance of incorporating design elements in creating unique and appealing products that represent the cultural identity

of a specific region. Similarly, according to Morgan et al. (2003), in 1999, a new corporate brand has gradually incorporated into its foreign operations, and a global marketing initiative with the catchphrase "100% Pure New Zealand" was introduced. Advertising focuses on above-the-line activity, primarily in print (magazines) and on television, and the executions highlight the unique landscapes, populations, cultures, and tourist attractions of New Zealand.
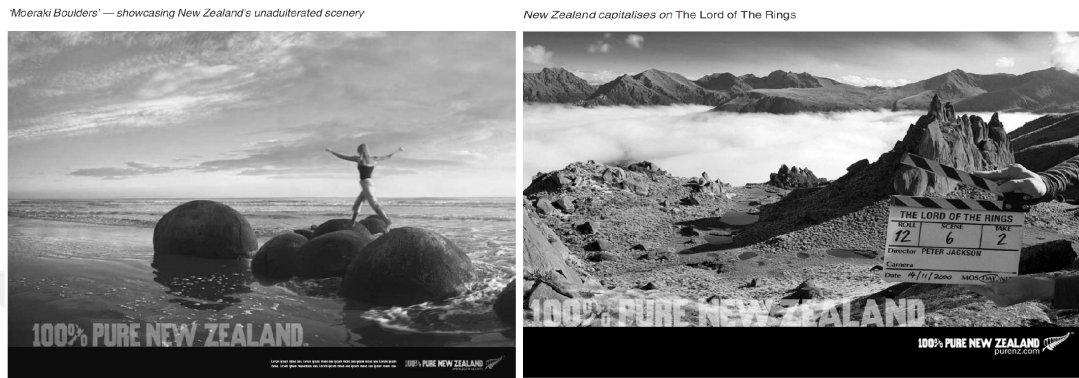
Figure 47. 100% Pure New Zealand" Campaign

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS

Through case study methodology, this thesis analyzes different perspectives of the selected stakeholders by conducting semi-structured interviews. (Figure 48) The aim was to be able to understand the wisdom behind the city branding project of Izmir in detail. Hence, to gain a holistic perspective, the stakeholders of the ongoing project of Izmir have been divided into three groups based on the existing literature and then interviewed accordingly. Initially, the team members who can comprehensively describe the process have been questioned. Then, the decision makers were interviewed to compare with the decision-making mechanisms. Finally, the designer was interviewed to get to the essence of the branding project in more detail.
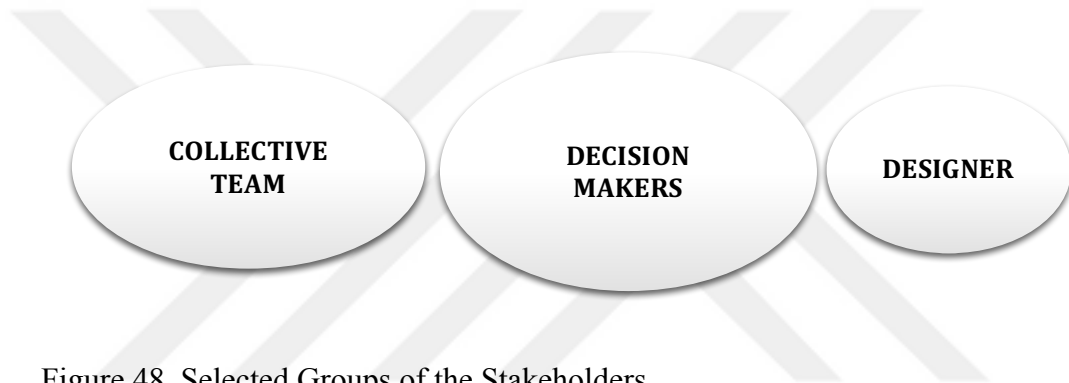
Figure 48. Selected Groups of the Stakeholders

So, as the first perspective, the interviews were conducted with the members of the collective working team who had the main role and key responsibilities for preparing the ongoing Izmir city branding project. The results are expected to enlighten the case of Izmir by revealing the main pillars of the project. While doing this, the main focus of the thesis, as well as the most important output of the interviews, have been limited with the issues of stakeholder involvement and their role in design decisions.

Next, the decision-making bodies' roles in Izmir's city branding process were examined from their point of view by asking them what and how they decide. The main aim of the decision-making analysis was to thoroughly explore who the decision makers were by decoding the stakeholder perspective and the process for the approval of a design product.

Finally, the last group of interviewees was deciphered in order to carefully scrutinize the process of design by mentioning the black box of the designer. The expected results were to analyze the way that the designer finalizes the design decisions and at what

extent stakeholder's involvement affect the design process.

In addition, in this analysis, besides the effects of the stakeholders on the process, the relationship between the stakeholders was also tried to be resolved.

The third chapter of this thesis, "stakeholder involvement in city branding," is used as a guide while the stakeholders are organized in this section. The research of the literature revealed that other studies have made analogous distinctions and classifications within the context of stakeholder involvement. For instance, Maheswari et al. (2014) analyze the role of important stakeholders by classifying them into two groups as brand creators and brand drivers, and then by examining the relationship between those groups of stakeholders, they specifically examine the relationship between branding and the development of businesses. Similar to this research, the key players in Izmir's city branding process were broken down into three primary groups. Team members and decision-makers were the first to receive in-depth analysis. However, because the design process was the main focus of the thesis, the designer was examined at in greater detail.

5.1. Collective Team's Analysis

Although the executive body was the Foundation of Izmir, it acted comprehensively and the members of the board of directors, namely the decision makers, were composed of different institutions. The team which conducts branding activities also formed a collective working team and worked together with the representatives from this team. In other words, the collective working team refers to the collaboration which is responsible for branding activities in İzmir by consisting of the employees from the Foundation of Izmir, and selected institutions working in city branding filed as such Izmir Chamber of Commerce, TARKEM, Kentimiz Izmir, as well as strategic partners namely Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Izmir Development Agency.

According to the interview protocol, the members of the collective working team are asked the following questions:

1.   What is the city branding efforts in Izmir?

2.   Who is leading the project?

3.   Are there any partners involved in this process?

4.   Did you test the new visual identity before its launch?

5.   Who has chosen / approved the end design?

6.   What were the stages of the project?

In total there were 8 interviews conducted with the members of the Collective Team. Here, there are 2 people from the Foundation of Izmir, while the others are all from different organizations. In accordance with the above-mentioned questions along with the interview content, the following eight areas of interest have emerged and the interview results will be reported according to these topics:

o   History

o   Leadership

o   Stakeholders & Involvement

o   Public & Involvement

o   Stages of the Project

o   Designer

o   Design

o   Application

After reporting the interview answers, a discussion will be held in the end of the sub-section.

5.1.1. History

Before defining the case of Izmir, itself, information about the historical patterns of the process was obtained, and the need was defined as follows:

As stated by the first team member (TM1), it was decided that the Foundation of Izmir would prepare the city's tourism strategy with the decision taken by the previous leading institution Izmir Development Agency (IDA) at the IDA Board of Directors, and the branding activities were initiated with the need arising from this strategy.

"TM1: The preparation of the Tourism Strategy was also handled with many stakeholders, and many people were interviewed at every stage, especially the Board of Tourism Coordination, academics and city leaders."

"TM1: As a result of the city identity branding process in Izmir, steps that will renovate it into a product have been taken in the last 10 years. ... The city marketing strategy

of IDA in 2010 was undertaken for the first time on the scale of İzmir. At that time, the Foundation of Izmir had various promotional activities in parallel or maybe not very parallel to this city identity between 2010-2020."

"TM1: The Foundation of Izmir started a multi-legged, comprehensive study, such as the renewal of the slogan of creating a corporate identity within the second largest systematic city marketing tourism strategy ever made for İzmir, in 2019."

Another team member (TM2) also drew attention to the importance of the Foundation of Izmir and the existence of previous efforts of city branding activities during the interviews.

"TM2: When we compare these branding efforts with other cities in Turkey, İzmir has put these efforts on its agenda since the previous years. ... Because this branding process we have done is not the first. Before that, there have been studies done by many institutions on the logo of İzmir."

"TM2: The last thing we did was to bring together different institutions under the umbrella of the Foundation of Izmir, with İzmir patterns or Izmir branding activities, to bring them into a structure that all institutions accept jointly. ... It was to find out the things that were in Izmir's history and culture and to ensure that they were redefined in a certain systematic way with a design language and a proper design language."

Most of the interviewed team members (TM4, TM5, TM6, TM7, and TM8) also emphasized the impact of various institutions on the current city branding process of Izmir and the differing approaches and designs adopted by these institutions previously. The interviewees discuss various branding efforts for the city of Izmir, Turkey, over the past decade. The Chamber of Commerce (City to Live), the Izmir Development Agency (The Evil Eye), and the Municipality of Izmir (The Living City) have all conducted separate studies and created logos and slogans for the city. (Figure 49) However, this has led to a fragmentation of efforts and a loss of productivity. The Izmir Development Agency was one of the first to work on city branding and created a Mediterranean brand for the city, focusing on the idea of pioneers and using an evil eye bead logo. Other expressions like "Izmir with love" and "beautiful Izmir" have also emerged. However, the branding efforts are now considered obsolete, and the city is perceived as divided due to the fragmented branding efforts.

Figure 49. Several Logos and Slogans for Izmir (Source: hurriyet.com.tr, 2012; Youtube, 2018; izto.org.tr, 2023)

The team members have also highlighted that the process of city branding in Izmir involves multiple institutions. However, the Izmir Development Agency (IDA), which initiated the process, is not considered as a city alliance due to its affiliation with the Ministry of Tourism in terms of budget and management style, despite its representation on the board of directors of various institutions. On the other hand, the Foundation of Izmir is viewed as an independent city alliance due to its structure.

5.1.2. Leadership

In fact, although the Foundation of Izmir is responsible for the branding process of the city, the leader was named Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) as the authority in most of the interviews. The key reason for this fact is that the Chairman of the Foundation is also the Mayor of IMM, so in people's minds, the process in which he is involved is attributed to IMM rather than the Foundation of Izmir. In other words, although the team members knows that the project is being carried out by the Izmir Foundation, when it comes to the question of leadership, the answer is given as the Municipality.

"TM1: In the Izmir Development Agency Board of Directors meeting, the city stakeholders took a joint decision to carry out the process after 2019 by the Izmir Foundation. ... What forms the basis of this corporate identity work is the vision and

approach of our Mayor Tunç Soyer, who started his duty in 2019, and the change that activates this work here. ... He is also the Chairman of the Izmir Foundation's Board of Directors."

"TM2: This work is actually led by the Izmir Foundation's Board of Directors."

"TM3: Actually, we can say İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, but as I said, we are trying to continue these studies with a participatory approach. For this reason, it continues in cooperation with the Board of the Tourism Coordination and the Foundation of İzmir. At the same time, the İzmir Development Agency took its place with us as an institution that supports the strategy document we prepared."

"TM4: The branding work which calls "The Patterns of Izmir" is carried out by the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir."

"TM5: As far as I know the Foundation of Izmir and the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir are two leading institutions. There was also the Izmir Development Agency."

"TM7: I care about it a lot because the Foundation of Izmir is a collective mind. It also includes performers. There are also many actors working in this field of tourism in terms of the city branding and marketing of the city itself. I think it was an accurate coordination in terms of owning the city branding process and sharing it in a way."

"TM8: I think I can answer this question as the Foundation of Izmir and the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir. ... because the CEO of a city is the Metropolitan Municipality. ... It would not be wrong to position the Foundation of Izmir as the coordinator of Izmir's brand awareness and recognition, as well as tourism affairs."

It can be seen that there is some ambiguity and differing perspectives regarding the institutions and stakeholders involved in the branding and tourism development of Izmir. While some emphasize the role of the Izmir Foundation and its Board of Directors, others highlight the involvement of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and the Izmir Development Agency. Despite these different views, there seems to be a general agreement that the process is being carried out in a participatory manner and that the collective ownership and coordination of the branding process by various actors is crucial for its success.

5.1.3. Stakeholders & Involvement

In this sub-section, the stakeholders who was involved in the city branding project, how these stakeholders participated in the process, the relationship between these stakeholders, and which stakeholders should have further participation in the project were examined in detail based on the interview questions. Even though the project manager identified the project's stakeholders, it was also attempted to understand a number of other stakeholders who weren't included in the Izmir branding process's organizational structure but were nevertheless thought of as project stakeholders. In addition, and more prominently, the main issue that needs to be revealed is the participation of these stakeholders in the city branding project of Izmir and the nature of relationship between them. Analyzing all the comments, a stakeholder map was constructed at the end of this section, through which the information retrieved from all the interviews was visualized.

The main stakeholders of the branding project are the Foundation of Izmir, as well as the people and institutions involved in the process through this Foundation. As stated in the research design, the thesis illustrates these stakeholders as three separate groups: decision makers, collective working team, and designer. However, it emerges from the interviews that, in addition to these three groups, there is another group that can be called "external stakeholders". This group includes academicians and excavation heads, as well as the experts from varying fields. Since these stakeholders do not have any organic ties with the Foundation of Izmir and their involvement in the branding process is realized only through the designer, they are called external experts or external stakeholders.

One of the team members (TM2) here discusses how the stakeholder involvement process can be managed through the city branding campaign of Izmir.

TM2: This work is actually led by the Izmir Foundation's Board of Directors. You already know by whom the Izmir Foundation's Board of Directors is represented. Everyone under that roof agreed that İzmir should have a branding identity and a common identity. In line with this decision that came out of there, all institutions providing representation in this sense were brought together in İzmir. Interviews were held with those institutions. After that, the visual identity that our design team works with, and the design team completed its work in line with the feedback it received at

the end of our meetings with other institutions. The result was presented to them by bringing together all the institutions in İzmir, and their ideas were taken. At the end of these, the Izmir brand took its final form today.

Besides, most of the interviewees also identify who the stakeholders are, how the stakeholders are involved in the city branding process and who would be the potential stakeholders in this process in detail.

The results show that all the team members highlight Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Izmir Development Agency as the two leading stakeholders in the process. Moreover, İzmir Governorship, Aegean Region Chamber of Industry, and Association of Turkish Travel Agencies are known as the other institutional stakeholders since they are already represented on the Board of Directors. Aegean Tourism Association and Çeşme Touristic Hoteliers Association, as well as other industrialists and businessmen associations in İzmir, both young and existing ones, are mentioned by the team members. There are also other stakeholders representing the tourism sector. For example, the opinions of the Izmir Chamber of the Guides, were also received due to their position in the Board of Tourism Coordination. Similarly, representatives from several hotel associations in Izmir were also interviewed. Besides, universities of Izmir can be counted as the stakeholders. Team members mentioned especially the meetings with faculty members rather than universities. They indicate that there were interviews with the members of the Izmir University of Economics, Dokuz Eylül University and Ege University. It can also be revealed that there have been several interviews with the Head of Excavations, academics, site heads of UNESCO and representatives from Tourism Coordination Board to consult their point of views.

In summary, team members point out the following institutions as stakeholders that they think are not included in the process but should be included: district municipalities, port operators, İzmir Economic Development Board (İEKK) etc. When we look at the structure of these institutions, it is possible to say that team members actually emphasize that institutions with more city-organized structures should be included in the city branding process. In addition, it is underlined that universities as institutions; whereas designers, communicators, marketers, architects, and city planners as a discipline requirement should also be involved. However, it should not be forgotten that the current team already includes a communicator, marketer and designer as team members.
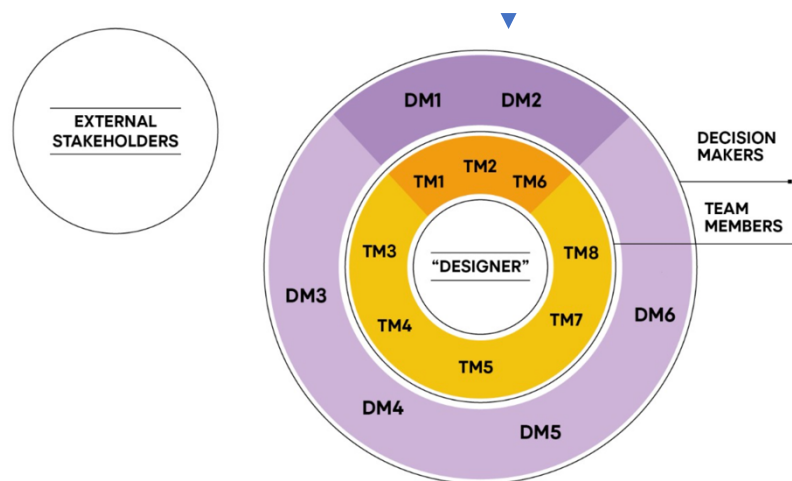
Figure 50. Stakeholder Map

Analyzing all the comments, a stakeholder map was constructed and the information retrieved from all the interviews was tried to be visualized. (Figure 50) Initially, although stakeholders were described as being divided into three separate groups as the decision-makers, the collective team, and the designer, they are now intertwined as illustrated. The decision maker team, which surrounds all actions and decisions as a decision-making body, is situated at the outermost point of the circle, with team members in a sub-segment with a supporting role and the designer at the center. External stakeholders who are not directly involved in the decision mechanism are not included at this stage. Hence, they are defined through their relations with the designer in the process conveyed by himself.

5.1.4. Public & Involvement

On the issue of public involvement, team members had different views since they expressed the most diverse opinions during the interviews. In the city branding project, the participation of the citizens was ensured in its natural flow, and as the designs began to be implemented gradually in the city, the reactions of the citizens were observed. However, no progress was made by applying any method such as surveys or interviews with the public.

"TM1: I don't know what the options regarding public involvement would be like, but I don't think it would be very helpful or meaningful."

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"TM2: First of all, the people of Izmir should have been involved. ... Another thing that I think is missing is that I don't think the design community's opinion is very popular. So maybe if the designers were involved, they could have made all the warnings in the talk I just gave earlier. Let's not just limit it to the designer, communicators and marketers should also be employed."

"TM2: No study has been done on whether or not the citizens accept this."

"TM3: Actually, we are testing this in the field, we did not conduct a one-on-one survey for this."

"TM4: These studies must first be accepted on the ground-level. In other words, the city, the people in the city, should own it and be known in the city. ... so first of all, it is necessary to know that these symbolic logos should be adopted by the citizens. ... This needs to be accepted by the public."

"TM6: It was put to the vote before, it should be a city vote. Everyone can have a say in terms of the citizens or those who feel that they belong to this city... The people should decide, right?"

"TM7: I don't think that the citizens were involved in the branding process. Everything needs to be delivered to the citizens again now. ... I'm one of those people who support the dictatorship in such matters."

"TM8: It is necessary to rely on knowledge and creativity. It is necessary to rely on the brief delivered to these children or the background story of their work. ... Whatever source they feed from; those sources are the right source. I think it is an unnecessary burden to include the views of someone who is not as familiar with this city and the story of this city as they are, just under the expression of that urbanite."

In summary, it can be retrieved that some of the team members argued that public involvement was not needed, while others believed the people of Izmir should have been engaged, and that the design, communication, and marketing communities should also have been consulted to have feedback. In addition, several team members' views differed on the best ways to involve the public, such as through city-wide votes, and delivery of the project to citizens. However, the majority of the participants agreed that gaining citizens' acceptance and ownership of the branding symbols was crucial for the project's success. Others also believed that relying on knowledge and creativity was more important than public opinion. One stakeholder even expressed support for

a dictatorship in branding matters. There was disagreement on whether a survey was necessary to gauge citizen acceptance of the branding. Thus overall, the team members suggest that there is a need for a balance between the vision of leading institutions and public involvement in branding projects.

5.1.5. Stages of the Project

According to the interviews with the team members, the stages of the city branding project of Izmir can be classified as follows:

I.   Project Preparation Process (Team)

II.   Stakeholder Feedback

III.   Research (GFK)

IV.   The Design Process

V.   Stakeholder Feedback

The interviews reveal that the project team turned a common will and idea, which emerged as a result of consultations with institutions, individuals, and sectors, into a project. They took into account policies of public institutions, previous studies in Izmir, global trends in branding processes, the expectations of the private sector, and Izmir's own historical identity and institutions. To gather up-to-date data, they conducted survey studies on a national and international scale with the help of Goal from Knowledge (GFK) and other institutions.

Also, it was revealed that the project team analyzed the situation and concluded that Izmir needed a common brand identity. As a result, the Izmir Foundation's board of directors decided to take on this task and hired a designer. The designer worked with the team to create draft works, which they then reviewed with archaeologists and university professors to determine the stories behind the patterns and choose which patterns to use. They also created an Izmir font and launched it. The team combined the font and patterns with the Izmir logo and began making minor applications in different areas to familiarize the citizens of Izmir with the new brand identity.

Overall, the team worked collaboratively to create a comprehensive branding strategy for Izmir, taking into account the city's unique identity and needs. Their approach involved gathering up-to-date data, analyzing the situation, designing a visual identity, and implementing the brand through various sub-brands and minor applications. They

also recognized the importance of monitoring and evaluating the project's progress and developing measurement tools to ensure its success.

5.1.6. Decision Making Process

The interviews with key stakeholders regarding the visual identity of İzmir suggest a collaborative effort among various institutions. The İzmir Foundation's board of directors and the İzmir Development Agency's board of directors were key decision-makers, with input from the Tourism Coordination Board. The İzmir Metropolitan Municipality ultimately made the final decision on the visual identity design. However, some stakeholders expressed concerns about the limited exchange of views and adoption of the visual identity among all parties involved, particularly among members of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce and other business associations. Additionally, some stakeholders believe that the city needs to move away from traditional decision-makers to progress. Overall, the collaborative process of designing İzmir's visual identity has been inclusive, but further efforts are needed to ensure wider adoption and dissemination of the visual identity among all relevant stakeholders.

"TM1: İzmir Foundation's board of directors and/or Izmir Development Agency's board of directors, then the views of the Tourism Coordination Board… We can also say that the partnership of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and Foundation of Izmir."

"TM2: All institutions providing representation in this sense were brought together in İzmir. Interviews were held with those institutions. After that, the visual identity that our design team works with, and the design team completed its work in line with the feedback it received at the end of our meetings with other institutions. The result was presented to them by bringing together all the institutions in İzmir, and their ideas were taken. At the end of these, branding of Izmir took its final form today."

"TM2: The institution that gives the final approval of the visual identity of the final design is the İzmir Foundation's board of directors."

"TM2: Ours is tourism-weighted, not to mention tourism-oriented. The Tourism Coordination Board made most of the decisions."

"TM3: Actually, the dialog continues more intensely. We have the secretariat duty of these meetings. A common agenda is being created. In fact, all stakeholders have a one-to-one influence, from setting the agenda to the latest outputs. Their opinions are sought in all works to be done in the name of tourism or branding in the city. But, of

course, let me say that the Foundation of Izmir has an intense support at the stage of its reflection on the design."

"TM3: In the implementation process, the promotional and communication activities of the project, such as solution partnerships and determination of strategic partnerships, were passed through, and at all these stages, both the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and our Tourism Coordination Board were told about these stages. Information was given at each stage. Their comments were received. It was generally welcomed. In this way, the visual identity study of İzmir was completed."

"TM3: Actually, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality makes the final decision. In other words, although we go through these processes together in the creation of the design, the Tourism Coordination Board or at work carries out the design of the Foundation, the Izmir Development Agency supports the process, but in the end, the decision maker is the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and the Mayor."

