

Analysis of Marketing Decisions in terms of Brand Positioning in all the Touristic Destinations; A Field Research regarding Çeşme District

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

In today's world, there are destinations with products different than others within the tourism market and destinations which spend tons of money for the tourism marketing works. Touristic consumers are heavily messaged by these destinations under competition. Even if the product offered by a destination is better among its kind, if it cannot express this product to the consumer in a correct way, this may cause it to drop behind. It is firstly required that the mutual interest holders must have a common opinion on fundamental matters for tourism marketing in the relevant destination. Upon accomplishing this, the most significant step in marketing, uniformity, is ensured.

It is no wrong to say that the fundamental decisions for marketing the destination are target market selection, marketing mix elements, destination's brand, image, and positioning (Akat, 2000) (Cemalcılar, 1999), (Coltman, 1989), (Hacıoğlu, 1991), (Kotler, 2011), (Morrison, 1989).). Since it is not possible to analyze all these decision areas in one study in detail, this study continues to underline the decisions regarding positioning. According to Trout, positioning is to differentiate the product in order to meet the expectations in the minds of customers. Positioning, however, is a procedure not to the product, but to the images in minds (2006:18). These decisions, particularly the positioning taken in the first stage, have importance as they will be the determiner of touristic future of the destination. The positioning is an important subject which has started to take place in the marketing world recently. The increase of products and enterprises in the global market brought the positioning forefront for all the industries. This situation is valid for tourism as well. Then fact that similar destinations amongst touristic destinations are plenty intensified the competition and made positioning significant. The fundamental actors of making difference or the positioning practices are offering products which are specific to the area located in the destination and regional originality, target market and price. Tek (1990), Kozak (2011), Kocabaş and Elden, (1997), Trout and Ries (1981), Kotler (2011), Morrison (1989), (Bulut, 2006)

The destinations position in a different place in the market and try to get ahead. As Tek (1990:751) and Kozak (2011:44) state, the target market must be determined firstly in the destination marketing studies. The determined target market makes up the focal point of all the marketing decisions. As stated in the positioning section of the research, the main purpose of the positioning is to take position differently from the rivals in the perception of the target market. Therefore, the studies must be initiated in order to take position in the minds of the customers in a place different from the rivals after the target market is determined.

Making difference in terms of pricing is used in positioning. (Kotler, 2011:80-81), (Kocabaş and Elden, 1997, 71). For low priced positioning, a consumer mass consistent and sensitive to the price in the market is needed. In high priced positioning, on the other hand, businesses set a higher price than their rivals in order to create a special position regarding their products. High priced positioning is generally used with a brand which has a good reputation with higher quality and a superior image (Uygur, 2007, 223).

The main purpose of the destinations in the tourism sector is to be preferred by the touristic consumer. Therefore, the touristic destinations try to exhibit their differences from the rivals (Booksbank, 1994), (Seaton, 1996), (Hankinson, 2001). The main reason for destination branding is creating a image desired and impressing the tourists and differentiate the destination from the destinations of the rivals (Park, 2006) (Park and Petrick, 2006); (Prebensen, 2007). It is possible to state that the fundamental differences which differentiate a destination from another are the characteristics of a region-regional originality- and local product presentation. The usage of agricultural products growing in the region in the tourism marketing is a commonly performed practice. Offering authentic touristic products to the touristic consumers whose expectations change by combining local products with tourism is seen to be common in the whole world.

After starting to implement these decisions it is very hard and costly to change them, therefore these decisions must be taken properly in the first stage. Researchers state that the differences in the demographical variants such as executive's age, education, functional specialty and seniority are associated with decision making (Finkelstein and Hambrisk, 1996:128), (Priem,1990:470). The impacts of these demographical variants on these decisions are discussed in many researches.

Method

The purpose of this study is to evaluate of the fundamental marketing decisions of Çeşme District in terms of positioning and to determine the impact of personal features on these decisions. Accordingly, the main subject of the research is how the differences in the personal features of those who work and/or are mutual interest holders on a administrative level in public or private sector impact on the positioning based marketing decisions of Çeşme. Personal features are taken as age, sex, place of residing, educational status, tourism education, duration of residence in the district, term of management activities, and working area. The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

H₁:There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and place of residing.

H₂: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and tourism education.

H₃: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and educational status.

H₄: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and age groups.

H₅: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and duration of residence in Çeşme.

H₆: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and term of management activities in Çeşme.

H₇: There is a significant relation between Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and working area.

The population of the research is the employees and/or mutual interest holders working at the management level of the public or private sector in Çeşme. This population was designated after receiving Protocol List from the Çeşme District Governorate, hospitality and travelling agencies list from the Çeşme Tourism Information Directorate, Catering facilities list from the Chamber of Merchants and Craftsmen, and Academicians list from Ege University, School of Tourism and Hotel Management. Judgmental sampling, a non-random sampling method, was employed in the research.

The population of the research was determined as 414, and 242 of them were reached at the end of the study. Sekaran assigns the sampling as 201 in the case of a population of 420 people (Sekaran, 1992:253). Although the whole population could not be reached, the rate of contacted people is very good with 58%. The research was applied to 242 people; however 235 of them were evaluated.

The data obtained from the questionnaire forms are evaluated via a software. The answers given are evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha test in order to test the reliability of the research. Factor analysis was employed for determining the validity level of the scales. Frequency and percentage values were calculated to reveal the demographical features of the participants. Furthermore, T-Test for the independent samples, One-Way Analysis of Variance for the Independent Samples were conducted in order to test the hypotheses. Based on the explained total variance of Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale (FFMÇS) with 54.94%, it is seen that the contribution to total variance is enough. Moreover, the answers given in FFMÇS were evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha test, and the reliability coefficient was found as 0.71.

Findings

13 questions are directed to the participants in the Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and they are asked to evaluate these questions with five point Likert scale. Upon evaluation of the averages, it is definite that the highest participation is at "A quality standard must be established for the tourism facilities" and "At least 80% of the employees in tourism facilities of Çeşme must have an educational background for tourism" with over 4.00. It is no wrong to say that both options are connected to high-quality services and creating an image in this regard. The least participation was at "The accommodation prices must be higher than other regions (Marmaris, Bodrum, Side, etc.)" option with 2.60. Participants show a low consensus on making the prices in Çeşme higher than other similar destinations in Turkey. Other

options vary between 3.00 and 4.00 and show a positive participation. As stated under findings, personal features are crucial in taking decisions on Çeşme. (H1, H3, H7) Personal features among them place of residence, educational status, working area influence the answers given to FFMÇS.

Results

After the research carried out in the framework of the employees and/or mutual interest holders working at the management level of the public or private sector in Çeşme, it was revealed in the answers to Fundamental Factors for Marketing Çeşme Scale and therefore in the decisions taken about Çeşme that place of residence, educational status, and working area are influential personal features.. The factors of price, regional originality, target group and local products in the scale are the differentiating features used in the positioning as discussed in the literature section. The participants residing in Alaçatı have a more positive approach towards the developed scale in comparison to those in Çeşme. Postgraduates have a more positive approach to the FFMÇS compared to undergraduates/associate degrees. Accommodation sector employees give more positive answers than those in the public sector. It is revealed, according to the research results, that there are differences in terms of personal features in the responses to the decisions which will determine the position of Çeşme District. These results demonstrate that studies should be carried out in order to build consensus in the decisions which will determine the position of Çeşme.