"TM4: They launched the project to us, but as I said, we were not involved in the preparation phase of the project. After the project was prepared, a presentation was made to us. ... There was no approval process, it was something that had already happened. It was shared with us. We saw the project after it was completed. In other words, it can be said that we were not involved in the preparation stage."

"TM5: the meeting I attended was actually a presentation of a finished study. In other words, the target audience has been determined, the purpose has been determined. After that, it was a version of it connected to a visual work. Of course, opinions were received, but it wasn't from the very beginning, it was more of a format where we saw such output."

"TM5: I think the decision maker is Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, but I don't know."

"TM6: ... Some work has been done on patterns or on tourism strategies or branding. Visual identity was introduced at the general assemblies within the foundation structure of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce. It was unanimously accepted by its members. Similarly, it was also unanimously approved by the Tourism Coordination Board."

"TM7: I think that the sharing or exchange of views is not enough and it is limited. ... Especially the Izmir Chamber of Commerce, the parties of this process, such as the

Commodity Exchange Market, the Chamber of Industry, had to adopt and disseminate it and have its members do it. I think these are missing here."

"TM8: In fact, the Foundation's contribution to this best practice is enormous. In the end, he actually shared the roles for these actors himself. Therefore, I think that the Foundation can determine well who can fill where and what kind of gap."

"TM8: I think the main problem in this city's progress is the boomers, it needs to get rid of them, so I see the biggest risk here. The boomer generation should no longer be in the decision-making seats."

5.1.7. Designer

The interviews reveal a range of perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of having an in-house designer from Izmir versus outsourcing the project to an external agency, as well as the importance of local knowledge and international expertise. Some argue that a competition could bring quality and diverse ideas, while others believe that an in-house team can provide valuable experience and knowledge sharing within the institution. Overall, these interviews provide insights into the complex decision-making process behind a branding project for a city and highlight the importance of balancing local knowledge with external expertise.

"TM1: The design team is inside, entirely within the Foundation of Izmir, but of course there will be an impact from outside as well. But the main team is the Foundation of Izmir. I think this is the right way."

"TM2: There is an advantage of the designer being from Izmir. He knows the city, he smells the air of the city, and all his thoughts are focused on that city. Therefore, it can reflect this much more easily and beautifully. The fact that the designer is from Izmir is in that sense an advantage in my opinion. Are there so many designers in Izmir? Another problem is whether there is a designer who has the capacity to do this job or not. But being from İzmir, being born and raised in İzmir, being raised in İzmir and acting like an İzmirian is a great advantage in that sense. I wish the agency would do it, but with a designer from Izmir, it would be the most stunning option. So, it happens like this. It also has a minor disadvantage. You can look at some things with blinders with a designer from Izmir. If there was an agency, they could have warned about the different points missed by the designers from Izmir within the agency. However, it is very pleasing that its essence comes from a designer from Izmir."

"TM2: Advantage and disadvantage of the inhouse designer - If it could be outsourced to a different agency. After that, if that agency has its own network, the advantages of the network, the different feedback it can bring, the knowledge etc. could be used. Now, when you just do inhouse here, it's up to your friend who works here, it depends on your knowledge in your own Foundation and getting information directly proportional to your workforce."

"TM4: I can consider this as a course of action depending on a policy or budget of the institution that runs the business. In other words, national and/or international competitions could be held for this. It could have also been a project for the students of the graphic design departments from Fine Arts Faculties of our universities."

"TM5: ...there are places in the world that have been made very successfully. There are campaigns, approaches to shine the cities that have nothing. This is something that I realize as a consumer or even as a visitor. At that point I care about external expertise. I mean, frankly, I care about the experience part of this job, but on the other hand, there is local knowledge. That is, eyes from outside will come and say, "Oh, İzmir has 'gevrek', there are also artichokes." So, I'm angry about that too. I also see that agencies in Turkey do a lot. I've seen it before. So, I think there should be a system that combines these two. .... I think it requires both interdisciplinary and international plus local teamwork from Turkey."

"TM7: Competition often brings quality, but or somehow different understandings, different philosophies, etc., but if you know what to do, if the philosophy and vision of the event is unique, then it doesn't matter who does how much."

"TM7: It is right to be a designer from Izmir. I think it is important that it is being oppressed with İzmir. I don't know if it was, but it means a lot for someone to design this work, according to the person who designed it or at the end of the day, as I said, by experimenting, trying, doing, and feeling. So is the Izmir font. For example, it was designed by someone from Mardin, but I see that he was inspired by İzmir, that he is from İzmir, that this is the İzmir font. For example, he convinced me in this way."

"TM8: When we move forward with outsourcing methods, I think that knowhow is definitely left out and cannot flow into institutions. ... So, it is actually the right decision to go inhouse. Seeing the difficulties in every aspect of this business, it is actually a valuable experience that all those discussions there, as well as the in-house

progress in the deduction processes and the fact that it is fed from within the institutions. And the fact that those people are in the institutions is a gain in my belief, so my opinion is positive. I already think that it should not be progressed through outsourcing, and especially it should never be tendered to international institutions through large tender processes."

In short, the opinions expressed by the participants regarding the design team for the branding of Izmir were varied. Some participants believed that having an in-house designer from Izmir would be an advantage, as they would have a better understanding of the city and could easily reflect its essence. However, others argued that outsourcing the job to a different agency would provide a broader range of feedback and knowledge. One participant suggested that national and international competitions could be held for the project, while another believed that a combination of local and external expertise would be necessary for its success. Nonetheless, it was generally agreed that the know-how gained through in-house progress was valuable and should not be overlooked. Overall, the opinions reflected a desire for a branding approach that balanced both local and external perspectives, while also recognizing the importance of in-house expertise.

5.1.8. Design

Regarding the design or output, namely the patterns, itself, the most emphasized point is the modularity of the product. As in many cities, we see that there are also many stakeholders in İzmir too. Everyone has a word or an opinion to say about İzmir, and everyone has a different way of symbolizing İzmir.

By combining 18 patterns from the history of Izmir with 12 color options, 216 different logo applications can be obtained. (See Figure 51) This reveals the polyphonic and multi-colored culture of İzmir and shows the harmony of the logo with this culture.

"TM2: The current visual identity has its advantages and disadvantages. Visually very effective. It attracts people, the color harmonies with each other are very beautiful. So, when you use it in an empty space, yes, it adds both joint mobility and color. .... For people who know the stories of the patterns, you can say yes, it reflects Izmir. But for those who don't know that these stories are elements of Izmir, they seem just like some ordinary patterns."
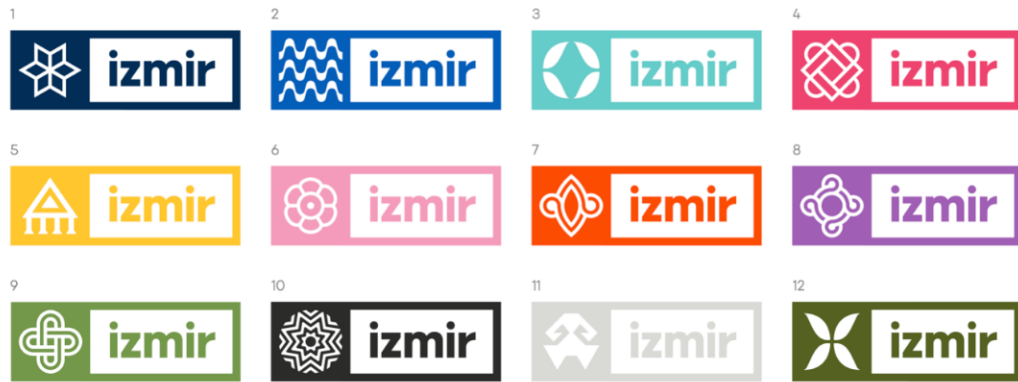
Figure 51. Selected Logos of Izmir

"TM2: We have 18 designs, four or five of them have meaningful stories. Others are adaptations of patterns we find in historical sites. Adaptation is a difficult task. ... When we said the city logo, it was supposed to be very simple for everyone to apply. Ours does not have such a characteristic. ... in the hands of these very competent designers, a very large world can reach a structure that can also disgrace Izmir in the hands of ordinary designers."

"TM7: I don't think these patterns are enduring at the moment. Since we are at the point we have reached, that is, when we see that the institutions that do this in the first place, spend money and put time and effort on it, do not give it the necessary value."

"TM8: The creators of Izmir, the children of Izmir, are creating something for Izmir and really with their Izmir stories. In fact, I think these are the reasons behind the adoption of these designs and these works, their acceptance and the fact that they are so close to this city."

The opinions expressed in the interviews reveal that the current visual identity of Izmir has both advantages and disadvantages. While it is visually effective and appealing to people, its significance may be lost on those who are not familiar with the stories behind the patterns. The creators of the designs are the people of Izmir, who aim to reflect the city's history and culture through their work. However, some believe that the designs may not endure, and their complexity may make them difficult to apply universally. The challenge lies in finding a balance between simplicity and meaningful representation of Izmir's heritage. Izmir visual identity should aim to strike a balance between simplicity, universal appeal, and meaningful representation of the city's unique cultural heritage.

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5.1.9. Application

During the interviews, team members also commented on the areas of application related to the new logo, as well as patterns related to the city branding project of Izmir.

"TM1: This logo was shared during the process since there was no announcement about this design. In İzmir, for example, it was applied on a large scale on Talatpaşa Boulevard. After that, there was the ferry application."

"TM2: These patterns began to be exhibited in various parts of the city. For example, we have a famous historical box on the ferry boats in Izmir, at the Pedestrian crossing in Talatpaşa, and again in Konak Square, in Kemeraltı, without being told that it has the Izmir logo and the Izmir branding identity. These patterns were also shown on the Kemeraltı route. ... Now, for example, these will be integrated into Izmirim cards."

"TM3: Currently several applications can be found in certain places. In fact, we can call them a test phase. For example, there are Izmir patterns in our historical information point, which we call the golden box, which was previously a red box. In fact, other than this visual identity study of İzmir, I don't know, the orange circle, visitİzmir, the designs we prepared for İzmiras, were all tested in the field at the initial stages of their implementation and reorganized with the feedback we received."

"TM6: We see these images in all stands and fairs of İzmir Fair in general, at the entrance of all fairs organized in İzmir and inside the fair building. There is also an Info Desk. Visitors who come there again have the chance to see that visual identity and get to know it closely."

The interviews revealed that the new visual identity of Izmir has been implemented in various locations throughout the city, including transportation vehicles, historical sites, and fair stand designs. The implementation process was conducted in a test phase, and feedback was used to reorganize the designs. While some team members acknowledged the attractiveness of the patterns, they also pointed out that the patterns may not be enduring and that the logo should be used more frequently. Additionally, the simplicity of the design was considered an essential characteristic for wider application. Some stakeholders expressed their hope that the success of the new visual identity would continue and that future administrations would not change it for the sake of legitimization. Overall, the interviews suggest that the new visual identity of Izmir has been well-received and implemented effectively, but there may be room for

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improvement in terms of frequency of use and adaptability.

For example, in Figure 52, it is illustrated that for the institutions in the board of directors, one of each of the 126 different designs was chosen, dedicated to them, and those logos were presented to the representatives of the corporations.

Figure 52. An Example of Application

5.1.10. Out-of-process Opinions

Additional opinions about the branding and its process are that the real challenges faced by cities, particularly İzmir, in the modern world, are more serious problems like climate change, financial crises, food shortages, and migration. For instance, TM1 suggests that branding studies may not be practical solutions for such complex and risky issues in a country like Turkey.

"TM1: I can say that in our age, cities are experiencing great difficulties. There is a climate crisis, a financial crisis, a food crisis, and irregular migration movements, both in İzmir and other cities in the Mediterranean basin, as well as in other world cities. There is also scarcity. There is a depletion in water resources. There are increasing CO2 emissions, there are wars. Therefore, since institutions are separate from each other, they also have similarities with each other, this means they have common problems and agendas. In such a problematic and troubled world and like Turkey, we can say this even though İzmir is the most visionary city in Turkey in this

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sense, I think there is no need for us to wear each other down like this because of such a problematic agenda that a subject like telling people about it was not taken care of enough when our time was so troubled."

Also, TM8 argues that tourism is not a significant factor in İzmir's economy and suggests focusing on renewable energy, maritime transportation, and logistics center as more strategic and beneficial sectors for the city's development.

"TM8: In fact, tourism has no determinative side for İzmir in terms of economics or its own development. The size of the tourism sector in the total city economy is 4 per thousand, ... Therefore, it is a mistake for me to place a sector in such a critical position that does not have such a multiplying effect, that is, does not increase production, does not increase employment, does not increase income. ... There are also new sectors that are neglected and which, in my opinion, should be highlighted in terms of communication for İzmir. ... in İzmir, there is an energy sector that has emerged in the world in recent years, especially with the technological development and renewable energy coming to the fore. Today, Izmir is one of the 5 cities in the world that includes all the components that can produce all the equipment related to wind energy. ... Izmir is also in the Aliağa region, which has the fastest growing port cluster in Europe, although it is still underdeveloped. Therefore, the issue of maritime transportation and port services is also very critical for İzmir. Actually, a logistics center, a hub. ... Therefore, I think that it is a much more strategic and correct positioning for İzmir to play in these areas."

Overall, they highlight the need for cities to address multiple challenges and adopt strategic approaches to promote their economic development and sustainability.

5.1.11. Discussion

The interviews conducting with the team members shed light on various aspects of the branding process for Izmir, including the role of different institutions, stakeholder involvement, public participation, design considerations, and the implementation of the visual identity.

The interviews highlight the impact of various institutions on the branding process but also point out that this has led to fragmentation and a loss of productivity. This indicates a lack of coordination and collaboration among the stakeholders involved. To ensure a more cohesive and effective branding strategy, it is essential for these

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institutions to align their efforts and work together towards a shared vision.

There is ambiguity and differing perspectives regarding the institutions and stakeholders involved in the branding process. While this may indicate a lack of clarity and coordination, it also emphasizes the importance of involving a wide range of actors to ensure a comprehensive approach. The interviews reveal a general agreement that collective ownership and coordination among these actors are crucial for the success of the branding process.

Some team members suggest that certain stakeholders, such as district municipalities, port operators, and the İzmir Economic Development Board, are not currently included in the branding process but should be. This highlights the need to involve a broader range of city-organized institutions that can contribute to the branding efforts. Additionally, it is emphasized that disciplines like design, communication, marketing, architecture, and city planning should be represented, along with universities as important institutions. This diverse inclusion can bring varied perspectives and expertise to the branding process.

The interviews indicate differing opinions on the level of public involvement in the branding process. While some argue for engaging the people of Izmir and seeking their feedback, others suggest that relying on knowledge and creativity may be more important than public opinion. The majority, however, agree that gaining citizens' acceptance and ownership of the branding symbols is crucial. Balancing the vision of leading institutions with public involvement and feedback can lead to a more inclusive and widely accepted branding strategy.

The team worked collaboratively to develop a comprehensive branding strategy for Izmir. Their approach involved data gathering, analysis, designing a visual identity, and implementing the brand through sub-brands and minor applications. The recognition of the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and measurement tools ensures ongoing progress and success. This comprehensive strategy reflects a holistic understanding of the branding process.

The interviews reveal a collaborative effort among various institutions involved in designing Izmir's visual identity. While the İzmir Foundation's board of directors, İzmir Development Agency's board of directors, and the Tourism Coordination Board played key roles, concerns are raised about limited exchange of views and adoption

among all stakeholders. This suggests the need for further efforts to ensure wider adoption and dissemination of the visual identity among relevant parties.

Opinions on the design team for Izmir's branding are varied. Some argue for an in-house designer from Izmir, while others favor outsourcing to gain broader feedback and knowledge. Combining local and external expertise is seen as necessary for success. However, the value of in-house expertise should not be overlooked. Balancing both local and external perspectives can result in a well-rounded and effective branding approach.

The current visual identity of Izmir is visually effective and appealing, reflecting the city's history and culture. However, concerns are raised about the significance being lost on those unfamiliar with the patterns. The complexity of the designs and their long-term endurance are also debated. Striking a balance between simplicity, universal appeal, and meaningful representation of Izmir's heritage is crucial to ensure the visual identity's success.

The new visual identity of Izmir has been implemented in various locations, and feedback has been used to refine the designs. While the attractiveness of the patterns is acknowledged, suggestions are made to use the logo more frequently and ensure its adaptability. The hope is expressed that future administrations will maintain the visual identity to ensure its success. This highlights the importance of consistency and long-term commitment to branding efforts.

Overall, the discussions within the interviews underscore the need for collaboration, coordination, and inclusion of various stakeholders in the branding process. Achieving a balance between the vision of leading institutions and public involvement is crucial, along with considering the expertise of designers and other relevant disciplines. The implementation of the visual identity should be well-planned and adaptable, ensuring wide adoption and consistency over time. By addressing these considerations, Izmir can develop a strong and meaningful brand that reflects its unique identity and cultural heritage while garnering public acceptance and support.

Moreover, although this group is coded as collective team members with the information received here, the studies have revealed that the participants apart from the Foundation of Izmir, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Izmir Chamber of Commerce do not see themselves as part of the team, but as collaborators or

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stakeholders.

For this reason, it would be more accurate to position institutional stakeholders, namely Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Izmir Development Agency, Historical Kemeralti Construction Investment Trade Inc., Kentimiz İzmir Association as a strategic partner rather than a collective team member.

One of the team members explains the above-mentioned inference in his own words as follows:

"TM4: They launched the project to us, but as I said, we were not involved in the preparation phase of the project. After the project was prepared, a presentation was made to us."

The fact that Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Izmir Chamber of Commerce see themselves in the process can be evaluated within the scope of the greater involvement of these institutions. It can be said that the reason for this is that the leaders of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Izmir Chamber of Commerce have both been appointed as the chairman and vice-chairman of the Foundation of Izmir. Since the responsibility rests with their leaders, it is also possible that the employees of these two institutions have become more involved or have had to involve themselves in the process.

In conclusion, regarding the analysis of the collective team members, it can be revealed that they all made unique contributions to the project at different levels and in various segments.

5.2. Decision Makers' Analysis

According to the interview protocol, decision makers are asked the following questions:

1.   Who is/are leading the city branding process in Izmir?

2.   Who is the owner and/or decision-making body of the city branding of Izmir?

3.   Are there joint or single decision mechanisms in Izmir?

4.   How do you identify the stakeholders? Who are the stakeholders from your perspective?

5.   Have the stakeholders been involved in the city branding process of Izmir?

a.   If yes, at what stage?

b.   If not, in what ways can they be involved?

6.   What are the roles of the stakeholders in İzmir's city branding process?

7.   According to your opinion, what is the expected contribution of the stakeholders?

8.   How do you define the role of the citizens in particular?

9.   Are there any stakeholders whose opinions were received? If yes, has the city branding process changed in line with these opinions?

10.   What do the stakeholders think of the new logo of Izmir? Do you think that they will be able to own this logo?

In accordance with the above-mentioned questions along with the interview content, the following six featured subjects have been emerged:

o   Ownership

o   Stakeholders & Involvement

o   Public & Involvement

This section details the relationship between these themes and the collected quotations from a total of six interviews. Rather than responding with a general structured interview, decision makers felt the need to state their own views on the more general subject.

5.2.1. Ownership

Regarding the ownership structure of the branding project of Izmir, what is stated jointly by all stakeholders is that the branding efforts are carried out by the Foundation of Izmir, and the main motive for this is that the Foundation has a multi-stakeholder structure and everyone who has a say regarding branding activities.

"DM3: Recommended by the Foundation of Izmir."

"DM5: Of course, the Foundation of Izmir. As Çeşme Touristic Hoteliers Association, we have been working in the management of the Izmir Foundation for a long time. We support this project and similar ones."

"DM6: I'm sure these were evaluated by the general manager of the Foundation of

Izmir before they came to us and finally presented to the Izmir Foundation's board of directors."

5.2.2. Stakeholders & Involvement

Decision makers discussed the importance of openness and transparency in achieving consensus among stakeholders, while also emphasizing the need to leave personal egos behind and work towards a common goal. The success of the project was attributed to the involvement and active participation of various institutions, including the Izmir Chamber of Commerce, the Aegean Region Chamber of Industry, the Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir, the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, and the Izmir Development Agency. And also, to the coordination between the Tourism Coordination Board and the Foundation of Izmir. However, although all the decision makers agreed about that DM1 emphasized the stakeholder involvement, it is still not clear in their mind that in what ways was this involvement been happened.

Moreover, they all agree that the project requires the involvement of various stakeholders, including universities, academics, and experts. They also suggest that the mayor needs to be more active and engaged in the meetings to activate the stakeholders and ensure their opinions are heard. Furthermore, important point raised by the decision makers was that stakeholders need to be more active in expressing their opinions and ideas to ensure the success of the project. Overall, the decision makers stress the importance of collaboration, consultation with experts, and active engagement to confirm the achievement of the city branding project of Izmir.

Most of the interviewees also mentioned that there is stakeholder engagement at some extent, but unlike others, some of the interviewees claims that it would be appropriate to receive any professional service, that is, to complete the design not only by the Foundation of Izmir, but also by bringing in external experts when necessary. For instance, DM2 highlights the importance of outsourcing certain specific matters and relying on the expertise and experience of individuals from both inside and outside of an institution. This approach can be adopted by other organizations, such as the Foundation of Izmir, to achieve successful outcomes in their respective endeavors. Therefore, effective communication, cooperation, and expert consultation could be seen as critical factors in the successful implementation of a project.

Another issue that the interviewee talked about was the involvement of universities in

the branding process. The opinions of the decision makers were that the engagement of people teaching the profession would definitely be beneficial. They argue this in terms of both communication and design, as well as marketing disciplines. For instance, DM6 highlighted the importance for the perspective of academia which did not engage well in the city branding process of Izmir.

"DM6: Universities. You know, the academy, the people who have the education in brand marketing, the people who teach the marketing discipline, the people who made these creative logo designs, the universities should embrace this."

5.2.3. Public & Involvement

Unlike other sections, there are conflicting ideas in the statements of interviewee regarding to public involvement issue in the city branding project of Izmir. As the Izmir branding project has focused on creating patterns that represent the city's identity and applying them to various areas in the city, including pedestrian crossings, ferries, and urban furniture, it should be stated that the project's success depends on the adoption and ownership of these efforts by the people of Izmir, and the local government's role in creating a common branding management system. Thus, there are differing opinions on how to involve the public in the decision-making process. Some argue that rather than an autocratical approach, the people of Izmir should be directly involved in choosing the city's symbols and branding elements through voting, while others suggest that this would take too long and that experts should make these decisions in a scientific workshop rather than the public. It is also suggested that the Foundation of Izmir should seek out and benefit from the ideas and experiences of the city's visionary people, such as artists, businessmen, and historians.

"DM1: Adoption and ownership of these efforts by the people of Izmir is important for the success of the project. In other words, there is a participation of the people in its natural process. Even though it is not asked one by one, it is applied in the visible parts of the city, their reactions are observed, it is continued because nothing negative happened."

"DM6: Asking the citizens of the city takes a long time, everyone gives an opinion, this decision should be made by experts."

On the other hand, there is the idea of supporting the management and the decision-making mechanisms of the leading institution in the branding process without

questioning. They argue that the mayor and administration have been elected with a significant majority and have been given authority by the people. It is asserted that democracy cannot be applied to every decision and that if the public is asked about everything, then effective management becomes impossible. It is thought to be like this: since the chairman of the board of directors has been elected by the people, they have already given their consent and trust to the local authority, and therefore the they should have the freedom to make decisions without constantly seeking the public's opinion.

"DM4: I'm in favor of this project being done by the leaders. Because the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality is at the head of this project. There is a mayor and administration elected with seventy percent. They have given him authority; the people have given them authority. Since a person who has taken his authority from the people is the chairman of the board of directors... Democracy cannot be for everything, that is, democracy cannot be everywhere. If you choose democracy somewhere, then you mean that you can rule us. Whether this government is good or bad will be revealed in the next election. Therefore, since our chairman of the board of directors is a chairman elected by the people, if we ask the public about everything, then we cannot manage anything."

This point of view reminds the concept of representative democracy since the interviewee emphasize the role of citizens in electing representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Representative democracy is a type of governance where citizens elect representatives to act as decision-makers on their behalf. In this system, citizens have the opportunity to vote for candidates who will represent their interests and opinions in the legislative body or parliament. The elected representatives are responsible for making decisions and passing laws that affect the country, its citizens, and its economy. They are accountable to the people who elected them and can be replaced through regular elections if they do not fulfill their duties or represent the interests of their constituents. This system is widely practiced in many countries around the world and is considered one of the most effective ways of ensuring democratic governance (Pitkin, 1967; Dahl, 1971; O'Neil, 2010).

Overall, a common branding management system that incorporates input from both experts and the public can help strengthen the city's identity and increase its ownership among the people of Izmir.

Another important point here is that decision-makers may not have realized that public involvement was being used as a tactical urbanism[3] experiment. In other words, their evaluation may not have been about whether it worked or not, but rather about using public feedback to improve and enhance the design process. The reason they may not have acknowledged this is that they may not have been aware of the changes made in the branding process based on public feedback or may not have seen design as a living, evolving process. This also shows that they may not have been deeply involved in the design process.

5.2.4. Discussion

The interviews conducted with the decision makers offer insights into the ownership structure of the branding project in Izmir, stakeholder involvement, and the issue of public participation.

The branding efforts in Izmir are carried out by the Foundation of Izmir due to its multi-stakeholder structure, which allows everyone with a stake in branding activities to have a say. This approach ensures that the project is not controlled by a single entity but involves a diverse range of perspectives. By involving multiple stakeholders, the Foundation of Izmir can tap into a wide pool of expertise and ensure a more comprehensive and inclusive branding strategy.

Also, the success of the branding project in Izmir is attributed to the active involvement of various institutions and coordination between the Tourism Coordination Board and the Foundation of Izmir. Decision-makers highlight the importance of openness, transparency, and consensus-building among stakeholders. They also emphasize the need for active engagement, consultation with experts, and collaboration to ensure the project's success. The involvement of universities, academics, and experts is seen as crucial to bring diverse knowledge and perspectives to the branding process. However, it is unclear from the interviews how exactly the involvement of stakeholders has taken place, and this aspect needs to be further clarified to ensure transparency and effective participation.

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[3] Tactical urbanism is an approach to urban planning and design that involves the temporary and low-cost transformation of public spaces using small-scale, community-driven interventions. These initiatives are often led by local residents, community groups, or activists and aim to improve the quality of urban environments, enhance public engagement, and address urban challenges. (Pfeifer, 2013)

There are differing opinions among decision-makers regarding the extent and methods of public involvement in the branding process. Some argue for direct public participation through voting and decision-making, while others suggest that decisions should be made by experts in a scientific workshop. The success of the project relies on the adoption and ownership of branding efforts by the people of Izmir. It is suggested to seek input from visionary individuals such as artists, businessmen, and historians, who can contribute with ideas and experiences. Some decision-makers advocate for supporting the management and decision-making mechanisms of the leading institution without constantly seeking the public's opinion, emphasizing the concept of representative democracy.

The discussion on public involvement raises important considerations about striking a balance between expert decision-making and democratic participation. While involving the public in decision-making processes can ensure greater buy-in and ownership, it can also be time-consuming and may not always lead to optimal outcomes. Expertise and professional knowledge are valued for making informed decisions efficiently. However, it is crucial to find ways to incorporate public feedback and ensure that the branding process is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people of Izmir.

The interviews indicate a potential lack of clarity and understanding among decision-makers regarding the public involvement strategies employed in the branding process. There may be a need to improve communication channels and transparency to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the changes made based on public feedback. Additionally, decision-makers may benefit from deeper involvement in the design process to gain a better understanding of its iterative and evolving nature.

In conclusion, the importance of ownership, stakeholder involvement, and public participation in the branding project of Izmir are the prominent subjects retrieved from the interviews. A multi-stakeholder approach, with active involvement of institutions, experts, and the public, can lead to a more comprehensive and inclusive branding strategy. Balancing expert decision-making and public opinion is crucial for effective decision-making. Clear communication channels and a deeper understanding of the design process can improve the implementation of public involvement strategies. By addressing these aspects, Izmir can strengthen its branding efforts and foster a sense of ownership and pride among its residents.

5.3. Designer's Analysis

Designers play a crucial role in creating a unique identity through a city branding process. From the designer's perspective, this process requires a combination of creativity, strategic thinking, and collaboration with the target audience to develop a brand identity that effectively communicates the desired message. Accordingly, in this section the entire branding process will be handled from the designer's perspective and the section also try to decipher the process with his responses.

Beginning with the designer commenting on his own story, he initially designates the branding process that took place under the umbrella of the Foundation of Izmir. The main motive behind this structure is highlighted as to ensure that the product remains impartial and free from political influence. This is also seen as the main cause that the Foundation of Izmir is jointly established and managed by the leading institutions of the city, according to the designer.

Although graphic design played a leading role in the city branding process, it is mentioned that the designer benefited greatly from other design disciplines. During the design process, for instance, the team took a multidisciplinary approach with a graphic designer, motion graphic designer, industrial designer, historians, archaeologists, and other experts from related fields. They also consulted with the Chamber of Architects and visited employees related to the project's patterns and excavation heads. A typographer has even been worked with who contributed voluntarily to the project.

Within this context, the disciplines involved in the process and the players from those disciplines that are already mentioned above can be summarized in the Figure 53 below:
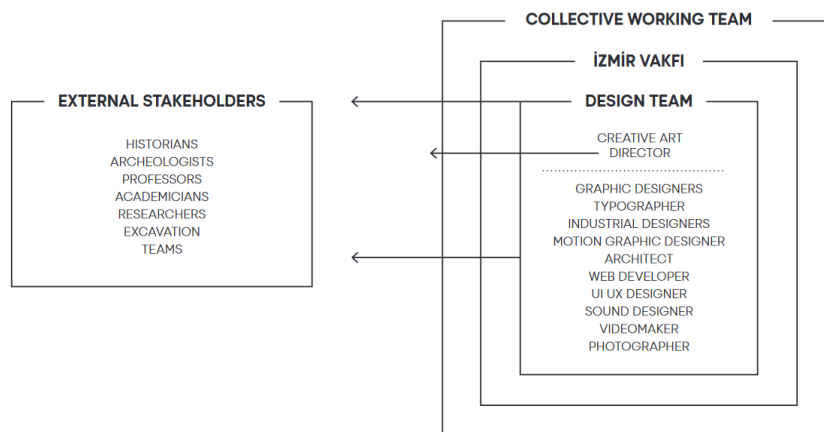

Figure 53. Disciplines and the Players

When we examine the above table carefully, we can see that the designer is at the heart and the most central point of this team. Therefore, the designer's selection process is also of great importance.

The Izmir branding project was initiated with the involvement of the designer from the very beginning. The designer was already familiar with the Municipality and had prior experience in branding all the fairs of Izmir. After taking a break, the designer was asked to take on the branding project. Without hesitation, the designer agreed to do it with pleasure and the project was launched. He declared that "Izmir branding was already a project that always revolved around in my mind".

During the branding process of the Izmir Fair, the designer had a vision of creating something worthy of the city. Despite the difficulty of getting his ideas accepted, his work was quickly understood and appreciated. In this process, the designer also competed with agencies who presented their own ideas. The designer submitted his ideas and was chosen to work on the project. While he is unsure if he was chosen for being more economical or better, he cannot compare himself to the other agencies as he did not see their presentations. Nevertheless, it was a competition and the designer was asked to convey his ideas quickly, which were eventually accepted.

The fact that the designer had previously designed logos for the fairs indicates a design policy, and there is a political decision involved. Design policy can be defined as

"the overarching strategy, program or initiative that a government, organization or institution puts in place to promote and support the development, application and use of design, and to improve the economic, cultural and social impact of design." (Design Council, 2021)

Design policy and designer are interrelated and interconnected concepts. Design policy provides a framework and guidelines for designers to work within, while designers play a key role in shaping and implementing design policies. Designers can benefit from design policies by having more opportunities to work on projects that align with the goals and priorities outlined in the policy. On the other hand, designers can also provide feedback to policy makers on the effectiveness of the policy and areas that may need improvement. Ultimately, both design policy and designer contribute to the development and advancement of design as a field, and their relationship is crucial in shaping the future of design (Robertson and Simons, 2012).

In the interviews the designer also commented on several motives behind the selection of himself as the designer of the branding project of Izmir. One of them is his persistence in being at the decision-making table and creating discussions, even if he sometimes lost. He believes that creating a poster is more important than organizing a fair because the poster will remain. He sees his involvement in the branding project as the result of his efforts in creating discussions and the sociological structure of Izmir, which has good universities.

Another important issue that the designer mentioned is the matter of being in Izmir. He believes that his decision to not work for an agency, and to stay and fight in Izmir, has been a key factor in his success. He acknowledges that there may be others who are capable of doing his job, or even doing it better, but he chose to stay and work in Izmir instead of moving elsewhere. As a result of his choices, he was able to secure his current job.

This also reminds the fact that Izmir is not the accurate place for creative work, as we see an example of qualified migration under the sentence "But they did not stay here and fight, they went to other locations. They work elsewhere. I chose to stay here.". It is understood that designers have a problematic relationship with the design of the city they live in. Although Izmir has been trying to position itself as a "design city" (Dereli, 2017) for many years, and even UNESCO applications (Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, 2020) have been made, it is emphasized that designers migrate to different cities, especially Istanbul, for work or development purposes.

While creative industries are being developed with the private sector in other cities, especially in Istanbul, it is being developed by the public sector in Izmir. The relationship between cities and design has been historically complex, with cities serving as cultural, economic, and social centers that provide a unique context for the creation and dissemination of design practices and ideas. However, challenges arise in promoting and supporting design, with designers struggling to find opportunities and resources in the urban context. The Izmir Culture Workshop and Design Forum (izmirdeniz.com, 2023). are also clear evidence that design is being developed by the public and municipal sector in Izmir. However, in Istanbul, which is the most important competitor, designers and design companies are in the forefront and have a leading role. Even the designers who participated in the Design Forum in Izmir were unfortunately from Istanbul, as it was known.

Thus far, the focus of the analysis has been on the designer himself, but now the thesis examines the design process in detail. However, inevitably the process and branding itself will also be intertwined. At this point, the designer first lists the stages of the process with the following words:

"DT1: As the Foundation of Izmir, we had to develop a tourism strategy first. ... This strategy took quite a long time to write. Konda took part in GFK, various surveys were conducted. The perception of Izmir was measured abroad. Also, the perception of Izmir in the country was measured. As a result of these researches, a roadmap emerged."

Here the designer specifically emphasizes that the design process begins with research, measuring the perception of Izmir both domestically and internationally, and drawing a roadmap from this data.

The designer also identifies the stages in the design process by commenting on the need for a unique logo of Izmir and on how then it was converted into a brand identity system, as follows:

"DT1: Now here the demand was the logo and there was not actually a brief... Therefore, I already had a visual brief in my mind to find solutions to these. At that point, when they said I need a logo, I said, I need much more than a logo. Because the logo is something that will not solve your problem."

Another important point that stands out here is that initially the brief was only for a city logo and the current brand identity system was not included in the initial request.

Being curious about the design strategy of city branding of Izmir, the designer mentioned that while designing the branding strategy, he was also working on creating a cultural archive for Izmir. The archive will be compiled and handed over to the next generation, with the idea that they will continue to add new finds to it. The branding layout was designed to be dynamic and adaptable, allowing for new patterns and discoveries to be incorporated. This reflects the rich cultural history of Izmir, which has spanned over 8000 years and will continue into the future. He believes that the engineering aspect of branding is particularly important in creating a lasting and dynamic structure for the city.

The designer's approach to the need for a brand identity system has also been acknowledged since he explains that İzmir has a rich cultural history that dates back

to the Pagan culture, and has been influenced by many cultures. Islamic calligraphy, for example, is just one aspect of İzmir's cultural heritage. İzmir's previous cultures also developed their own designs and symbols, such as Cybele. Therefore, he believes that there is no single logo that can fully represent İzmir, as all designs are equally legitimate and accurate in their own right.

The designer also commented on the involvement of the designer into decision-making processes. The concept of designers being "at the table" during decision-making processes in organizations is often discussed in both design and design thinking literature as well. For example, Tim Brown, the CEO of IDEO, discusses the importance of having designers involved in strategic decision-making in his book "Change by Design." Similarly, in the book "Design Thinking for Strategic Innovation" by Idris Mootee, the author emphasizes the need for designers to be integrated into cross-functional teams and to participate in strategic conversations.

There are also several academic research on different aspects of involving designers into decision-making processes. For instance, Braga and Monte (2019) examines the role of design thinking in decision-making processes. Through a systematic literature review, it analyzes how design thinking can be integrated into decision-making processes and provide benefits. The article discusses how the participation of designers can add value to decision-making processes and explores its applications in various industries. Similarly, in their article Su et al. (2018) investigates the role of designers in strategic decision-making processes. The authors explore how designers can contribute to strategic decision-making processes and create value for organizations. The article discusses how designers' creativity, problem-solving abilities, and user-focused perspectives can impact strategic decision-making processes. Also, Nigai et al. (2017) focuses on establishing a connection between design and business strategy to enhance decision-making processes. The authors present a framework that explains how design can be integrated with business strategy and decision-making. The article discusses how designers can become involved in business strategy and decision-making processes, how design thinking can be applied to strategic decision-making, and how it can create value for organizations.

Accordingly, the designer also expresses that they do not enjoy working closely with large corporations or institutions because it is difficult to maintain their own design attitude and keep it alive. These institutions have strict hierarchies, so the designer

must often bend and manage their ideas to align with the organization's goals, which can compromise the quality of their work. The designer prefers to work from a distance, but acknowledges that not being present can lead to poor design decisions, which can ultimately be attributed to the designer.

On the other hand, it is important to define and explain the boundaries of design. In his book, Tim Brown notes that design is not only limited to aesthetic function, but also includes functionality and user experience. The book also emphasizes the relationship between design and engineering, which is important in ensuring functionality and optimizing the product (Brown, 2008).

Another article focuses on how the design thinking approach is an effective toolset for innovation and how companies from different sectors adopt and implement the design thinking approach. The article emphasizes the importance of the relationship between design and engineering in the product development process and discusses different models that define the interaction between design and engineering. Additionally, the article touches on how these models can be adapted while considering the differences in product development processes and disciplines (Smith and Goninon, 2019).

In the interview, the designer also describes the details of the design process, starting with the design of the İzmir Typeface, which is as important as the design itself, since a high-quality font has the ability to shape the identity of a city, impart its individuality and characteristics, and generate significant enthusiasm among people. Accordingly, before continuing the analysis, it was considered useful to visit selected examples in the world since there are numerous cities that have their own distinctive fonts (the Guardian, 2015a).

For instance, the typeface used in London's transit system since 1933, designed by Edward Johnston, is considered the most recognizable font in the city. Also, although many city fonts are designed with a modern and sleek look, often featuring geometric shapes, the Milano City font stands out with its softer, rounder appearance that manages to evoke a sense of history without appearing overly ornate. Eindhoven also redesigned its logo in 2013, creating a typeface named after the city. The typeface was designed to match the logo's red zig-zag pattern with jagged edges, giving it a dynamic, unfinished look. Similarly, Essen International, a design agency, was assigned the task of creating a new look for the city of Stockholm in 2014. To achieve this, they gave

St. Erik, Stockholm's patron saint, a new design and developed Stockholm Type, a simple geometric font. Another example is Chattanooga which is a vibrant, distinctive, futuristic, and technologically advanced city. Its unique typeface, Chatype, represents and celebrates the magnificence of the city. Chattanooga is the first local government in the US to utilize a unique typeface to create a distinctive identity. For usage on signage, advertisements, and the internet, Chattanooga, Tennessee, commissioned the creation of Chatype. Along with the backing of numerous regional designers and opinion leaders, Chatype also has the endorsement of Insigne Design, Wilton Foundry, and D+J Identity (Wheeler, 2017).

While there are many more examples like these, it is important to emphasize why font design is important for city branding. The study conducted by Nurcahyani and Sari (2018) discusses the role of typography design in creating visual identities for cities in Indonesia. The study aims to identify the characteristics of typography used in the city branding of selected cities in Indonesia and to investigate the relationship between typography design and the visual identity of a city. The authors analyze various examples of typography used in city branding and use the findings to propose guidelines for designing typography that effectively communicates a city's identity. The study concludes that typography is a crucial element in creating a city's visual identity and that a well-designed typographic system can effectively communicate the unique characteristics and values of a city.

Since the importance of font design and why it should be done is explained in the existing literature, the designer also discussed the importance of creating a custom font and addresses the criticisms about the Izmir font.

Accordingly, the designer mentioned that the first problem he encountered was the fact that their language has unique letters in its language, so a foreign designer may not have been able to create a font that worked well with it. The second problem was that designing a font is not just about the letters themselves, but also the space between them and how they work together as a whole. To solve these issues, the designer enlisted the help of Ahmet Altun to create a font that would work well for the branding of Izmir. He was given a brief to create a font that was not necessarily new or original, but would do its job well. The resulting font received some criticism for being too flat when viewed on its own, but overall, it was deemed to be effective in branding the city.

The designer also emphasized that the font did not necessarily need to reflect Izmir, as the primary goal was to create a font that could be used across various platforms and contexts. They opted for a clean sans serif font that was grotesque and yet had a humanistic feel to it. Overall, the custom font designed for Izmir was successful in meeting its branding needs. In that sense, the designer's approach is seemed to be different from all of the stakeholders, i.e., more emotional than others.

To explain the design process, it is also necessary to comment on the design itself and describe it comprehensively. As it is mentioned before, the most vital part of this branding project is seen as the grid – layout system (See Figure 54) and the designer highlighted this fact as follows:

"DT1: Actually, neither logo, nor color, nor anything else. What constitutes this branding is the principles of their coexistence. So, I think this is actually the layout system. Because that pattern or this pattern is not important at all, we accept all symbols that we can draw in our own grid system and divide it into two or four spots, provided that they belong to Izmir, and this system has been designed to bring them all together in the same way. Therefore, for me, the main thing is the system itself. I am interested in the system of how it can be used with the logo, how it contains the logo, or how it can be used without a logo, how it can be applied on which wall, on which vehicle. In fact, it is exactly like İzmir."

Figure 54. Grid System of the Izmir Branding

"DT1: There are many things that make it a city while telling, and there is a reductionist approach in graphic design, that is, an effort to explain a subject in the simplest way. But when it comes to a city, it didn't seem right to me to reduce it to a single symbol, especially when it comes to a city like Izmir.

It appears that the current work has two advantages:

1.   Putting the signature of Izmir on symbols used in different parts of the world,

2.   Introducing the city culture of Izmir to its residents.

"DT1: This had two advantages. First, these symbols are already used multidisciplinary by many designers and architects in many places around the world. They just don't have the Izmir signature on them. Creating this awareness will provide us with a very important advantage in visual communication. Because an Italian living in Italy will be surprised to know that a pattern that he thinks belongs to his own

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culture actually belongs to Izmir. A second advantage is that the people of this city (Izmir) will have the opportunity to get to know their own culture."

Looking at the motivation of the designer's attributed vision and polyphony, it comes from the cultural heritage of Izmir, which has a history of polyphony, change, transformation, and openness even dating back to the philosophical thought of the Ephesian school before Christ. Therefore, the designer believed that it was more appropriate to evaluate the existing symbols that this culture brought rather than creating something completely new. Although it may seem that this polyphonic vision comes from the designer, when we look at the opinions of other stakeholders in this regard, it should be noted that Decision Maker 1 (DM1) also played a role in shaping this vision, as we see from his quote below.

"DM1: If it is not nourished by its roots, it is a promotional or identity expression instrument that you find, then it becomes something like an outfit that does not fit, it falls out. It is not sincere; it is not believable."

The designer also continues to explain how the symbols were found and describes an inspiring story about visiting a carpet shop that had an influence on the design process. The designer visited a carpet shop in Selçuk and asked the shop owner to set aside carpets unique to Izmir. The shop owner showed him a few patterns that were unique to Izmir, and the designer researched the subject further, finding a journal focusing on 'belleten motifs'[4]. The designer then started with a few pieces of patterns and did a graphic training with them, taking something that he knew really had an Izmir pattern or symbol as his starting point. This story can also be considered as the starting point for the project. It is also proof that design cannot be done only at a desk.

The search for symbols started with carpets, and then continued by delving into the city's roots through ancient city versions. The designer mentions that he knew the best

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[4] Belleten motifs refer to the decorative patterns and motifs found in traditional Turkish art, specifically in the context of the Belleten style. Belleten is a term used to describe the traditional decorative arts of Turkey, including calligraphy, illumination, carpet weaving, ceramics, and woodwork. Belleten motifs are characterized by their intricate and geometric designs, often inspired by nature, Islamic geometry, and cultural symbolism. These motifs typically consist of repetitive patterns, arabesques, floral elements, and stylized forms. They are known for their rich colors, precision, and attention to detail. These motifs can be found in various forms of traditional Turkish art, including textiles, ceramics, architectural elements, and manuscript illuminations. They are integral to the visual language and cultural identity of Turkey, reflecting the country's historical and artistic heritage. Belleten motifs are often used to adorn objects, surfaces, and architectural elements, adding beauty and aesthetic value to the artistic creations.

places to find ancient symbols and patterns were in ancient cities, as he had lived in the city before. He then took a camera and went around the ancient cities to photograph all the patterns and symbols he saw while walking around.

On of the challenging issues with city logos to date is the alteration. It is constantly being transformed. In fact, a city is already a constantly moving product. Other products are stable or you provide the change. Here, there is an alteration without your control. However, with this logo system, the sustainability of the system can be ensured thanks to the ability to add new patterns.

In selecting the symbols, the designer also explains that they had two important criteria. The first one was to choose symbols that could fit into the grid system they had created. The second criterion was to ensure that the selected symbols belonged to Izmir, and had historical claims to the city. Additionally, the symbols needed to fit the mosaic and stonework styles that were characteristic of the region. Despite encountering intricate and detailed symbols, the team was limited by the graphic language they had established for the project.

 "DT1: We had two important criteria here. One of them is to choose icons that can fit into the grid system we made. So, there are other things that are very detailed, very intricate, but unfortunately, we cannot adapt them to our graphic language. But in general, there is already a style in this region. In other words, it has a mosaic style because it fits in that style. In other words, the region has a stonework style. Since almost all of them fit that style, it was very likely that each of them would fit. That was our first criterion. Our second criterion was to show that it really belongs to Izmir, and although it was used in other places, it could be seen in two places in prehistory, at least it could be a claim from Izmir."

The designers also consulted with academic experts, excavation directors, and archaeologists to select 18 symbols out of 80-90 options, but believe that the project can develop further.

 "DT1: According to the academic experts, we also talked to excavation heads and archaeologists in Izmir. We talked to professors who work in this field at Ege University and Izmir University of Economics. We created the second part of this by researching and consulting with these experts. We went through about 80-90 symbols and ended up selecting 18 symbols. However, I believe that there is still room for

further development."

Also focusing on how the process started and where such a need came from, the designer highlighted that in Izmir, each institution has its own visual language, resulting in a lack of a common visual identity. Although creating a common visual language is simple, it is not given much importance, with functionality being the only consideration. However, the importance of a design's aesthetic appeal and contribution to the city should not be overlooked. Therefore, the priority is to create a job that can potentially solve this problem and have the ability to create an aesthetic language for buildings.

In addition, the designer enlightens regarding the difference of this branding efforts from other city branding studies. The designer envisions a pattern-based visual language that could unify the communication of different institutions in Izmir, Turkey, allowing them to speak in one language even if they use different tools and instruments. This idea, however, faces challenges and setbacks that need to be addressed, but it remains a priority for the designer. Another challenge is the lack of a clear perception of Izmir's image and identity abroad. In other words, there are two problems arising: the first one is the corrupt visual identity of İzmir, and the second one is the lack of recognition of İzmir. This also shows who the target audience is: the public and the city itself. From another perspective, it actually targets tourists as well.

"DT1: Now design means this to me. This is an opinion, but I think it may be my personal opinion that is correct. Before there can be a design, a problem is needed. Therefore, it is the visual problems in İzmir that affect me the most. As part of trying to find solutions to them, I actually created my own brief and first found the problem. I tried to identify the problem."

At this point, the designer lists the solutions to the problem one after another. The designer believes that if you import a solution from outside to solve this problem, it won't be yours. It would be like using irrelevant materials, such as aluminum or tape, for a building, which would look silly and out of place. Therefore, it is necessary to look for the solution right here to avoid making the same mistake. Hence, the designer also gives an example as the reason for this situation subsequently. He mentions people like Sait Hoca, Bedri Rahmi Eyüpoğlu, and Nazım Hikmet who all looked for solutions to problems within their own context instead of importing ideas from outside. The

designer believes that if you try to solve a problem by importing ideas from outside, it won't be your own solution.

Returning to examining the details of the design process, it can be seen that the designer continues to explain the steps that followed the initial problem identification in the rest of the interview. The designer explains their design process, starting with researching other cities and seeking input from friends in well-branded cities. He also describes constantly thinking about the problem and adding to their "cloud of problems," sometimes even finding solutions while out walking. The designer acknowledges that chance plays a role in his work, but believes that spending a lot of time on a project and making mistakes is necessary to arrive at the best solution. He designates making thousands of mistakes and then finding the one correct solution, and seeing their design process as a journey towards finding the best solution.

The designer also explained how the first design approval process took place, and summarized the process as follows:

"DT1: I presented this to the mayor, and his team. The presentation was like this, but besides me, there were other agencies and designers whom I didn't know, maybe they also presented their approaches. The mayor had dedicated a day to this and everyone presented their ideas, including some who presented finished designs. I didn't present a finished design; I just explained an idea. Maybe the idea excited him, I don't know. After that, he said, "Let's start this project" and in the next presentation, I developed and made the idea more understandable. Then, in the next presentation, I presented it to other stakeholders, including the head of Izmir Chamber of Commerce, which is also part of the Foundation of Izmir."

During this process, the design process also continues. Each of these can be evaluated as mini approval presentations or initial symbol presentations from time to time. The designer also emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration and seeking input from experts in various fields, including academics, archaeologists, and excavation heads. They believe that consulting with these experts not only adds value to the design process but also expands the designer's perspective. The designer also highlights the significance of visiting excavation sites and learning about the history and culture behind the designs they are working on.

The designer also emphasizes the changes brought about by the meetings with

academics, excavation directors, and archaeologists. The designer mentions that they discovered many patterns that they thought were theirs, but actually were not, and had to eliminate them. For example, they thought the Konya Ladik pattern was a Bergama design because they saw it in Bergama carpets. However, it turned out to be a Konya Ladik pattern that a girl from Konya Ladik had added to Bergama carpets to show her ownership. A professor from İzmir University of Economics explained this to them, and they had to eliminate the pattern.

The designer also explains another method used in the design process which involves a snowball effect of referring to different experts. They start by showing a file of various symbols to an academic and ask them to explain which symbols they recognize or are familiar with. From there, the academic may refer them to another expert who may have more knowledge on a specific symbol. This process continues until they have gathered enough information on each symbol. The designer also mentions that sometimes they may have some prior knowledge or information about a symbol, and they will ask the experts if they know anything about it. In one instance, the designer asked about an Izmir figure, and the head of the Yeşilova excavation was able to show them a seal from 8,000 years ago with a similar symbol.

The designer also stated during the interview that this project is a living branding, emphasizing its ongoing nature. The designer explains that the work they are doing is open to renovation and alteration, just like the city of Izmir. Thus, he gives an example of a pattern called Simone that originated from Andalusia but became a part of Izmir's culture over time. They also mention the wave pattern in Kordon, which was originally designed by a landscape architect in Copacabana, but it has a sweet story about how it came to Izmir, so it has become a part of the city's culture. The designer believes that the city's identity is shaped by various influences and that as long as something has been embraced by the city and its people, it can become a part of its culture.

The designer also remarks that during the design process, a new method was tried out where design applications were tested in areas such as pedestrian crossings and ferries. (Figure 55) For instance, in this experiment, a single color was applied initially, and subsequently a double color trial was produced. In this way, improvements in the branding process have been provided.

Figure 55. Application Examples of İzmir Branding (Source: aa.com.tr, 2020; izdeniz.com.tr, 2023; Metropolitan Municipality, 2020)

Within this context, the designer presented his ideas to various stakeholders, including the city municipality, and conducted experiments in several locations in the city. For example, they placed a cube in Konak Square, Izmir, with the city's branding, and it became a popular photo spot. (Figure 56) They also experimented with wrapping ferries, and after observing people's reactions, found that many appreciated the designs without knowing the reasoning behind them. The designer believes that it is important to conduct such experiments, even if they receive criticism, as it is essential for city development.

Figure 56. Golden Cube in Konak Square

This new approach brings to mind the concept of tactical urbanism, which has a significant place in the literature. Also known as "tactical urbanism," the philosophy of "tactical city planning" involves organizing and improving urban areas through short-term, low-cost, participatory interventions that are temporary and scalable. This approach advocates for developing cities more quickly, cheaply, and inclusively, in place of large-scale, long-term projects. This approach enables people to bring innovative and creative ideas to urban areas with small-scale solutions by utilizing vacant spaces in their cities (Lydon and Garcia, 2015; Andara, Alvani and Herliliy, 2019; Azadeh and Shohreh, 2020; Cariello , Rossella and Rotondo, 2021; Bordin, Toso and Carvalho, 2022; Stevens and Dovey, 2023).

Several practices are seen in many parts of the world within the scope of design strategies of city branding. The products, which are works of art based on a unique main idea and that emerge in environments where daily life is represented, also allow us to discuss tactical urbanism as an art form within this aspect. These practices have become widespread in design disciplines and have been examined as tactical urbanism movements because they reveal different forms of urban intervention from architectural and urban design methods (Akgün-Yüksekli and Kabakoğlu, 2016).

The reference and perspective of tactical urbanism actually also evoke and encompass the iterative design process at this point. Iterative design process is a design

methodology that involves repeating a cycle of designing, prototyping, testing, and refining a product or service until it meets the desired requirements and user needs. In this process, designers create a first version of a product, gather feedback and data from users, and then use this information to improve the design in the next iteration. Each iteration brings the design closer to the final product, with the aim of creating a solution that is functional, user-friendly, and efficient. The iterative design process is often used in software development, product design, and user experience design, among other fields (Adams and Atman, 1999; Blake et al., 2003; Katsulis et al, 2016; Viudes-Carbonell et al., 2021)

In other words, the designs carried out as part of the Izmir city branding efforts are also being opened to the public through a soft opening method without drawing attention, even though the process is not yet complete. And eventually, it turns out through discussions that the approval and satisfaction of the public have been obtained within the scope of tactical urbanism.

Considering the subject of the public, the designer's ideas were also asked about the involvement of the city's residents in the design process. The designer believes that there is a big difference between someone who spends all day researching and thinking about problems and someone who approaches the topic as simply producing visuals. Design is a problem-solving process, and it is absurd to search for solutions without knowing the problem. The designer acknowledges that this view may not be democratic, but it is the truth. If people were aware of problems like environmental pollution and aesthetic issues, they would not have created them. The current problem is significant, and it is mostly due to the way we live. The designer thinks that there is no time to talk to those who created the problem; instead, they should show them the solution and ask for their opinion. Collaborating with them will only create a cacophony without producing anything useful.

Also, the designer further deliberates that the public would not have created the problems that they are trying to solve if they were aware of them. He also thinks that the responsibility of finding a solution lies with those who have predicted the problem. The designer assumes that their input was taken into consideration in the approval process, but he believes that after that point, the decision of whether to seek the public's opinion is up to the decision-makers.

Considering the design strategy, the designer discusses the importance of aligning design strategy with the needs of stakeholders and creating a system to solve their problems rather than just producing visual outputs. He expresses his preference for not completely methodologizing design, as it may limit creativity, and instead opt for a freer and open approach.

Furthermore, the designer also mentioned on design strategy which is based on creating an engineering system that solves the problem of communicating a unified message about the city. Although the designer personally may not agree with the methodology, the need for a solution to the problem dictates the approach. The long-term goals of the design strategy include contributing to the city's aesthetic appeal, which requires a lot of effort.

When examining various design strategies, it becomes apparent that the designer mentioned earlier shared commonalities with examples of user-centered design. User-centered design (UCD) is a design approach that places a strong emphasis on understanding and addressing the needs, preferences, and limitations of the end user throughout the design process. This approach involves collecting and analyzing user feedback, conducting tests and iterations on designs, and consistently integrating user insights to develop products or services that effectively cater to the target audience. The primary objective of UCD is to create designs that are both usable and efficient, ultimately enhancing the user experience and aligning with the user's objectives and expectations (Löwgren and Stolterman, 2004; Norman, 2013).

In the case of Izmir city branding process, the user-centered nature of the design also refers to several stakeholders. For instance, the designer believes that the stakeholders of the city have a big role to play in promoting the branding of Izmir. He suggests that instead of using empty billboards, branding designs that represent Izmir can be used. Beautiful murals can also be painted on the walls, incorporating the Izmir branding. The second important goal is to make Izmir known internationally, and this can be achieved by adding value through visual communication. If the branding has a design value, it can be discussed and shared globally in design media, which will also promote the city.

Since design decisions also involve the application, stakeholders become even more important at this stage. After this point, it is seen as a part of the job for everyone to

use and direct it to appropriate places, and the application location directly affects the design. So, when suggesting to put it on the walls, use it for visual purposes, or make a mural, the stakeholder indirectly influences the design decision as well.

From design strategies to design approaches, it is important to emphasize a few names that the designer mentioned being influenced by. For example, when considering the place of Sait Maden in the designer's life, considering the projects realized with him, for instance, Sait Maden's relationship with these symbols can be considered as significant within this context. Another important aspect attributed to Sait Maden is his relationship with the city. Although the issue of city branding has only been discussed in the literature since the 1980s, Sait Maden was one of the first researchers to establish a relationship with it.

The designer also commented that Sait Maden has a great love for Istanbul and has made 99 different logos for the city out of this passion. He would sketch Istanbul landscapes and scenes during his free time, eventually creating hundreds of sketches, from which he selected 100 to finalize by hand using calligraphic precision. Each logo represents a different aspect of Istanbul, capturing the city's diverse and beautiful character. His approach to creating logos is unique because of his cultural background, which is influenced by both Eastern and Western traditions. This way of thinking has allowed him to approach the task of creating logos in a way that is different from the conventional Western approach.

5.3.1. Discussion

5.3.1.1. "Sait Maden" Effect

The designer got to know Sait Maden, a designer with a unique understanding of Anatolia, through Ömer Durmaz who is the designer's mentor, as well as the project partner. Sait Maden impressed the designer with his ability to write poetry and design logos.

It seems that the lack of a single logo for Izmir's brand identity may be influenced by the Sait Maden effect, but it is also a result of cultural factors. The designer suggests that by gaining the ability to look at the culture through Sait Maden's perspective, there may be an impact on the way he approaches the design of the logo. The designer also notes that this is not a new issue in their culture, and there are many examples of it.

Before starting to work on the branding of Izmir, the last work of the designer was the

Sait Maden documentary. Sait Maden has also conducted studies on symbols. He even has a book called "Symbols" ("Simgeler" written in Turkish). (Figure 57) The designer also mentions that he had the opportunity to go through Sait Maden's archives and organized an exhibition for this book in 2013. The experience helped the designer to develop their logo design skills and focus on understanding the symbol, culture, and Sait Maden himself.

Figure 57. The book "Simgeler" by Sait Maden (Source: gmk.org.tr, 2023)

Sait Maden was a wise person who taught the designer to look at things differently and appreciate ancient ruins in a new way by describing the meaning of a symbol for a graphic designer with the following words:

"A symbol is a reservoir of information. It evokes, announces, and convinces the institution it represents, encompassing its history, special position within society, impact, activities, and overall scope. It presents before the viewer a presence formed by the most reduced formal elements (a couple of letters, a couple of lines, a couple of spots that push the limits of simplicity)." (...) "Designing a symbol is a serious and fundamentally original endeavor, akin to composing a symphony or writing a poem. It is the only type of plastic art created with the most minimal tools. This is the purpose of a symbol: to realize the most direct, simple, and concise state of an idea or invention through a drawing that does not require effort to grasp, is suitable for all printing methods, and has a high ability to establish and adhere to the social memory." (gmk.org.tr, 2023).

Also, during the exhibition, many logos that Sait Maden had drawn by hand in the past were redrawn digitally. In the Izmir branding process, the designer's task was to convert the pattern pieces and symbols drawn by others thousands of years ago into a

digital grid system. From this perspective, the technique used here is almost identical to the one used in the exhibition. In the Figure 58 below, selected examples for this exhibition designed by the designer could be seen.

Figure 58. Sait Maden exhibition posters by Miraç Güldoğan (Source: behance.net, 2023d)

At this point, it may be worth asking whether one of the most important parts of the branding work carried out for Izmir, which is entirely based on symbols, could be attributed to the importance that Sait Maden placed on symbols. In addition, Sait Maden's creation of 99 logos for Istanbul could be considered as one of the first examples of city branding. (Figure 59) The fact that he created multiple logos for the city could also explain why today's branding system is also multiple. In this way, the designer removes the need to convey branding with a single logo.

Figure 59. Sait Maden in his exhibition (on the left), Ömer Durmaz and Miraç Güldoğan at one of Sait Maden exhibitions (on the right) (Source: milliyetsanat.com, 2013; ankarakitapligi.org, 2023)

5.3.1.2. The Impact of the Designer Himself

Regarding to the designer, it is important to highlight that he had previous knowledge and expertise in branding of all the fairs of Izmir and was already acquainted with the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality. While working on the branding of the Izmir Fair, the designer had a goal of creating something that would truly represent the city, and he stated that the idea of branding Izmir had been on his mind for a long time. Besides, it is also considered significant that the designer is in Izmir and he is also from Izmir.

In Revai's (2022) article, the impact of cultural values on the design process is explored by analyzing the design process of two groups of designers from different cultural backgrounds. The study found that designers from collectivist cultures tend to prioritize the group's needs and preferences in their designs, while individualistic cultures prioritize the designer's personal vision and expression. This highlights the importance of understanding cultural values when designing for specific audiences. Designers should consider the cultural background of their audience and how it may influence their preferences and perceptions of design. By doing so, they can ensure that their designs are relevant, appropriate, and effective in communicating their intended message.

Gautam and Blessing's (2007) study also highlights the importance of cultural influences in the design process. The study found that cultural influences can significantly affect the design process, including the selection and interpretation of design elements, communication and collaboration among designers, and the overall design approach. This suggests that designers should consider cultural differences when working in a multicultural team or designing for a global audience. By acknowledging and accommodating cultural differences, designers can improve communication and collaboration, resulting in more effective and culturally appropriate designs.

Wan-Lin and Tahira's (2018) study focused on the impact of contextual experience on the ideation process and design outcomes. The study found that designers with more contextual experience tend to generate more innovative ideas, use more diverse sources of inspiration, and produce more coherent and well-conceptualized designs. This suggests that designers' experience and exposure to different contexts and cultures can have a significant impact on their design abilities. By exposing themselves to

diverse experiences and cultures, designers can broaden their perspectives and generate more creative and culturally sensitive designs.

Since these studies highlight mainly the significance of cultural values in the design process, as well as the contribution of the designers' cultural awareness, contextual experience, and exposure to diverse cultures to a more effective and culturally sensitive designs, the attitudes of the designer of Izmir city branding project also directly relates with the so-called examples.

5.3.1.3. Research Approach

The designer in this case used various methods for problem identification. Firstly, the designer observed Izmir itself and identified aesthetic shortcomings. This suggests that the designer took a close look at the city and analyzed it from a design perspective. Secondly, the designer conducted surveys to understand how Izmir is perceived. This suggests that the designer wanted to understand the public perception of the city and use this information to inform the design process. Thirdly, the designer had a dialogue with friends living in cities with effective branding, which indicates that the designer sought the opinions of individuals who had experience with successful branding. Finally, the designer visited the ferry terminal to observe and examine the usage area. This suggests that the designer took a hands-on approach to the problem identification process and sought to understand how the design would be used in practice. Overall, the designer used a combination of observation, surveys, interviews, and post-research to identify the problem and gather information for the design process.

From this perspective, it is possible to say that the research approach and process steps used by designers are similar to the design thinking approach which is a problem-solving approach that focuses on human-centered design and innovation. It is a methodology that originated in the field of design but has since been applied to various disciplines and industries. Design thinking involves a systematic and iterative process of understanding, exploring, and solving complex problems.

For instance, as a classic reference on design thinking and process, Norman (2013) emphasizes the importance of a user-centered design process, where designers prioritize the needs and perspectives of users when creating products. He outlines a five-stage process for design that includes:

● Gathering user requirements and understanding the context of use

- Generating ideas through brainstorming and sketching

- Prototyping and testing designs with users

- Iterating on the design based on user feedback

- Implementing and releasing the final product

Moreover, Cross (2011) provides a more general overview of the design process, exploring how designers approach problems and generate solutions. He identifies four key stages of the design process:

- Understanding the problem and researching the context

- Generating and developing ideas through brainstorming and sketching

- Evaluating and refining ideas through prototyping and testing

- Implementing and delivering the final product

Both references emphasize the importance of creativity, collaboration, and iteration in the design process. They also stress the need for designers to empathize with their users and understand their needs and perspectives throughout the design process.

In design thinking, the focus is on empathy and gaining deep insights into the users or stakeholders. Similarly, in the city branding process of Izmir, the aim is to understand the city's identity, culture, and aspirations, and align them with the needs and desires of the people of Izmir.

Both approaches embrace an iterative and experimental mindset. Design thinking involves rapid prototyping, testing, and refining of ideas based on user feedback. Similarly, the city branding process of Izmir may involve testing different visual identities, communication strategies, and implementation methods and making adjustments based on the feedback and insights gained throughout the process.

Design thinking encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration, bringing together individuals with different expertise and backgrounds to foster creativity and innovation. Similarly, the city branding process of Izmir involves the participation and coordination of various stakeholders, including institutions, experts, and the public, to ensure a collective ownership and diverse input in the branding efforts.

Design thinking seeks to identify and address challenges or unmet needs through creative and user-centered solutions. Similarly, the city branding process of Izmir aims

to address the challenge of creating a cohesive and effective brand that represents the city's identity and resonates with its stakeholders.

Design thinking encourages divergent thinking and the generation of a wide range of ideas. Similarly, the city branding process of Izmir may involve exploring different creative concepts, visual identities, and communication strategies to find unique and innovative solutions that differentiate Izmir and capture its essence.

Overall, it can be retrieved that the city branding process of Izmir benefits from adopting a design thinking approach, as it provides a structured and user-centered framework for understanding and addressing the branding challenges. Applying design thinking principles such as empathy, iteration, collaboration, and creativity are seen to ensure a more effective and engaging city branding process for Izmir.

On the other hand, these are the essential steps of all design processes, no matter which methodology is going to be followed. However, it is not easy to follow the steps as it is described in design thinking methodology. There is a more complex structure in the city branding project of Izmir. In other words, there are divergences such as the direct intervention of stakeholders, regular exchange of information and comments, and the meeting of the outputs with the user at the prototype stage.

However, there is one important point that distinguishes this project from all city branding design processes, and that is the integration of the designer into the process from the very beginning of the project and positioning it at the heart of the whole process. The effectiveness, power and dominant role of the designer in the process also stems from this situation.

The analysis of various city branding strategies reveals that graphic designers often play a limited role in the process. They are often seen as mere "technicians" or "facilitators" rather than being actively involved in defining the design problem and finding solutions. In many cases, graphic designers are often engaged later in a project, primarily responsible for implementing a predetermined client brief rather than actively contributing to the development of the branding strategy's core elements. As "technicians," graphic designers are tasked with specific assignments and have limited involvement in the overall decision-making process. They receive clear instructions from the client and are expected to deliver accordingly. Conversely, as "facilitators," graphic designers are brought in when the client has a general understanding of their

requirements but lacks the expertise to achieve their desired outcome. In this capacity, graphic designers have a more restricted role in shaping the solution space and assisting the client in achieving their objectives. (Paton and Dorst, 2011) Unfortunately, there seem to be a general lack of understanding regarding the significant role graphic designers can play in city branding development. Their expertise and creative input are often undervalued, and they are not given the opportunity to contribute fully to the strategic aspects of the branding process. This limited involvement hinders the potential of graphic designers to make a substantial impact on the overall success of city branding initiatives (Wardani and Wahyurini, 2014).

This research emphasizes the necessity of recognizing the broader scope of graphic design and the evolving role of graphic designers in city branding strategies. In recent times, graphic designers have faced the challenge of applying their design thinking skills to address complex problems that extend beyond traditional design tasks (Brown and Katz, 2011). According to Brown (2008), design thinking refers to a discipline that utilizes the sensibility and methods of designers to align people's needs with technological feasibility and viable business strategies, ultimately creating customer value and identifying market opportunities. This expanded understanding of design thinking highlights the potential of graphic designers to contribute their expertise in problem-solving and strategy development within the context of city branding initiatives (Brown, 2008). To gain a comprehensive understanding of the city branding process, it is essential to explore the broader role of graphic designers.

Hence, the designer was asked several reasons behind his selection as the designer for the branding project of Izmir during the interviews. Considering the designer's analysis, it was revealed that one significant factor was his determination to be actively involved in the decision-making process and initiate discussions, even if he occasionally faced setbacks. He believed that participating in shaping the branding project was crucial, as he considered creating a lasting poster to be more important than organizing a temporary fair. He attributed his involvement in the project to his persistence in generating discussions and the favorable sociological structure of Izmir, which boasted reputable universities. Additionally, the designer highlighted the importance of being located in Izmir. He explained that his decision not to work for an agency and to remain in Izmir played a pivotal role in his success. While

acknowledging that there might be others equally capable or even more skilled in his profession, he chose to stay and contribute to the branding efforts of Izmir instead of relocating elsewhere. By making this choice, he was able to secure his current position and actively contribute to the city's branding initiatives. From this perspective, it can be seen that the responses from the designer provide an opportunity to analyze and understand the designer's role in a more comprehensive manner.

The contribution of graphic designers has often been overlooked by marketing practitioners, who tend to limit their involvement to the later stages of the city branding process instead of engaging them from the beginning. Bill Baker, an expert in place marketing and author of a book on destination branding, emphasizes that city branding is a complex undertaking that should not be solely entrusted to graphic designers. He challenges the idea of allowing graphic designers to dictate the course of a city branding strategy, stating that they may lack the required expertise and comprehension to effectively execute city branding initiatives. (Personal communication, August 14 2012)

The success of city branding relies on a collaborative approach that involves various stakeholders, including city councils, brand strategists, graphic designers, and local communities. Recognizing the pivotal role of graphic designers in shaping the city branding strategy is crucial to achieve the desired objectives. Unfortunately, in practice, the importance of graphic designers has often been overlooked, relegating them to a limited role as technicians or facilitators towards the end of the development process. This disregard for their expertise undermines the potential value they can bring to the overall branding efforts. Research suggests that it is essential to involve graphic designers right from the outset of the city branding process. By engaging them early on, there can be a mutual understanding of their role and the contributions they can make.

This thesis emphasizes the active participation of graphic designers throughout the process, including conducting necessary research to articulate the project's outcome. This involvement allows graphic designers to gather information and insights that can inform the development of creative ideas. Ideally, graphic designers should be seen as artist-experts, enabling them to have an extensive role in both problem space formulation and solution space formulation. By granting them greater access and involvement, graphic designers can contribute their expertise and creativity to shape

the city branding strategy in a more holistic and impactful manner. This collaborative approach ensures that the unique perspectives and skills of graphic designers are utilized effectively, leading to more successful and comprehensive city branding initiatives (Wardani and Wahyurini, 2014).

5.3.1.4. Design Environment

Hiring an in-house designer and a designer from outside (such as a freelancer or design agency) both have their own advantages and disadvantages. Many design agency websites consider the pros and cons of having an inhouse designer vs outside designer. As common points, here are some points to consider (chatterbuzzmedia.com, 2023; impactplus.com, 2023; stefivanov.com, 2023; superside.com, 2023):

In-house Designer:

Advantages:

● Familiarity with the company's brand, values, and culture.

● Easier collaboration with other internal teams.

● More control over the design process and output.

● Potentially a more consistent design aesthetic across all projects.

● Can contribute to long-term design strategy and growth.

Disadvantages:

● Higher fixed costs due to salary, benefits, and overhead expenses.

● May have limited design expertise and skillset compared to external designers.

● Limited exposure to external design trends and perspectives.

● May experience burnout or lack of inspiration due to being immersed in the same environment and design challenges.

Designer from Outside:

Advantages:

● Access to a wider range of design expertise and skillsets.

● Fresh perspectives and external design trends.

● Flexible working arrangements and project-based pricing.

- Potentially lower costs due to project-based pricing.

- Can bring a new and creative approach to projects.

Disadvantages:

- May not have the same level of familiarity with the company's brand, values, and culture.

- Communication and collaboration may be more challenging due to distance and time zone differences.

- Limited control over the design process and output.

- Potential for inconsistency in design aesthetic across different projects.

- May not contribute to long-term design strategy and growth.

However, when looking at city branding examples, it is very difficult to find an example that works with the inhouse designer. Although there is usually a design team within the DMO (destination management organization), municipality, city hall or local administration, outside experts are working on critical issues such as the city logo or rebranding of the city.

For example, Eindhoven initially established its own office affiliated with the mayor and later made an agreement with an agency. Eindhoven365 is an organization that operates independently of municipal authorities but maintains close connections and reports to the councilor responsible for city marketing, leisure, and events. Their place branding and marketing initiative, aptly named "He who chooses, will be chosen," has an interesting approach to creating a visual identity. They decided to develop a unified brand visual based on open-source principles, eliminating the need for a separate manual. In 2013, a "virtual design agency" consisting of fifteen talented designers from diverse disciplines was assembled to create the logo for Eindhoven. These designers were compensated for their contributions and were asked to share their vision of Eindhoven. A core team was subsequently formed to build a foundational identity based on the collective input received. Collaboration presented a challenge for these designers accustomed to working independently. The visual identity aimed to incorporate a logo, typography inspired by duct tape, a distinctive photography style, and a unique tone of voice. Additionally, research by Malamud et al. (2022) discussed Eindhoven365's approach and highlighted the engagement of a branding agency in the

development of the visual identity. The agency conducted thorough research and facilitated a meeting involving designers, strategists, trend observers, and other professionals to gather unique perspectives and visions about the city. Rather than a traditional competition, the branding agency proposed a collaborative group called the Virtual Design Agency, comprising top design studios and experts in color and typography. In 2014, this collective launched a dynamic and open-source visual identity for Eindhoven, promoting maximum engagement and a sense of shared ownership among citizens, institutions, and companies (Malamud, Neves and Patrocinio, 2022)

From other side, there are several examples in which hiring outside designers allowed cities to benefit from outside innovation, know-how, and fresh viewpoints. For instance, Melbourne can be a good example. Due to the multitude of diverse initiatives, programs, services, events, and activities in Melbourne, the city's brand identity had become fragmented and unappealing. A fresh and captivating brand was needed to instill enthusiasm among the population and present a unified, adaptable, and forward-looking image. Landor & Fitch, an external design agency, took on the task of developing this brand, which celebrates Melbourne's culture, sustainability, innovation, and tourism while positioning the city prominently on the global stage. The core of the brand developed by Landor & Fitch is a large, bold M, which serves as a representation of Melbourne. This M serves as a canvas for limitless artistic creativity, with each design showcasing the diverse range of services that Melbourne offers. The design is both recognizable and diverse, mirroring the city's own characteristics. Its remarkable versatility is its most significant aspect, allowing it to be recreated in numerous ways and always maintaining a modern feel. This design enables Melbourne to adapt, expand, and evolve alongside its changing and growing population, seamlessly connecting with new opportunities. Following the implementation of this branding initiative, Melbourne experienced a notable increase in international overnight visitors, with a growth rate of 4.5% (landorandfitch.com, 2023).

Wardani and Wahyurini (2014) also commented on the brand strategy of the City of Melbourne. The study claims that the City of Melbourne council sought the expertise of Landor Associates, a highly respected brand consultancy, potentially employing a similar approach to the one described, to develop a brand strategy and a fresh visual

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identity system for the city. The objective was to create an identity that could effectively represent Melbourne, both on a national and international scale, aims to establish itself as a prominent destination for appealing shopping experiences, leisure activities, education, arts, and culture. Before undertaking this initiative, the city council had sporadically created several logos over a span of fifteen years to represent its diverse array of services. However, this approach resulted in challenges in managing and upkeeping the logos, leading to escalated costs. To address these issues, the City of Melbourne council enlisted the services of Landor to formulate a comprehensive brand strategy and develop a new visual identity system. The intention was to establish a unified and coherent brand image that would effectively project Melbourne's unique offerings and appeal to both local and global audiences. This approach aimed to streamline the visual representation of the city's services while ensuring ease of management and cost-efficiency (Wardani and Wahyurini, 2014).

One of the most renowned examples is the creation of the "I Love New York" logo by graphic designer Milton Glaser. This iconic logo features an uppercase "I" followed by a red heart symbol and the uppercase letters "N" and "Y" in the American Typewriter typeface. It was initially introduced in 1977 as part of a campaign to promote both New York City and the state as a whole. During that time, New York City was facing numerous challenges, including high crime rates, financial difficulties, and negative publicity following a widespread blackout. To boost tourism, the New York State Department for Economic Development collaborated with advertising firm Wells Rich Greene to create a campaign that would encourage people to visit the city. While the campaign had a slogan, jingle, and television commercial, it lacked a distinctive logo. Milton Glaser, renowned for his previous design work such as the iconic Bob Dylan portrait and the visual identity of the World Trade Center restaurant, was approached to develop potential logos for the campaign. Presently, the trademark for the "I Love New York" logo is held by the New York State Empire State Development (ESD), the primary economic development agency of the state. They license the logo's usage, and it has achieved global recognition. The logo is prominently featured on official merchandise, generating substantial revenue, with a portion of the profits going to the ESD (logoworks.com, 2023).

Also, Amsterdam took a unique approach with its city campaign by focusing on its citizens' diversity rather than highlighting buildings or history. The 'I Amsterdam'

campaign, executed by KesselsKramer, an independent advertising agency located in Amsterdam, with additional offices in London and Los Angeles, had the objective of honoring the residents of Amsterdam. As part of the campaign, a large three-dimensional version of the logo was placed in the famous Museumplein. This installation has become a significant landmark in Amsterdam, with visitors capturing photos of themselves alongside the iconic letters (kesselskramer.com, 2023).

In June 2014, White Studio, a multidisciplinary design studio located in Porto, was tasked with the creation of a fresh visual identity for both the city of Porto and its city hall. The primary goal was to develop a visual system that would enhance communication with citizens and establish a clear hierarchy, fostering a strong connection between the city and its governing body. The overarching objective was to portray Porto as a global city that is welcoming and accessible to all. Founded by Eduardo Aires, White Studio undertook the responsibility of designing Porto's new identity. With offices in London, Luxembourg, and Santiago de Chile, White Studio successfully created a remarkable visual identity that effectively captured the essence of the city (onlygraphicdesign.com, 2017).

Similarly, the City of Helsinki entrusted Werklig, a design company located in Helsinki, with the responsibility of leading the design process for their new brand identity in August 2017. Helsinki set an ambitious objective to become the world's most functional city. In pursuit of this goal, they initiated the largest brand renewal ever undertaken in Finland and ranked among the top five city branding efforts globally. The new logo for the City of Helsinki draws inspiration from the well-known symbol of Helsinki, the coat of arms that has been in use for over 400 years. The design of the new logo prioritizes adaptability and responsiveness, allowing it to be effectively utilized across various content and language versions. The logo's distinctive shape ensures its recognizability, even if the accompanying text may be unfamiliar (werklig.com, 2023a).

Another example form the East Asia is China. In 1997, following the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China, a new set of definitive stamps was required. The existing design featuring Queen Elizabeth II needed to be replaced. Chinese graphic designer and artist Kan Tai-Keung took on the task and developed a new design that showcased the iconic skyline of Hong Kong. To differentiate the different denominations, a gradation of color was incorporated into the design. Kan Tai-Keung

also drew inspiration from traditional Chinese scrolls, which often depicted continuous landscapes. The new stamp design allowed for the creation of a series of "mini-stories" over the years. As these stamps were sent worldwide, they provided recipients with a snapshot understanding of the place from where the letter originated. This design approach ensured that each stamp contributed to building a narrative and representing Hong Kong. It is common for graphic designers to be commissioned to create corporate identities, which often includes designing the logo for companies or organizations (Lau and Leung, 2011).

In general, hiring an in-house designer can be beneficial for a city or organization that has ongoing branding and design needs, allowing for a consistent and cohesive approach to all projects. Hiring a freelance designer or design agency can be beneficial for specific projects or campaigns, allowing for fresh and creative approaches to design challenges. Ultimately, the decision to hire in-house or freelance designers depends on the specific needs and goals of the city or organization.

At this point, it is seen that the case of Izmir differs from all other examples detailed above since in Izmir branding strategy, instead of choosing a brand agency or an outsider as designer, the selected in-house designer is recruited. The consequences of this situation are also stated by the designer as follows:

"DM1: They say there's a fair in Malaga. We need to find a solution because the branding process has been dragging on for so long. Actually, all the solutions to these problems have already been generated and they are sitting somewhere. Or they are in my mind. They give me a problem to solve. I solve it and give it back to them. I create a fair booth, but in addition to that, it should be mentioned that everything, including dressing up a blind wall or a deaf wall in a city, designing a pedestrian crossing, I have already solved all these problems in my mind. So when they bring me any visual problem related to the city, I have already created a system to solve it. Therefore, for me, I have the answers to all the problems that these ongoing institutions in life need. They can all be solved with this pattern. But how did I do it? I did it by thinking. I already thought about the fact that so many problems could arise in this process. For example, I made a list of where this could be used. What kind of problems can it solve visually? I have already solved all the problems on that list and packaged them somewhere. Some have been designed and are stored as files, I have solutions for all of them. Of course, the journey from problem to solution also involves a bit of luck.

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They usually don't spend so much time working on a single project. It's also the luck of this job. I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time on it. But I believe that good work can only come out with a lot of time spent. Design, for me, is actually about making mistakes. How does a designer design, how do they make mistakes, you don't actually see most of those mistakes. However, they make thousands of mistakes. Within those thousands of mistakes, they find one correct solution, and the more mistakes they make, the closer they get to the right one. In this process, I was given the opportunity to make a lot of mistakes. I had a lot of time, so I made a lot of mistakes. Then I gathered all those mistakes and found the most correct solution in my own way. That's actually what my journey to the solution is all about."

It can also be revealed from the passage above that although our case "Izmir city branding" is a project-based process, selecting to hire an in-house designer by the Foundation of Izmir freed the designer in terms of the absence of time and budget constraints, as well as reduced the pressure on him.

5.3.1.5. Effects of the Stakeholders

Looking at the inclusion of university professors, for instance by proposing a new pattern, extracting a carpet pattern, or adding a color, we can assume that the idea of decision-makers including experts from universities has actually been fulfilled. However, it should be noted that here, experts were only consulted in terms of design disciplines. Marketing and communication disciplines were not involved. Even design cannot be claimed to have been fully evaluated, as only information was obtained for the iconization of patterns. No interpretation or opinion was taken from the design perspective, apart from input. In other words, the expertise that would be included from universities should not be limited to design expert opinions, but other disciplines should also have been included.

In fact, branding is being changed at every stage, and each stage has a different impact. This branding is a "living" branding, open to transition and change, just like the city of Izmir itself. With this new method, experimental applications are also being made at such as pedestrian crossings, ferry terminals, and other locations while the process is ongoing.

5.3.1.6. A Living Branding

The biggest problem with logos up until now has been the change. They are constantly

changing. Actually, a city is already a product that is constantly changing. Other products are stable or you are the one who brings about the change. When it comes to a city, however, change is happening outside of your control. Some of the key factors that contribute to the city image by strengthening the city's reputation can be summarized as authenticity, stakeholder involvement, experiences and events, community engagement, innovation and adaptability, consistent communication, and continuous evaluation and improvement. By embodying these principles and actively engaging with its community, a city brand can evolve from a static representation to a dynamic, living brand that truly reflects the essence and vibrancy of the city (Dastgerdi and De Luca, 2019; placebrandobserver.com, 2019).

With the logo system and the ability to add new designs of Izmir branding project, it ensures the sustainability of the system. New discoveries can be made in the future to ensure sustainability continues. For example, a new excavation can be conducted to uncover a new symbol, which can then be drawn and added to the system. Alternatively, if a symbolic building or monument is constructed in the city, it can also be drawn and incorporated into the design afterwards. In the light of such additions and changes, the design also finds opportunities to evolve and develop itself.

5.3.1.7. Public Involvement

Although Kavaratzis (2012) and several other scholars emphasize the importance of public involvement in city branding literature, it is worth noting that in the city branding project of Izmir, this aspect was not given much consideration. For instance, in Kavaratzis's work, such as the article co-authored with Ashworth (2008), there is a focus on developing more inclusive, bottom-up, and participatory governance techniques to facilitate stakeholder participation. Also, as mentioned in the literature review, Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) argue that the involvement of citizens is crucial for ensuring effective stakeholder engagement. They emphasize that citizens play a necessary role in the process. Similarly, Choo and Park (2009) highlight the significance of city residents in delivering a consistent brand promise. They emphasize that the support and participation of residents are essential factors in the successful implementation of city branding initiatives.

However, in İzmir case, it is clear from the interviews with the designer that he thinks that the solution cannot be sought with someone who does not know the problem.

Therefore, the designer claims that while the public's familiarity with the issue can be questioned, ensuring the participation of the citizens will be controversial. The team, who had discussions, thought about Izmir's city branding and tried to solve the problem, but it would not be precise to evaluate it visually. In other words, some decisions must be made by adopting a top-down structure. The designer furtherly argues that the public itself is the one who creates this problem, and it will be futile to discuss this solution with the one who created it. In this case, getting feedback after the design is completed may be a more reasonable alternative. However, it was revealed from the interviews with the designer that involving the public in the design process can create a cacophony. Therefore, participatory design is also not valid for the case of city branding efforts of Izmir.

In summary, it was obtained that the existing literature emphasizes the importance of citizen engagement in city branding projects to foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents (Moilanen, 2015). However, it was found that the opposite approach was adopted in the Izmir city branding project, as there was a significant lack of citizen engagement throughout the process.

5.4. Findings and Comments

The main research question of this thesis is to investigate the impact of stakeholder involvement on the city branding process. In this context, a detailed examination of the city branding literature was conducted. Specifically, the integration of stakeholders into the city branding process and the resulting processes within this integration were explored. Considering the influence of stakeholder involvement in the process, it became apparent that the role of the designer is highly significant in the case of Izmir. Therefore, analysis that focuses more on the designer part has emerged.

The analysis' results presented based on interviews conducted with three different groups can be examined under four main headings:

5.4.1. Tourism Perspective and Its Effects

When the details of this process, which is called "city branding" by all partners, are examined, it is seen that the work started with the aim of tourism, as in a "destination branding" project. The reason for this was that, although the project was attributed to the city in the future, it was seen that the stakeholders who made up the team also had an identity responsible for the tourism of the city at the same time.

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This conclusion can be reached from both the stakeholders and the representatives of the institutions involved. The fact that the Foundation of Izmir used to be the Tourism Promotion Foundation and that most of its members are from the tourism industry serves as evidence. It is also important how the representatives within the organization were selected. As an example, while there are many directorates and departments in the Metropolitan Municipality, the Tourism and Foreign Relations Directorate was assigned for these branding activities. Similarly, at Izmir Chamber of Commerce, an advisor responsible for tourism participates in the sessions, as well as the activities within the İzmir Foundation were initiated through the tourism coordinator.

At this point, interviewees also raise objections to the tourism industry perspective. Generally, it is argued that the inclusiveness of other sectors should be defended, and the importance and magnitude of tourism are also questioned by those who participated in the interviews. This inference is also consistent with the key findings of Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) that emphasizes the importance of several factors in place marketing which include the necessity of developing a shared understanding and recognition of place marketing, fostering extensive collaboration and defining clear roles, adopting a long-term approach to marketing, and expanding the application of marketing principles beyond the realm of tourism development.

One of the team members (TM2) argues that the tourism coordination board makes most of the decisions, and the concept of city branding encompasses more than just tourism. The aim is to make a city a brand by bringing together various elements, including investors, workers, and tourists. While tourism can make this process easier, city branding should be a broader and more inclusive initiative. The team member also notes that the current emphasis on tourism in İzmir may be due to the organization's previous identity as a tourism promotion foundation. The organization has undergone a transformation, with the upcoming general assembly marking a shift from a tourism-focused board to one with more business-oriented members.

Another team member (TM8) also argues that tourism is not a significant contributor to the economy of Izmir, with the sector representing only 0.4% of the city's total economy. Instead, the city should focus on promoting its emerging energy sector, including wind energy production and equipment manufacturing, as well as its logistics and transportation industry, particularly the fast-growing port cluster in the Aliağa region. The team member furtherly suggests that these industries are

interrelated and represent a high-tech, advanced technology sector that requires skilled human capital. Overall, the team member believes that Izmir should strategically position itself in these industries to increase its attractiveness and visibility.

Based on the opinions gathered at this point, it appears that when it comes to branding, there is a distinction between the tourism sector and the rest. Although similar studies around the world started around the aim of tourism, in the following years, its perspective expanded and it moved away from the focus of tourism. Therefore, it would be appropriate to look at branding initiatives that exist within Turkey, our own country. For instance, while the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (2023) focuses on promoting tourism, on the other side the Türkiye Brand Office (Türkiye Brand Forum, 2023) takes an overall perspective and concentrates on creating the Turkish brand. This means that the tourism sector is not the one shaping the tourism branding, but rather the one implementing it.

Actually, İzmir Foundation is also adopting the same way of doing the same thing. They are not limiting themselves to tourism, but interested about branding İzmir as a whole. However, people always start talking within the word of "tourism" due to its past and structure. This can be attributed to the fact that its old name was İzmir Tourism Promotion Foundation and the majority of its members are still from the tourism sector. It is also evident from the Board of Directors of the Foundation that the majority have a tourism background. However, the collective working team, which consists of stakeholders from diversifying backgrounds and disciplines, has taken important steps in terms of creating a city brand by removing this project from tourism perspective.

5.4.2. The Model of Governance

How and by whom the branding process is managed is one of the main topics that this thesis focuses on. The execution of the Izmir branding project was given to the Izmir Foundation with the approval of the leading institutions of the city. İzmir Foundation represents a city alliance model and the management of the foundation is carried out by the leading institutions of the city. At this point, however, the governance model within the structure of the Foundation of Izmir is seen as important.

The Foundation of Izmir is managed by the Board of Directors elected by the members with a total number of 71, and the President and Vice President elected by this Board

as well. However, it is not the elected members who carry out the Izmir city branding project, but the collective working team appointed by the elected members, and the designer is also included in this team. (Figure 60)
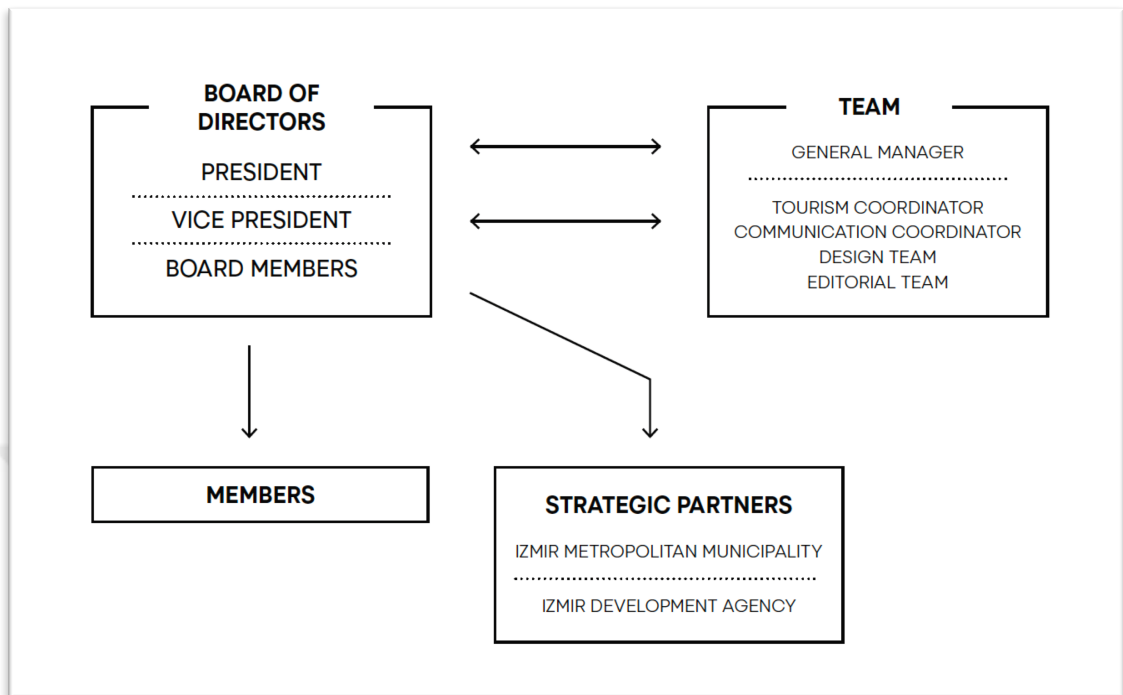

Figure 60. Governance Structure of the Foundation of Izmir

The collective working team regularly reports all its efforts and activities to the President, as well as to the Board of Directors with monthly meetings, and to the members within the general assembly on an annual basis. The process continues with mutual exchange of views.

As in all design processes, the progression usually starts with a design brief or a request, but it is understood that this branding project started in line with a mutually determined need. In other words, the project starts with a need determined internally, not through an external demand. Afterwards, although a collective and regular exchange of views seems to have been carried out, there is a point that needs attention. It is seen that the leading influence of the mayor, who started the branding process and is also the president of the İzmir Foundation, endures in the decision processes as well. At the meetings held it was retrieved that if the mayor approves a decision, other stakeholders. usually do not express a contrary opinion. In other words, we can say that other stakeholders have a more supplementary role. Therefore, it was concluded that other participants do not intervene clearly due to our management style or culture,

especially when city leaders are present in those meetings.

During the process, it is obviously seen that there are decision makers, designer and a collective team that organizes the process. In addition, it is known that there is continuous exchange of information between these three groups, and all of them have an undeniable effect on the branding process. However, it is also clear that the designer is the most significant stakeholder in the process. Rather than a continuous control mechanism, decision makers fulfill their mission of opening the horizon and inspiring, while team members come to the fore in areas such as improving the process and disseminating the use of the branding.

As an area that can be described as lacking in the governance mechanism, it is the management of the process with internal resources and without any external expertise. However, it can be said that the negative impact of this situation is reduced by the meetings with external stakeholders. Even though, while the structure of the collective working team is so interdisciplinary, it can also be criticized that the external stakeholders come from only selected disciplines. In general, the interviews reveal that the experts included from the academy are mostly from the field of archeology and design, apart from these, the exclusion of city planning, brand and communication experts can be seen as a shortcoming. However, it is important to consider that the team also consists of branding and communication experts, so this may be why it was not deemed necessary to include them.

5.4.3. Stakeholders

The initial starting point of this thesis was to uncover the decision maker's perspective and the designer's black box, and team members were included in the process to better understand the case. However, the interviews have shown that their involvement has contributed more clear and detailed observations to the topic due to their higher level of involvement.

As mentioned at the beginning of the process, stakeholders who were the people that carried out the project, consisted of the collective team members, the decision makers, and a design team. However, the results of the interviews showed that, in addition to these three groups, there are also experts called external stakeholders. In this context, the decision of each group on the branding process and design decisions was examined in detail throughout the research, and the relationship between them was also tried to

be analyzed.
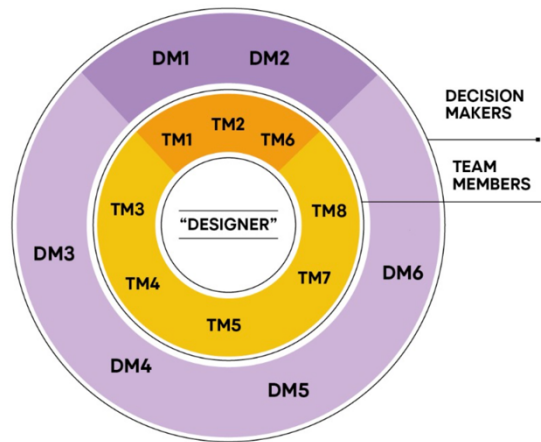
Figure 61. Stakeholder Map

It has been observed that the designer is at the center of the whole branding process. Designer has created a design team in line with the needs of the process, by including stakeholders from several background in the branding process while asking their opinions when deemed necessary. However, while he was always positioned at the center of the process, the other stakeholders mentioned were mostly included in the branding process during the implementation of the design.

In terms of the effect on the designer, the collective team members are seen in the closest circle and are located in the outer circle. It has been observed that the effect of each of the collective team members is not the same, but at different levels. It has even been observed that some team members do not even identify themselves as members. At this point, the inclusion of TM1, TM2 and TM6 among team members was seen as different from all of them. The reason for this is defined in the previous chapter, in the framework of its relations with DM1 and DM2, who are seen as the president and vice president in the Izmir foundation. Although the decision makers, who are the outermost circle, are not perceived as distant and one-on-one stakeholders, it is obvious that they have an inclusive effect in the vision dimension from the beginning. However, there are differences in the level of influence among them, as in team members.

It is also possible to draw a "team line" between the members that have the most influence in the transitions between the circles.

The decision makers' impact on design decisions was on the vision dimension, while the direct effect was seen in the contribution of experts consulted for the design of patterns and colors.

Perhaps one of the most important effects of the collective team members and decision makers is that they have changed the overall grid system and the usage of logo. While all patterns were used together around the Izmir lettering placed on the grid system in the brand originally planned for the Izmir logo (Figure 62), due to reasons such as application difficulties and inability to be understood by institutions, firstly, single symbols were used, and then the number of colors was increased and diversified accordingly. (Figure 63)

Figure 62. First versions of İzmir logo

Figure 63. Revised version of the İzmir logo

In summary, the need for single logo usage has been determined by the members of the collective team, and logos with one symbol have been reached by requesting a change in usage. Thus, flexibility in usage is provided, and application areas are

facilitated and increased.

It is also clearly seen in the pictures below that both symbols and these single logos were used in fairs and communication works throughout 2022 and 2023. (Figure 64)
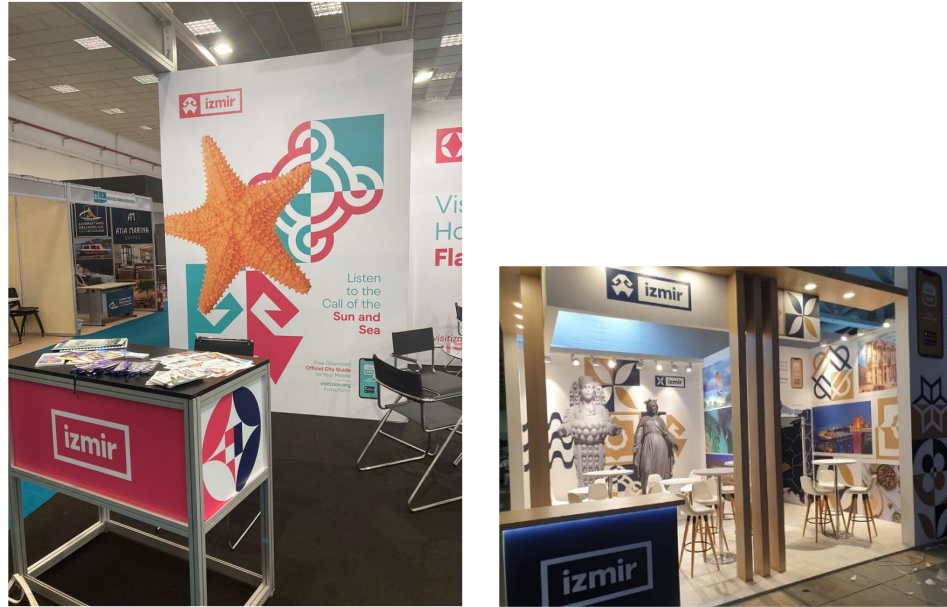
Figure 64. Fair Boots from Arabian Travel Market, Dubai (upper left and right); Philoxenia Expo, Thessaloniki, Greece (bottom left); ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin), Germany (bottom right)

It is also important to remember that when we talk about stakeholder involvement and its impact, it is believed that it has much more effect in small working groups or one-on-one meetings rather than formal, large, and institutional meetings. Considering the meetings in which decision makers or collective team members participate, it is observed that general opinions are expressed in a positive or negative way, but no direction is given.

On the other hand, in the one-on-one meetings, team members and external stakeholders touched on different points. For example, one of the team members drew attention to a color that is one of the values of İzmir and added it to the color system. Similarly, the removal of unfitting symbols or the suggestion of new symbols by academics which are among the external experts have also emerged in the studies conducted within the scope of one-on-one interviews. Although a participatory approach was not preferred in the design process, it was observed that stakeholders had a tangible effect on the design.

5.4.4. Stages of the Design Process

City branding case studies and theoretical models in the literature often do not emphasize the designer's role, it was observed that this differs in the Izmir city

branding project. For instance, Kavaratzis (2012) acknowledges the ongoing discussion about the importance of stakeholders in the creation, development, and ownership of place brands in the field of place branding. He emphasizes the need to reassess place branding to encourage greater stakeholder participation. However, it is worth noting that in his research related to city branding literature, Kavaratzis does not explicitly recognize the designer as a stakeholder, nor does he specifically focus on the design process.

Through researching the details of the Izmir city branding project, it was evident that the designer occupies a central position and the process revolves around the designer. This finding reveals that previous studies describing the city branding steps did not focus on the design process, and therefore, despite being a visual design project, the city branding process was not approached from a design perspective. It was even noticed that many studies did not mention the designer or the designer's direct or indirect influence.

On the other hand, when defining the city branding project steps, a direct transition from strategy to design was observed. In other words, visual design emerges after the strategy is handed over to the designer. However, important details such as how this design is developed, how the design process takes place, the factors influencing the design process, the impact of stakeholders in the design process, and the points that inspire the designer were found to be lacking. In short, the existing literature does not address the transition from city branding strategy to city brand identity.

To emphasize the critical importance of the designer in city branding processes, this thesis also highlights the concept of design thinking. Moreover, studies related to design processes, idea development, and the iterative nature of this process within the design literature were examined. Within this framework, although not included in the literature review chapter, some models such as the Stanford design thinking model, double diamond model, user-centered design were referenced in the analysis section.

The design process has been tried to be defined in different ways so far. One of the most widely known identification is the five-stage Design Thinking model (Figure 65). This model proposed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school) which is a problem-solving methodology used to approach complex challenges and create innovative solutions (Brown, 2008; Plattber, Meinel and Weinberg, 2009;

Plattner, Meinel and Leifer, 2011; Brown, 2018).

Understanding the users' needs, wants, and perspectives is crucial in the empathize stage. This involves observing, engaging, and empathizing with the users to gain insights and develop a profound understanding of their experiences. The define stage utilizes the insights obtained from the empathize stage to define the problem at hand. This involves synthesizing the collected information and framing the problem in a way that focuses on the user's needs. The ideate stage is centered around generating a wide range of potential solutions to the defined problem. This stage encourages brainstorming, ideation, and exploration of different possibilities without judgment. In the prototype stage, physical or digital representations of the ideas are created, ranging from rough sketches to functional models. The objective is to quickly and inexpensively develop tangible representations of the ideas for testing and refinement. The final stage, test, involves putting the prototypes in front of users and gathering feedback to evaluate how effectively they address the problem identified in the define stage. Based on the feedback received, iterations and refinements are made to the prototypes until a solution that meets the users' needs is achieved.
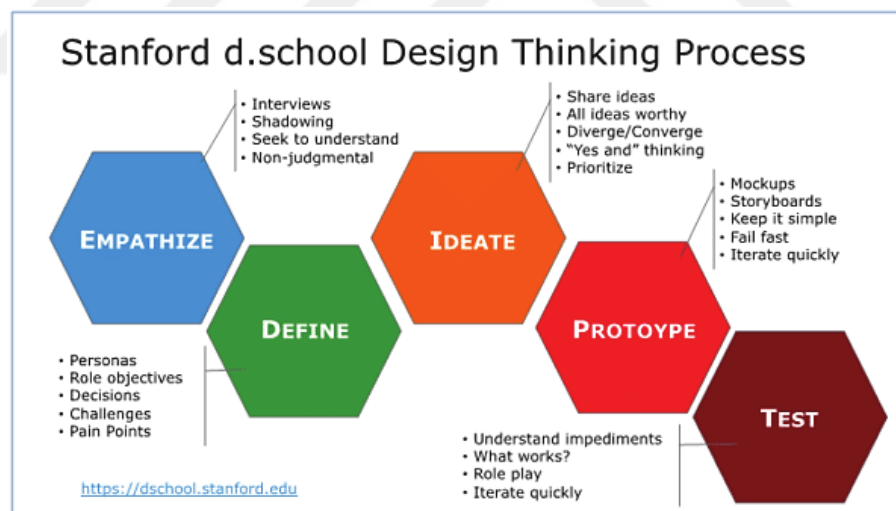

Figure 65. Five-Stage Design Thinking Model (Source: dschool.stanford.edu, 2023)

Another important model is the Double Diamond model put forward by the UK Design Council. (Figure 66)
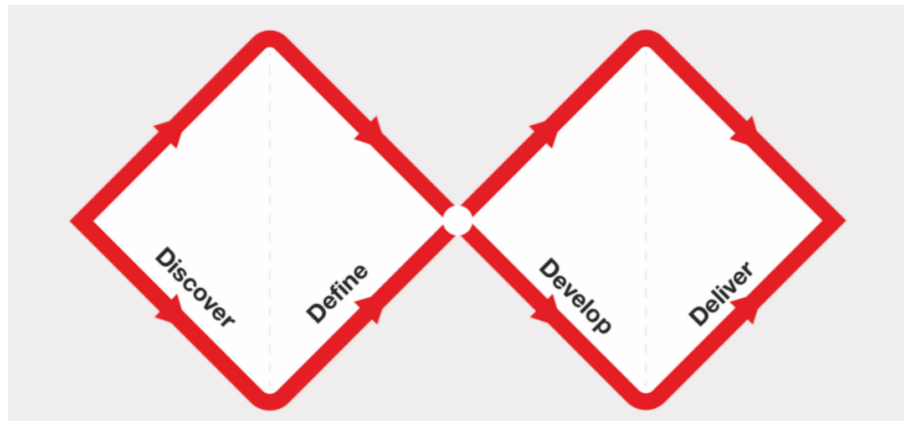
Figure 66. Double Diamond Model (Source: Design Council, 2023)

The Design Council's Double Diamond model makes the design process easily understandable for both designers and non-designers. Represented by two diamonds, it illustrates the process of first conducting extensive analysis (divergent thinking) and then taking focused action (convergent thinking). The model consists of four steps (Design Council, 2023):

−   Discover: The first diamond emphasizes the importance of understanding the issue by engaging in conversations and spending time with those affected by the concerns. This step aims to avoid assumptions and gain genuine insights.

−   Define: Using the knowledge acquired during the exploration phase, the challenge is redefined, ensuring a clear understanding of the problem at hand.

−   Develop: The second diamond encourages the generation of various solutions to the defined problem. It involves seeking inspiration from different sources and engaging in co-design with diverse individuals.

−   Deliver: The delivery stage involves experimenting with multiple solutions on a small scale, eliminating ineffective options and refining those that show potential.

The arrows in the diagram indicate that the process is not linear. Organizations often gain deeper insights into the underlying issues, leading them to revisit earlier stages. Discovery can involve creating and testing initial concepts. In today's dynamic and digital environment, no concept is considered "finished," and feedback plays a crucial role in iteratively improving products and services.

Other models in which the scope has been further expanded by centered on the Double Diamond model are shown in the Figure 67 below.

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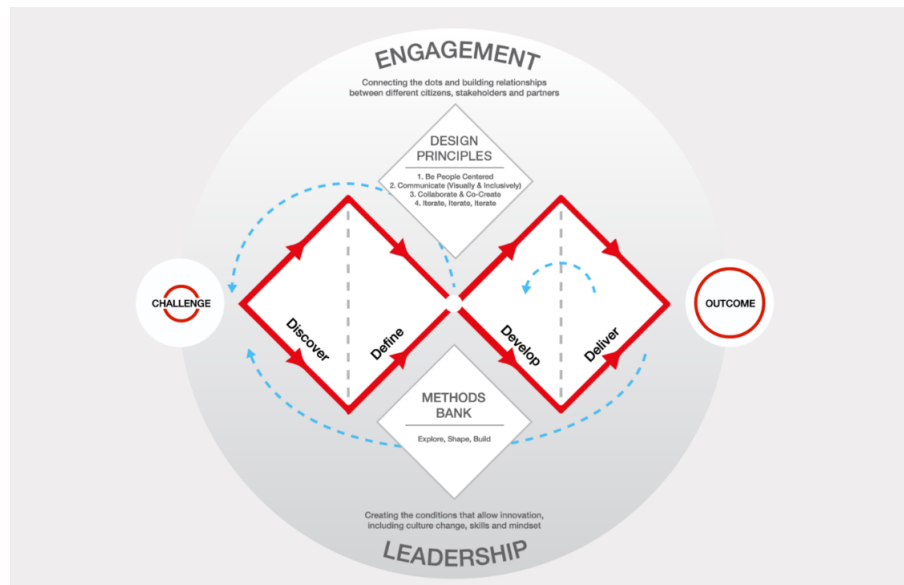
Figure 67. Double Diamond Model (Source: Design Council, 2023)

The Double Diamond model encompasses four key phases, complemented by various elements that contribute to the success of the design process. The methods bank provides a range of design methodologies categorized into three groups: Explore, Shape, and Build. These methodologies assist in uncovering challenges, identifying needs and opportunities, creating prototypes, gaining insights, and developing visions. They enable individuals to investigate, shape, and build ideas, plans, and expertise. Creating a culture of success is crucial as it involves recognizing that complex issues require multiple solutions and collaboration with other organizations. Organizations must foster a culture that encourages individuals to actively participate in finding solutions. It entails establishing strong relationships with partners and embracing guiding principles that guide the organization's procedures. Leadership plays a vital role in promoting creativity, skill development, and a culture of experimentation and learning. Strong leadership enables open and agile initiatives that can adapt, evolve, and demonstrate progress. By providing permission to explore new ideas and take risks, leaders foster an environment that nurtures innovation and continuous improvement. Engagement is another critical aspect of the Double Diamond model. It emphasizes the importance of working with individuals who contribute and receive ideas, as well as cultivating relationships with potential new partners. Building connections and fostering relationships are just as essential as generating ideas. Collaborating with diverse stakeholders and engaging in meaningful dialogue leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the problem space and opens up possibilities

for innovative solutions.

Also, by examining user-centered or human-centered design, several models surveyed in detail below are included in the literature. Figure 68 shows the steps in the process, which include an iterative cycle of defining the user needs and the context in which the product will be used, followed by the creation of design solutions that can be tested against these criteria. During the early stages of the design process, the requirements are typically at a high-level, and the design solutions are often in the form of mock-ups. As the design progresses, higher fidelity prototypes are created and evaluated based on more specific criteria
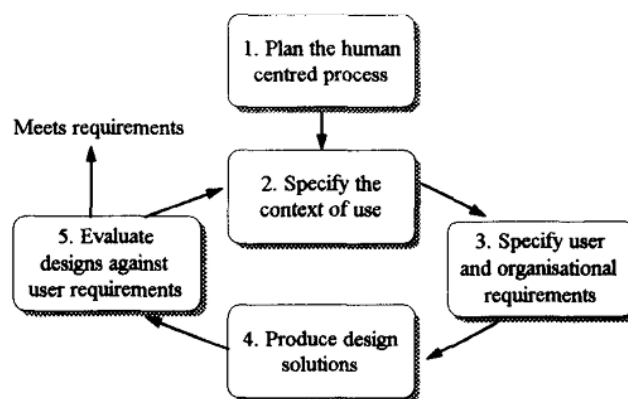
Figure 68. User centered design process (Source: Bevan and Curson, 1998).

In the context of human-centered design, a robust model is expected to follow various principles outlined in ISO standards. This approach prioritizes the customers and other key stakeholders, ensuring that the design, innovation, and implementation processes revolve around their needs and preferences. These principles are:

−	the design is predicated on an explicit comprehension of users, tasks, and environments,

−	users are involved in all phases of design and development,

−	user-centered evaluation drives and improves the design,

−	The design considers the entire user experience,

−	The approach is iterative, (Figure 69)

−	The design team incorporates multidisciplinary talents and views. (Roto, 2019)
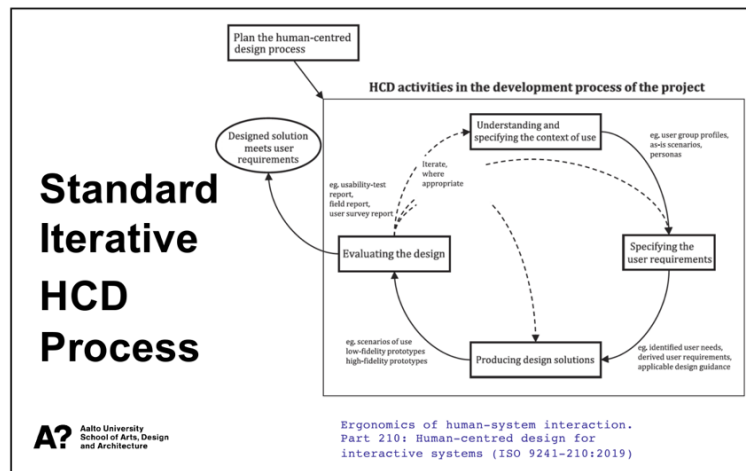
Figure 69. Standard Iterative human-centered design Process. (Source: Roto, V. (2019)

Another approach to the human centered design has been highlighted as iterative, measurable, and goal-oriented by the Dalberg Trust (dalberg.com, 2023) (Figure 70). The strategy concentrates on comprehending stakeholder dynamics throughout the ecosystem. Collaborating with all relevant parties, including service providers and end users, tactics and solutions are developed that address problems and open up new possibilities for impact and value creation.
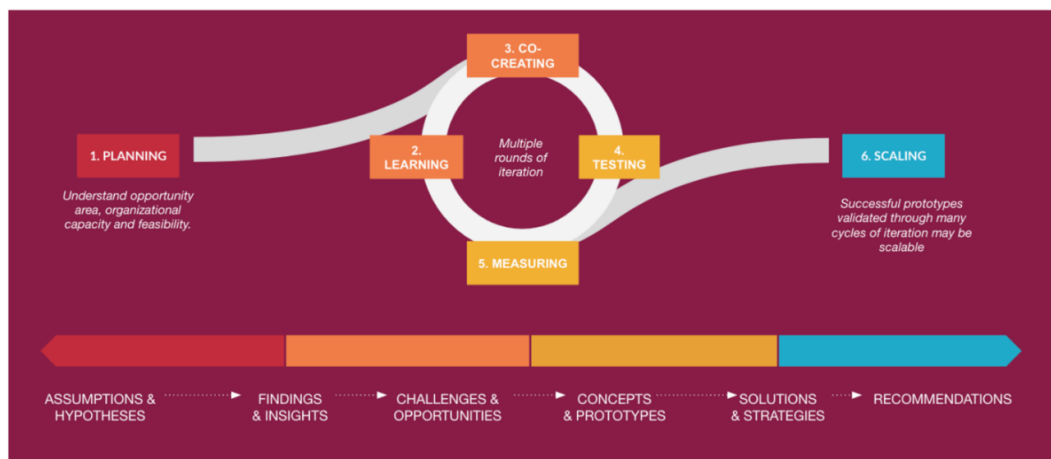
Figure 70. The strategy of Dalberg to the human centered design (Source: dalberg.com, 2023)

Since the importance of the designer and design process have been emphasized again and again in all the models and approaches mentioned above, in addition to the stakeholder involvement cases reviewed in the literature, brand identity especially city brand identity development processes were also examined and added to the analysis

section. However, a different picture emerges when we examine those processes. In these processes, it is seen that there is no focus on how the design emerged and how the designer came up with that idea as mentioned before.

Firstly, examining the brand identity development process proposed by Alina Wheeler (Figure 71), who is a graphic designer and branding practitioner, the client, creative director, designers, and brand strategists must all work together for the branding process to be effective (Wheeler, 2009). Bill Baker's framework for city branding is followed by Wheeler's basic but thorough approach for the brand identity development process (Baker, 2007; Wheeler, 2009). This model reinforces the research findings by including the participation of a graphic designer and recognizing the importance of their role in the city branding strategy.

Figure 71. The Process of Brand Identity Development

In addition, there is the impression that a sensory process as well as design is approached only with strategic inputs. However, unlike products, cities are not properties, but a living structure that consists of people, nature, and culture, as well as emotions. For this reason, it is important to conduct a branding process that reveals the spirit of the city.

At that point, in their study of Hanna and Rowley (2011), the models available in the literature were compared and a new model was proposed, which is thought to eliminate the deficiencies and shortcomings, namely "the strategic place brand-management model". (Figure 72) The model proposes an initial step of conducting a thorough analysis of both tangible and intangible elements, as well as strengths and weaknesses, related to the place, people, processes, and partners involved. It emphasizes the development of action plans for these components. The model's specific application is for Kazakhstan as an umbrella brand for its cities. Although it may not explicitly use branding terminology, it addresses essential aspects of the place brand management process, including infrastructure development. In essence, the model centers around the analysis and improvement of various components of a place's brand to enhance its

overall management and development.

Figure 1 Strategic place brand-management model.
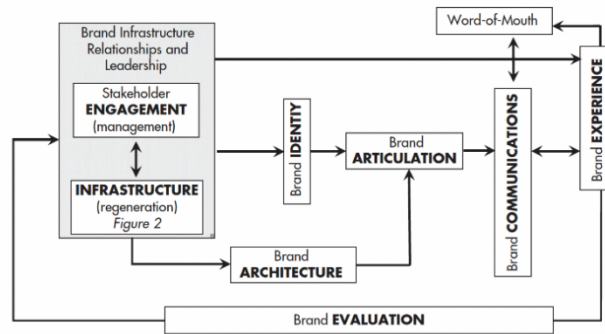
Table 2 Place brand-management components.

| Brand management components	Brand evaluation	Brand infrastructure relationships and leadership	Leadership	Stakeholder engagement (management)	Infrastructure (regeneration)	Brand identity	Brand architecture	Brand articulation	Brand commun-ications	Word of mouth	Brand experience
Holistic Place Brand Management (proposed model)	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Relational Network Brand (Hankinson, 2004a)				•	•				•		
City Image Communication (Kavaratzis, 2004)	•			•	•				•	•	
Model of Destination Branding (Cai, 2002)					•	•			•		
7A Destination Branding Model (Baker, 2007)	•			•	•		•	•	•	•	•
City Brand Management (Gaggiotti et al., 2008)			•	•	•				•		

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Figure 2 Infrastructure (regeneration).
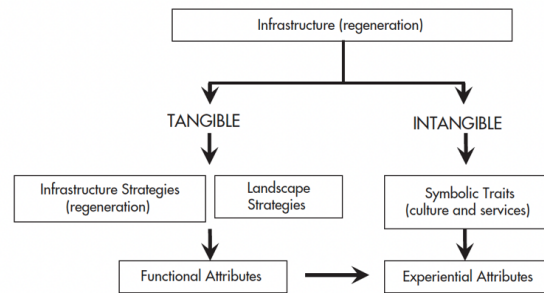
Figure 72. Strategic place Brand Management and Its Components (Source: Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

The place branding process and its essential elements are represented by the model initially. Next, since branding is a dynamic, ever-evolving activity, the integration of the feedback loop through brand evaluation serves as the primary indicator in the model. Third, brand identity is largely influenced by the "place" and its stakeholders and is the very essence of the place, as opposed to other branding contexts. Finally, brand experience rather than brand image is what matters most as a result of the branding process. Initiatives for building a brand must be founded not just on communicating the image but also on the "brand reality."

A crucial component that includes both the tangible and intangible components of a location is brand infrastructure, also referred to as brand regeneration. It includes the presence, availability, suitability, and possible need for renovation and revitalization of a location's functional and experiential qualities. The impact on stakeholders, any potential adverse environmental consequences, and the way in which the location is changing as a result of outside forces all play a role in how well a place's brand communicates its experiential features.

Investment is required in facilities and services that enhance and improve the many qualities used by the location in order to create a compelling brand experience. Infrastructure and landscape strategies, which take into account the built environment, urban design concerns, green spaces, and architecture, are used to realize functional qualities. Conversely, symbolic qualities and functional features are combined to create experience attributes. Providing cultural activities and services that enhance the entire brand experience are examples of symbolic qualities.

In conclusion, the strategic place brand-management model is created to help brand managers combine place brand development activities, such as regeneration, with brand identity and brand experience. By detailing the eight major components of the branding process, it also intends to assist place managers in better understanding the critical steps and significant areas of activity. In addition, because it is a strategic and all-encompassing model, it will motivate the various stakeholders involved in the branding process by clarifying their functions within the process as a whole. The methodology will make it easier to advance best practices by enabling benchmarking and comparisons.

Another model is the five-step place branding approach by Robert Govers and Frank Go. (Figure 73) The place branding process consists of five primary steps. Firstly, it involves formulating project goals, including defining the vision, mission, and objectives of the place. Secondly, it requires analyzing the current place brand by examining its perceived identity, image, and projected image. Thirdly, the process involves designing the essence of the place brand, capturing its unique qualities and characteristics. Next, it entails implementing the new place brand, putting the strategies and initiatives into action. Lastly, it necessitates monitoring the place brand, assessing its performance and making adjustments as needed.

STEP 1: Formulate Project Goals	STEP 2: Analyze Current Place Brand	STEP 3: Design Place Brand Essence	STEP 4: Implement New Place Brand	STEP 5: Monitor the Place Brand
Vision	Perceived Identity	Brand Identity	Construction	Awareness
Mission	Perceived Image	Value Match	Cooperation	Perceived Image/Loyalty
Objectives	Projected Image	Experience Concept	Communication	Projected Image

Figure 73. Five-step place branding approach (Source: Govers and Go, 2009).

In this model, the formation of a shared vision serves as the place branding project's starting point, and it is later transformed into a mission and a set of precise objectives. Next, to create a reputation based on a consistent, all-pervasive feeling of any place, alignment with the place identity is essential to making the place brand offer authentic and distinctive. In the third step, the design of the place brand essence is based on the information from the place brand analysis and is built on the brand identity, which

consists of the brand name, values, narrative, visual identity, and scope. Next, numerous components must be put in place during brand implementation phase (Step 4) to execute the place brand essence triangle. Finally, in the last and fifth step of the model, a periodic assessment of the brand's equity or brand value is required to determine how effective the new location brand is (placebrandobserver.com, 2015).

Besides several model to city branding, within the case of destination branding project of the City of Helsinki, the design agency commented on the design process in detail. In 2017, Werklig collaborated with the city of Helsinki on an ambitious rebranding initiative, aiming to transform Helsinki into the world's most efficient city while reflecting this vision through its identity. This extensive brand renewal, the largest ever undertaken in Finland, involved the participation of over 200 city employees and spanned a period of seven months. The objective of the rebranding was to provide residents and visitors with a clear and reassuring understanding of the diverse public services and amenities available in Helsinki, ranging from the zoo to the city orchestra. The rebranding project resulted in significant cost savings internally by implementing a cohesive visual system. The successful outcome of the project has established Helsinki as one of the top five cities globally in terms of city branding, as acknowledged by various sources (werklig.com, 2023c).

As stated on their website, Werklig offered a collaborative strategy centered on co-creation after winning the pitch for Helsinki's rebranding project. About 200 people from various city departments and positions were involved in the project. Four guiding principles—Fascinating Contrasts, Unique & Diverse, Transformation & Growth, and Helsinki Works—formed the basis of the rebranding plan. To reduce the possibilities, the design decisions underwent numerous iterations of sprint reviews, feedback, and decision-making. Everybody's perspectives were respected and balanced during the process' multiple meetings and workshops, which produced spirited debates and fun teamwork. Despite the demanding seven-month time frame, city employees were proud to deliver the striking new identity on their own since they had developed their brand design skills throughout the process. (Figure 74)
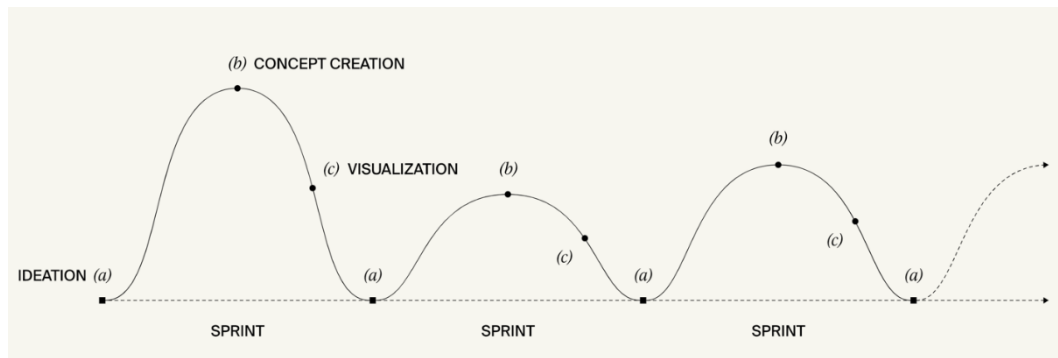
Figure 74. The Design Process of City Branding of Helsinki (Source: werklig.com, 2023c)

As a result, it can be observed that in these models, design or the designer is not positioned as the main focus of the analysis. While other models focus on the entire process, there is no specific emphasis on the design aspect. In other words, these models do not explain how design is achieved, from the brief to the strategy, and from the strategy to the output. The main focus of this thesis, however, is to uncover this aspect. Despite the existence of various research studies focusing on how different designs are conducted in the literature, it is observed that there is a lack of research in the field of city branding that investigates how the design process evolves and matures.

So, based on the information obtained from the interviews with all stakeholders, including the designer, all information in these models is compiled, and a process diagram detailing the design process within the city branding project of Izmir has been constructed. During the analysis, the design process itself was mainly focused on, and within this scope, the entire process was merged and reevaluated from a design perspective. To conclude, the diagram reveals a similar flow chart for the Izmir city branding process.

The process of design has been illustrated in Figure 75.

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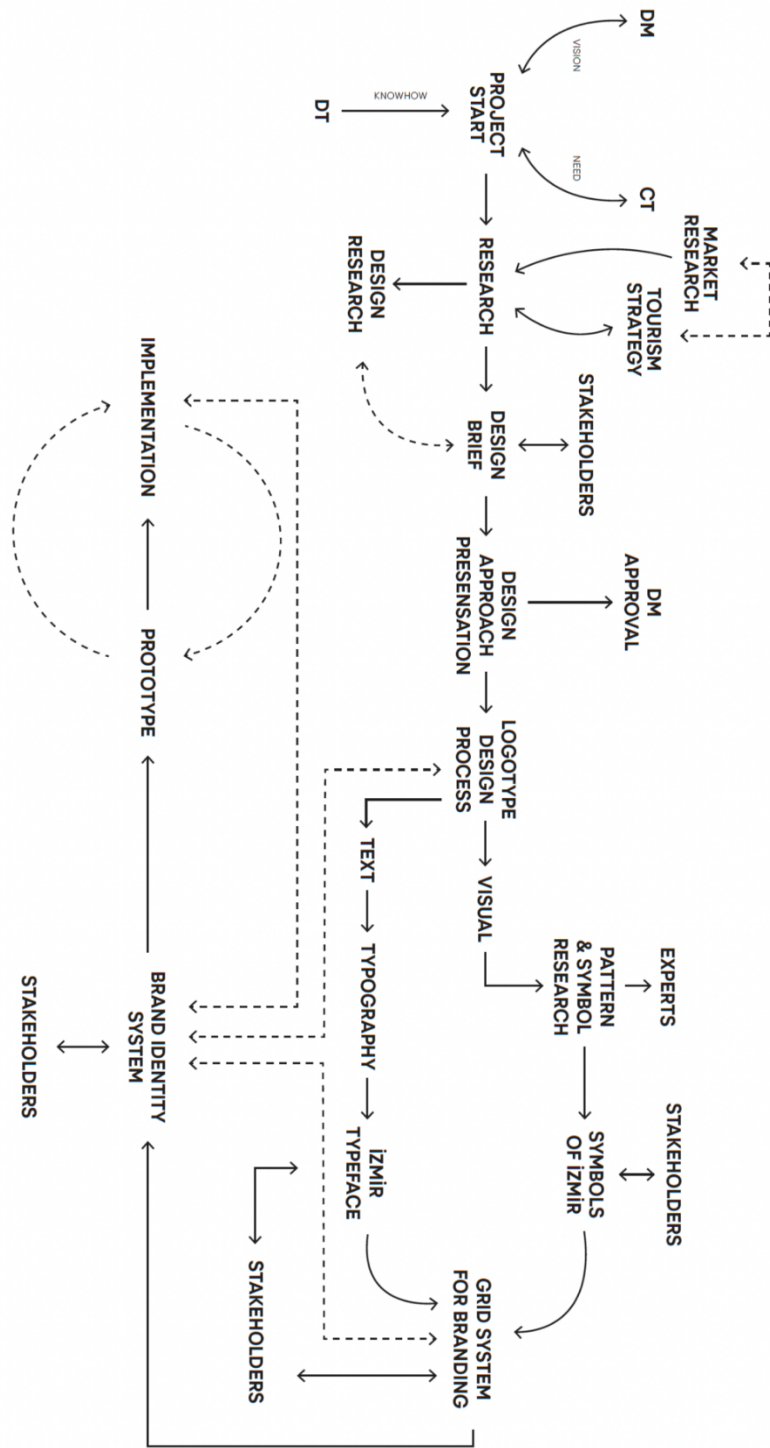
Figure 75. The Process of Design

Upon closer examination of the Izmir city branding process, the significance of the design process emerged once again. Therefore, while listing the steps in the city branding process as in previous research, this study deviates from other studies by

placing a significant emphasis on the brief and visual design, analyzing what takes place within the process and how it progresses. In essence, the most fundamental and comprehensive contribution of this thesis to the city branding literature is opening a design parenthesis within the relevant literature. As previously mentioned, it is known that no references have been made to this aspect in studies investigating city branding processes. Additionally, another important contribution of this thesis to the existing literature is providing an explanation of how idea development, which is the most crucial aspect within the city branding process, is conducted.

When examining the design process employed for the branding project of Izmir, several noteworthy aspects come to light. While the process does not precisely conform to established models, it does exhibit certain resemblances. The Izmir model encompasses iterative steps, embodying the cyclical nature commonly found in design models. However, it also deviates from conventional frameworks in various respects.

A prominent feature of the Izmir model is the direct involvement of stakeholders throughout the design process. Stakeholders actively participate and provide feedback at each stage, contributing to a collaborative approach. Although the designer does not strictly adopt a participatory design approach, they demonstrate a willingness to engage and collaborate with stakeholders. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and facilitates a deeper understanding of the unique requirements and perspectives of the project.

One distinguishing factor that significantly impacts the Izmir model is the intricate stakeholder structure inherent in the city branding process. This complexity adds layers of intricacy to the process, making it less amenable to simplification compared to more straightforward models. Numerous approvals and comments often necessitate revisiting previous stages or even returning to the initial phases, further emphasizing the intricate nature of the process. Additionally, prototype processes, typically limited to sketches without direct user involvement, are occasionally implemented in Izmir. This allows for the evaluation of citizens' reactions and enables the development of context-specific approaches tailored to the city's distinct character.

Moreover, the Izmir branding process departs from convention by eschewing the traditional route of public announcements or formal launches. Instead, projects are sometimes implemented directly, allowing for more organic and fluid developments.

This departure from established practices creates a dynamic and adaptable environment, providing opportunities for adjustments and refinements based on real-time feedback and observations.

Another notable departure from established models is the origin of the Izmir branding process itself. Unlike many other projects that stem from external demands, the Izmir project emerges from an internal need for a cohesive and authentic representation of the city. This internal impetus drives the vision and sets the stage for the subsequent design activities.

Intriguingly, the Izmir model diverges from the norm by establishing an internal design team rather than relying on external branding agencies or design teams. This distinctive approach affirms the commitment to an intrinsic and locally rooted perspective. The involvement of the designer from the project's inception to its completion, including participation in decision-making processes, underscores their integral role within the team. This deep integration of the designer into the project ensures a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the objectives, challenges, and opportunities throughout the entire journey.

A defining characteristic of the Izmir branding process is the emphasis placed on capturing the spirit and essence of the city. The design approach prioritizes the authentic representation of Izmir's identity and character, surpassing a mere focus on strategic marketing objectives. By striving to reveal the true essence of the city, the branding process assumes a more profound and meaningful dimension. It becomes a means of not only communicating with external audiences but also fostering a sense of pride and resonance among the city's residents.

In summary, the design process for the branding project of Izmir exhibits both commonalities and deviations from established models. The active participation of stakeholders, the unique stakeholder structure, the organic implementation process, and the emphasis on capturing the city's spirit all contribute to a distinctive approach. By taking a more inclusive and authentic path, the Izmir branding process endeavors to create a comprehensive and resonant representation of the city's identity.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis is primarily focused on examining the design process within the context of city branding, with a specific emphasis on the case of Izmir. Existing models and

research studies on city branding often overlook the design aspect and fail to provide a comprehensive explanation of how the design is accomplished from the initial brief to the final output. To address this gap, a series of interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including the designer, to gather diversifying insights. The insights obtained from these interviews were consolidated to create a detailed process diagram that illustrates the design process employed in the city branding project of Izmir. The analysis primarily centered around the design process, amalgamating and reevaluating the entire process from a design perspective. In essence, the diagram reveals a flow chart outlining the similar design process followed in Izmir's city branding project.

The findings of this analysis shed light on the perspectives of stakeholders, the governance model, and the design process implemented in the Izmir branding project. These insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with different stakeholder groups. The results underscore the importance of considering a broader perspective beyond tourism, emphasizing the influence of decision-makers, the designer, and stakeholder involvement throughout the entire process.

Initially, the branding project in Izmir focused on tourism, given the stakeholders' identities and the city's history as a tourist destination. However, objections to this perspective arose, with some advocating for the inclusion of other sectors and questioning the significance of tourism. The team members emphasize that city branding should be a broader and more inclusive initiative, aiming to transform the city into a brand by incorporating various elements beyond tourism.

Examining the governance model, it was revealed that the branding process in Izmir is managed by the Izmir Foundation, which represents a city alliance model. The Foundation is governed by a Board of Directors elected by its members, and a collective working team, including a designer, is appointed by the elected members. The team regularly reports its progress to the President and the Board of Directors. However, it is important to note that the mayor, who initiated the branding process and serves as the president of the Izmir Foundation, wields significant influence on decision-making processes, often leading to limited expression of dissenting opinions by other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the analysis uncovers the involvement of key stakeholders in the

branding process, including the collective working team, decision-makers, and the design team. External stakeholders, such as experts, also play a role in shaping the project. The designer holds a central position in the process, establishing a design team and involving stakeholders as necessary. However, it should be acknowledged that the influence of individual team members varies, with some being more active than others. Decision-makers primarily impact the vision dimension of design decisions, while external experts contribute their expertise to specific aspects such as patterns and colors. Also, examining the stakeholder map constructed, it was revealed that each stakeholder group possesses varying degrees of impact. In other words, as the power of stakeholders increases, their engagement in the city branding process, and consequently the project itself, tend to deteriorate. For instance, considering the interviews, decision-making level of stakeholders be subject to make administrative decisions, whereas the collective working team and the designer are the main stakeholders responsible for managing and overseeing the process of city branding project, thus being more extensively involved for an extended period.

Moreover, the thesis highlights the existence of various design process models, such as the Design Thinking model and the Double Diamond model. Both models are widely used approaches in the field of design, particularly in problem-solving and innovation. Design Thinking is a human-centered approach that focuses on understanding user needs and finding innovative solutions through empathy, ideation, and prototyping, while the Double Diamond is a visual representation of divergent and convergent thinking and emphasizes the importance of exploring a problem space before converging on a solution. Design Thinking typically consists of five stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test; whereas the Double Diamond model consists of four stages: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. In the process of Izmir city branding, it was observed that a similar path has been followed. For instance, the citizens' needs, wants, and perspectives were understood through observation, informal interviews with citizens, similar to empathize stages in both models. Also, tangible representations of city branding ideas have been created and tested in various places in Izmir like ferries, Pedestrian crossings for the prototype and test stages like Design Thinking model, as well as like the deliver stage of the Double Diamond model which involves experimenting with multiple solutions on a small scale, eliminating ineffective options and refining those that show potential.

The thesis also noting the lack of focus on how the design emerges and how the designer's ideas are developed in city branding processes. The significance of the designer is emphasized, but the design process itself is not thoroughly discussed in existing research. To address this gap, a proposed model called the "strategic place brand-management model" is introduced, which underscores the need for a comprehensive analysis of tangible and intangible elements, as well as the development of action plans. This model also emphasizes the importance of brand evaluation and the influence of the place and stakeholders on brand identity.

However, the applicability of a model cannot be universally defined, as it varies depending on the city and its governance structure. One of the most influential factors in this variation is the presence and involvement of designers, alongside the acceptance and integration of design culture within the city's context. The thesis emphasizes that the designer possesses systematic knowledge and are well-versed in the systematic design thinking process, which makes this approach particularly tailored to the specificities of Izmir.

The design process employed for the branding project of Izmir also showcases several noteworthy aspects. It exhibits both similarities and deviations from established models. The process involves iterative steps and embraces a cyclical nature, while also introducing unique elements. A key feature is the direct involvement of stakeholders throughout the process, fostering collaboration and shared ownership. The intricate stakeholder structure adds complexity, necessitating the need for revisiting and prototyping. Departing from traditional practices, the Izmir branding process implements projects directly, allowing for organic developments and real-time adjustments. Unlike externally-driven projects, the Izmir branding process arises from an internal need for an authentic representation of the city. It establishes an internal design team, emphasizing a locally rooted perspective and integrating the designer throughout the entire journey. Capturing the spirit and essence of the city takes precedence over strategic marketing objectives, aiming for a profound and meaningful representation that resonates with the residents.

When ranking the factors that most influence design decisions, the designer, his close colleagues, and external experts are identified as the primary influencers. Moreover, the significance of the designer's "black box" should not be underestimated. Additionally, the absence of a rigid control mechanism and the gradual evolution of

the design process are contributing factors in shaping design decisions. Similarly, the intertwining of the implementation phase with the design process and the subsequent changes in design based on implementation have been observed to impact design decisions significantly. Lastly, the transition from a collective system to an individual logo design was entirely influenced by the team, highlighting the noteworthy impact of subjective interpretations throughout the city branding process.

From other side, examining the factors influencing the design, three main aspects stand out. Firstly, the "Sait Maden effect" is noteworthy. In this regard, the following questions arise: 1) Could the concept of a multiple logo system originate from this effect? 2) Could it be attributed to the importance Sait Maden places on symbols, which form a fundamental part of the İzmir branding, constructed entirely around symbols? Although the designer may not provide definitive answers and may not be entirely certain of their responses during the interviews, the discussions ultimately lead to the conclusion that Sait Maden has an undeniable impact on both the designer and the design of the İzmir city branding project. Another influential factor in the design process is the influence of previous works by İzmir Chamber of Commerce (IZTO) on the designer's subconscious, particularly the prior utilization of Agora patterns in İzmir. Lastly, the designer's choice of approach during the logo design process is also significant. Notably, it is observed that the designer prefers to employ a modular system similar to the prevailing trend in the design community worldwide, where most logo designs feature a modular system.

At this juncture, the most significant contribution of this thesis to the existing literature is to underscore the necessity of investigating designers, in addition to stakeholders and brand managers, during the analysis of city branding processes. City branding endeavors should not be perceived as rigid machines, and designers should not be treated as mere cogs in the wheel. This is because the most ambiguous and creative aspects of city branding projects emanate from the work of designers. In other words, when a brand manager leaves a project and is replaced by another, such a change is generally considered less disruptive for the continuity of the city branding project compared to making alterations to the designer.

Moreover, another significant contribution of this thesis to the existing literature is the conceptual framework that highlights the role of the designer and analyzes its effects. The analysis results largely align with the design literature, but it reveals a unique

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finding not present in the city branding literature, which fills a gap and complements the existing knowledge. The absence of public involvement stands out as the sole aspect contradicting the city branding literature. It is observed that the fuzzy front end, i.e., the early stages of the design process, lacks engagement of the public. However, as the project moves towards implementation stage, reactions are observed, and even in the implications stage, the issue is addressed. In essence, although the initial findings might seem contrary to the literature, the overall trajectory leads to the same conclusions, which can be seen as an alternative approach.

It can also be stated that the city branding process is entirely shaped by stakeholder involvement in answering the main research question of how does stakeholder involvement effect design decisions. As a stakeholder, the designer is seen to be perhaps the most important stakeholder in this process. However, when specifically considering the Izmir case, it was observed that in addition to the designer, other stakeholders categorized into two main groups as decision-makers and the collective working team also have a direct influence on the city branding process. The traces of this direct influence are evident not only in decision-making or process management and execution but also in design decisions, as supported by examples. Furthermore, it was emphasized that stakeholders' opinions trigger the iterative process at every stage, leading to certain adjustments. In summary, this thesis highlights the urgency for city branding studies to give due consideration to the role of the designer and enriching the city branding literature with design aspect.

One of the outcomes of this thesis is its clear indication that in addition to viewing city branding as a strategic process, it should also be examined as a design process, given the emergence of a design product. Within this scope, studies that approach city branding from a design process perspective can be deemed as potential areas for further research.

The fact that this thesis was authored by a member of the team can be considered as a methodological contribution, as it provides an insider's perspective and first-hand insights into the city branding project. However, it should also be acknowledged that working within the city branding project's managing foundation may be viewed as a limitation. The researcher's close association with the organization might potentially introduce biases or affect the objectivity of the study's findings. Therefore, it is essential for future research to take this limitation into account and consider employing

various methodologies to ensure a comprehensive and impartial analysis of city branding projects.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. TABLE OF INTERVIEWS

Interview Coding	Position	Stakeholder Level	Institution
DM1	Chairman of the Executive Board	Decision Maker	İzmir Fair Services Cultural and Art Affairs Trade Inc.
DM2	Vice Chairman of the Executive Board	Decision Maker	İzmir Chamber of Commerce
DM3	Board Member	Decision Maker	Aegean Region Chamber of Industry
DM4	Board Member	Decision Maker	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies
DM5	Board Member	Decision Maker	Çeşme Touristic Hotels' Association
DM6	Board Member	Decision Maker	Swiss Hotel Grand Efes Izmir
DT1	Designer	Design Team	İzmir Foundation
TM1	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Foundation
TM2	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Foundation
TM3	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality
TM4	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Provincial Directorate Of Culture And Tourism
TM5	Member	Collective Working Team	Kentimiz İzmir Association
TM6	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Chamber of Commerce
TM7	Member	Collective Working Team	TARKEM
TM8	Member	Collective Working Team	İzmir Development Agency

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APPENDIX B. INSTITUTIONS

1. Izmir Foundation

The Izmir Foundation, a collaborative initiative consisting of 61 institutions including governmental bodies, chambers of commerce, NGOs, and private sector entities, was established in 2000 to shape Izmir's future. Its mission is to globally promote Izmir, preserve its cultural and natural heritage, and contribute to its economic growth. With a historical role as a pivotal trade hub between Europe and Asia, Izmir has evolved into a significant Mediterranean port city.

Drawing inspiration from Izmir's geographical attributes and universal values, the foundation aims to safeguard its cultural heritage, facilitate global interactions, and foster mutual learning. The core objective is to establish partnerships among public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations in Izmir and the broader Mediterranean region to preserve and promote the city's inherent values. The foundation's comprehensive strategy comprises six objectives, each tied to specific outcomes:

— Elevating Izmir's global reputation and brand value through initiatives like the Izmir Tourism Promotion Strategy, in collaboration with the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and IZKA, aiming to position Izmir as a gastronomic hub through events such as Terra Madre Anadolu.

— Identifying, conserving, and holistically managing Izmir's destinations, including cultural and natural heritage, supported by IZKA and projects like the Izmir Heritage of the World initiative focused on UNESCO World Heritage areas.

— Promoting Izmir's priority destinations through the Visit Izmir mobile app, website, and social media campaigns.

— Enhancing visitor experiences and durability of places and tools through the "Made by Izmir" brand inspired by the city's design culture, and collaborating with Izmir Metropolitan Municipality on a comprehensive tourism map and promotion office.

— Streamlining direct transportation options to Izmir via sea and air, including increased cruise trips and flights, through collaborations with relevant industry

stakeholders.

— Cultivating opportunities for experiential learning of Izmir's culture and Mediterranean culture at large, through initiatives like the Izmir Design Research Office, Sinema Izmir, Izmir Culture Schools, and the PhD Izmir Program.

In essence, the Izmir Foundation's comprehensive strategy aims to enhance Izmir's global presence, preserve its rich heritage, and promote sustainable growth through collaborative efforts across various sectors.

2. İzmir Metropolitan Municipality

The Izmir Metropolitan Municipality encompasses three key segments: the municipality itself, the Mayor's office, and the Council and Executive Board. It includes 35 departmental branches, an affiliated branch directorate, a chief physician's office, and four regulatory bodies. Additionally, the municipality comprises 13 joint-stock companies and two public entities, namely İZSU (Water and Sewerage Administration) and ESHOT (Electricity, Tramway, and Tunnel Operations).

The Municipality's international presence and globalization efforts are evident through its membership in diverse organizations, including such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Balkan Network of Cities (BALCINET), European Cities Network (EUROCITIES), Mediterranean Cities Network (MEDCITIES), European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Cities Network, and Active Cities Network (CFM).

The vision of Izmir is to become an inspirational global city that derives strength from embracing diversity, fostering harmony, and integrating well-being, justice, and environmental balance into every facet of life. Its mission involves harnessing public empowerment to deliver innovative municipal services prioritizing shared interests and sustainable urban development.

Positioned as a progressive "City of Fairs, Congresses, and Festivals," Izmir has gained acclaim for hosting numerous national and international events. Its flagship Izmir International Fair, initiated in 1931, is emblematic of its rich tradition. Notably, the "Marble and Natural Stone Technologies Fair" ranks as the world's second-largest sector fair, and "IF Wedding Fashion" rapidly ascended to Europe's top three fairs.

Demonstrating its capacity for significant international events, Izmir successfully staged the 1971 Mediterranean Games and the UNIVERSIADE 2005 IZMIR (World University Games). Additionally, it has hosted various international sports championships, enhancing its organizational expertise.

Through close city relationships, the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality facilitates communication, cooperation, and knowledge exchange across diverse realms, including socio-cultural, economic, educational, health, trade, tourism, local governance, and sports, contributing to collaborative growth.

3. İzmir Fair Services Cultural and Art Affairs Trade Inc.

Izmir, a historically significant port city with a strong tradition of commerce, played host to Turkey's inaugural fair, known initially as the "Sample Exhibition" and later renamed the "September 9 Exhibition," coinciding with the Izmir Economic Congress. This event marked the inception of the Izmir International Fair. Dr. Behçet Uz's leadership led to the formation of Izmir Fair Services Culture and Art Affairs Inc. (IZFAŞ) on February 7, 1990, in collaboration with prominent entities like Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, TOBB, Aegean Region Chamber of Industry, Aegean Exporters' Associations, Izmir Chamber of Commerce, and Izmir Commodity Exchange, owing to the fair's enduring success and Turkey's economic progress.

IZFAŞ, functioning as a public corporation, sustains national trade vitality and amplifies global interaction through annual fairs. It commits to ushering international fair advancements into the country, exemplified by hosting Turkey's pioneering international fair, Izmir International Fair, at "Kültürpark," alongside premier specialized fairs such as "Marble Izmir" and "IF Wedding Fashion Izmir" at the expansive "Fuarizmir."

In response to the pandemic-induced limitations in 2021, IZFAŞ embarked on innovative virtual fair ventures, launching the "Digital Izmir Fair" platform to provide a distinct experience for industry professionals. This underscores IZFAŞ's pioneering role and imaginative vision in the fair industry.

IZFAŞ's affiliation with UFI (Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) attests to its prominence on the international fair stage. Continuously hosting new fairs and esteemed global events, including the UCLG Culture Summit and Terra Madre, IZFAŞ effectively elevates its global brand stature.

In summary, Izmir's historical prominence in trade culminated in the establishment of IZFAŞ, which, through innovation and collaborations, orchestrates influential fairs and augments its international repute, adeptly adapting to evolving circumstances, as demonstrated by its venture into virtual fair platforms.

4. Izmir Chamber of Commerce

The İzmir Chamber of Commerce functions as a professional entity that represents the interests of entrepreneurs and enterprises within the İzmir region of Turkey. Its primary objective is to encourage and bolster economic growth, trade, and investment specifically in İzmir. Through an array of services, the chamber fulfills its mission:

— Trade Insights: The chamber collects and shares comprehensive data pertaining to both local and global trade. This includes market analyses, trade statistics, and updates on trade-related regulations and policies, all of which are made available to its members.

— Networking and Business Advancement: By arranging events, seminars, and trade exhibitions, the chamber effectively facilitates networking opportunities for businesses. These events furnish a platform for members to establish connections, explore potential collaborations, and expand their professional networks.

— Advocacy and Representation: Serving as a voice for its members, the İzmir Chamber of Commerce communicates with governmental bodies, policymakers, and relevant institutions to articulate the concerns and requirements of the business community. Its goal is to foster a favorable business environment and influence policies that underpin economic progress.

— Business Assistance: A spectrum of support services is extended to members, encompassing legal aid, consultancy, business training initiatives, and guidance for start-ups. This includes assistance in adhering to legal and regulatory standards, identifying investment prospects, and devising market entry strategies.

— International Trade Promotion: Proactively fostering international trade for its constituents, the chamber offers guidance and support for both imports and exports. It facilitates participation in global trade missions and exhibitions and

provides invaluable information concerning foreign markets and trade avenues.

— Research and Development: Engaging in research and studies concerning economic trends, industry sectors, and market dynamics, the chamber aims to augment the knowledge base of its members. This initiative provides insightful perspectives on emerging business prospects.

In totality, the İzmir Chamber of Commerce occupies a pivotal role in bolstering the local business community of İzmir. Its multifaceted services and resources are geared towards elevating competitiveness, catalyzing trade, and nurturing economic expansion within the region.

5. Aegean Region Chamber of Industry

The Izmir Economic Congress, held from February 17 to March 4, 1923, preceding the formation of the Republic of Turkey, laid the groundwork for swift national industrial development. Concurrently, the concept of forming a unified front to safeguard the professional interests of Ege Region industries emerged. The Republic administration's initial focus was on trade and industry chambers, leading to the Trade and Industry Chambers Law on April 22, 1925, granting legal recognition to these chambers. Consequently, the Izmir Trade and Industry Chamber, established in 1885, underwent restructuring.

In subsequent years, the "September 9 Domestic Goods Exhibition," later evolving into the "Izmir International Fair," was inaugurated in 1927. During this period, a group of growing industrialists in Izmir recognized the absence of an organization representing their interests. However, existing legislation did not align with their need for dedicated chambers. Consequently, these industrialists established the "Izmir Industrial Association" on September 11, 1927, to fill the economic void. Membership in this association was voluntary.

After the disruptions of World War II, the Izmir Industrial Association ceased operations from 1937 to 1945. Activities resumed in December 1945 with 96 members, but full-scale operation was achieved only in 1951. Law No. 5590 on Chambers in 1950 granted chambers the status of public institutions and allowed industrialists to establish separate chambers. Thus, on December 1, 1951, the Izmir Industrial Chamber began operations with 612 members. It later became the Ege Region Industrial Chamber (EBSO) in 1954, encompassing multiple provinces.

EBSO's endeavors include reinforcing professional ethics, expediting industrial growth, promoting capital investment, aiding industrial entrepreneurs, guiding industrial zones, and advocating for growth-oriented legislation. Over time, various provinces established their chambers, while EBSO continues to unify regional industrialists and achieve recognition. EBSO, with 70 staff members, has initiated impactful efforts such as post-Republic industrial organization, university-industry collaboration, the first Turkish Technopark, and ISO certifications, along with adopting the EFQM Excellence Model.

EBSO's excellence was acknowledged through awards, notably the "Best Chamber" accolade from the Asia-Pacific Chamber of Commerce and Industry Confederation (CACCI) in 2018. Complying with legal obligations, EBSO contributes to industry growth, facilitates government-industry dialogue, and provides insights to policymakers. Core responsibilities encompass strengthening professional ethics, driving industry aligned with national interests, conducting research, disseminating industry insights, issuing reports, and supporting member needs.

EBSO's obligations are founded in the Turkey Chambers and Commodity Exchanges Law of May 18, 2004, complemented by relevant regulations and internal guidelines.

6. Association of Turkish Travel Agencies

The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB) was established in 1972 under Law No. 1618, functioning as a significant public institution with attributes outlined in Article 135 of the Constitution. Exclusively attainable through TÜRSAB membership, the designation "Travel Agency" encompasses all travel agencies across 36 regions in Turkey, solidifying TÜRSAB's status as the country's largest professional organization.

TÜRSAB's vision is to contribute to the Turkish Tourism Sector and the Travel Agency profession by cultivating an innovative and sustainable perspective aligned with the digital age. This aims to empower its members to play more active, influential, and robust roles on both national and international platforms. The organization's approach is aligned with Turkey's Tourism Goals, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism established by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

TÜRSAB's mission involves effective representation of the tourism sector, heightened

public awareness, proactive engagement in legal enhancements, augmentation of members' and employees' performance, competitive environment management, and the elevation of service standards within the Travel Agency profession through educational initiatives that contribute to professional development.

Guided by a set of values including Reliability, Impartiality, Transparency, Determination, Accessibility, Proactiveness, Team Spirit, Quality Focus, Social Responsibility, and Environmental Friendliness, TÜRSAB is committed to conducting operations in compliance with laws and regulations, fostering the professional growth of its member travel agencies, boosting employee motivation and productivity, aligning with global technological advancements, prioritizing human health, safety, and environmental preservation, and continually enhancing its processes in a sustainable manner. TÜRSAB also commits to adapting to evolving standards and practices as it strives to achieve its objectives.

7. Çeşme Touristic Hotels' Association

The Çeşme Hoteliers Association, established in 1990 by hoteliers to tackle mutual challenges and promote Çeşme tourism, initially had limited activity until 1998. With a renewed leadership in 1998, it united the majority of Çeşme's hotels, shedding light on tourism concerns. Guided by the association, Çeşme rapidly rose as a key tourism hub, transforming from an Izmir leisure spot to a vital holiday destination through collaborative efforts with Çeştob.

Amid minimal documentation until the 2000s, Çeştob tirelessly generated numerous promotional materials, enhancing Çeşme's global presence in expos. The region is poised to further elevate its global visibility year-round, surpassing Turkey's budget tourism policy with Çeştob's assistance.

Promotional materials highlighting thermal resources have positioned Çeşme as a premier choice. With exceptional beaches, adjoining thermal amenities, surfing prospects, entertainment, and convenient access, Çeşme distinguishes itself as a remarkable holiday destination.

8. Swiss Hotel Grand Efes Izmir

Swissotel Grand Efes, located in the heart of Izmir, a historic and picturesque city, offers convenient access to key areas such as business districts, shopping centers, the International Izmir Fair Area, the Archaeology Museum, and the scenic Kordon on the

Izmir Gulf coast. Situated only 15 km from Adnan Menderes Airport, the hotel enjoys a central position within Izmir's vibrant urban landscape. With 402 well-appointed rooms, including 55 uniquely designed suites featuring state-of-the-art amenities, the hotel is designed to accommodate both business and leisure travelers.

The hotel features an impressive collection of significant artworks, some crafted by renowned Turkish artists, creating an ambiance akin to an expansive art gallery. The entrance showcases a notable 2.5-meter-tall equestrian statue named "Horseman" by celebrated Colombian artist Botero. Noteworthy artworks within the hotel's gardens include "Guillotine," a creation by Rabarama (Paola Epifani), a graduate of the Venice Academy of Fine Arts, and "TIP," an artwork by Turner Prize-winning artist Antony Gormley. Lorenzo Quinn's sculpture "Love," also displayed, adds to the noteworthy collection.

The Grand Efes Congress Center, featuring 19 divisible meeting rooms with advanced technology, conference spaces, and ballrooms, offers a remarkable total area of 7,316 square meters, catering to diverse events and functions. The contemporary and elegant design of the 5,500-square-meter Pürovel Spa & Sport draws inspiration from the Alps, offering guests a comprehensive approach to a well-rounded and health-conscious lifestyle.

The hotel's dining options are equally exceptional, featuring a range of traditional Turkish and contemporary international cuisine. Café Swiss and Aquaium Mezzes & Grill provide an array of delectable culinary choices to satisfy various preferences.

9. The Provincial Directorate of Tourism and Culture

The Provincial Directorate of Tourism and Culture in İzmir is a governmental body tasked with advancing tourism and cultural endeavors in both the İzmir Province and City of Turkey. Its primary aim is to spotlight İzmir's historical, cultural, and natural riches, attracting tourists from both within and outside the country. Operating under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, this directorate collaborates with local municipalities, cultural institutions, and tourism stakeholders to amplify İzmir's tourism potential and ensure its sustainable growth.

The directorate holds several responsibilities:

— Preserving and Promoting Cultural Heritage: It focuses on conserving and showcasing İzmir's historical and cultural assets, such as archaeological sites,

museums, cultural festivals, and events, to heighten awareness about the city's rich heritage and diverse culture.

— Enhancing Tourism Infrastructure: The directorate contributes to the improvement of İzmir's tourism infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and visitor services, aiming to enhance accessibility and the overall tourist experience.

— Marketing and Promotion: Through participation in national and international tourism fairs, organizing campaigns, generating marketing materials, and maintaining an online presence, the directorate actively promotes İzmir as an enticing tourist destination.

— Cultivating Cultural and Artistic Activities: The directorate supports cultural and artistic initiatives by offering grants, arranging events, and fostering collaborations among artists, cultural organizations, and local communities.

— Tourist Information Services: It operates tourist information centers that provide visitors with essential details about İzmir's attractions, transportation, accommodation, and related services, serving as a valuable resource for tourists.

In essence, the Provincial Directorate of Tourism and Culture in İzmir assumes a crucial role in elevating İzmir's status as a prominent tourist spot, safeguarding its cultural legacy, and presenting its diverse offerings to both domestic and international travelers.

10. Kentimiz İzmir Association

Founded in 2012, the "Kentimiz İzmir Association" is a non-profit entity dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of İzmir, Turkey. Its primary objectives encompass the restoration of neglected historical structures, innovative utilization of these buildings, comprehensive research initiatives to uncover cultural heritage, and the implementation of projects and events aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and raising awareness. To date, the association has successfully executed over 100 projects and events, drawing the participation of over 50,000 individuals. The association's digital platforms have garnered significant attention, reaching an audience of more than 10 million through its published films.

11. Historical Kemeralti Construction Investment Trade Inc.

Historical Kemeralti Construction Investment Trade Inc. (TARKEM) is spearheading a pioneering venture in İzmir, aiming to establish a novel business model that preserves historical heritage while introducing innovative approaches. Notably, TARKEM serves as a prominent illustration of the public-private partnership paradigm in Turkey, with a 38% contribution from joint construction and 62% from the private sector. The initiative is led by Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, holding a 30% stake among public partners. The central mission of TARKEM revolves around revitalizing the Kemeraltı area and the historical city center through a visionary and participatory management approach.

Kemeraltı boasts over 2,000 registered monumental architectural instances, historic streets, squares, inns, workshops, religious sites, and cultural structures spanning 2,500 years, representing a diverse and evolving mosaic. Collaborating extensively with local, national, and international entities, TARKEM is committed to reinvigorating the Historic City Centre in conjunction with public, private, and civil partners. Notably, implementation is underway following advanced planning for the restoration of the historical precinct.

TARKEM is dedicated to addressing the varied challenges and requirements of Kemeralti, Basmane, and Kadifekale, ensuring prompt, proactive, and effective decision-making to enhance livability, safety, and foremost, positioning the area as İzmir's premier tourism hub.

12. İzmir Development Agency

The İzmir Development Agency is committed to promoting sustainable progress within İzmir by leveraging local potential through participatory methodologies. Established as a pioneering pilot agency in 2006, it orchestrates innovative endeavors aimed at achieving the city's enduring growth. Guided by comprehensive planning and alignment with national development objectives, the agency provides support for projects that target crucial priorities outlined in regional plans.

İZKA's objective is to enhance İzmir's standing as an investment center, accentuating its distinctive maritime advantages for both local and international investors. Simultaneously, the agency seeks to position İzmir as a globally recognized destination through comprehensive urban marketing strategies. With an inventive, solution-driven

approach, the İzmir Development Agency envisions a dynamic İzmir that optimizes its resources to foster social, economic, and cultural advancement.

The vision of the agency is to establish international recognition as an organization that sets benchmarks in regional policy practices through the creation of knowledge, development of methodologies, and the implementation of pioneering transformative programs; while its mission is to cultivate knowledge grounded in the concepts of Green and Blue Growth and to pioneer, initiate, and showcase projects that propel İzmir's advancement.

Considering the organization structure, operating under the coordination of the Ministry of Industry and Technology, the İzmir Development Agency's decision-making body is the Executive Board. Led by the Governor of İzmir, the Board includes the mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Chair of the İzmir Chamber of Commerce, CEO of the Aegean Region Chamber of Industry, and three members elected by the Development Council.

CURRICULUM VITAE

She is an accomplished communication professional with over 15 years of experience in advertising and marketing. She graduated from Middle East Technical University with a degree in Business Administration before delving into the dynamic world of advertising in Istanbul.

During her career, she worked with renowned international agencies, like McCann and Wunderman, worked for both local and global clients. Her expertise spans both traditional and digital advertising.

In 2014, she returned to Izmir and co-founded GençYaratıcı İletişim Hizmetleri Agency, a student-led advertising agency simulation project. Alongside her professional endeavors, she teaches Advertising, Brand Communication, Digital Communication and Social Media courses at İzmir University of Economics.

She completed her Ph.D. in Design Studies focusing on City Branding, she aims to combine academic knowledge with industry experience. Also working as a Communication Consultant for the Izmir Foundation, she continues to promote Izmir at national and international levels.