

# The contribution of gastronomy tourism to the branding strategy of a city

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**ABSTRACT:** In recent years, local cultural heritage has become an important source of identity formation for cities. This, in turn, increased the interest in cultural heritage and enabled local governments to include cultural heritage in their city branding strategies. Since gastronomy is one of the most distinctive cultural features of cities, gastronomy has been incorporated into city promotions by local stakeholders while creating destinations. The city promoting activities that include gastronomy tourism have increased in cities. In this study, Gaziantep, one of the cities that was selected for the ‘Brand City Project’ by official authorities and has been running branding strategies since the beginning of 2000s were analysed to discuss the relationship between gastronomy tourism and city branding strategies. In this study qualitative and quantitative research methods used to investigate city’s culinary heritage, the implementation of gastronomy tourism and how the city positioned itself as a ‘Brand City: Antep’ in terms of gastronomy and how the it is perceived by the visitors. The research findings illustrate how a city can be repositioned with its cuisine heritage, what role stakeholders can take for implementing these branding strategies and how gastronomy tourism can be embraced not only for creating a tourism destination, but also for branding the city.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many countries have been highlighting certain cities and regions rather than promoting the country to stand out and attract attention (Balibrea, 2011). As applied in product marketing, identities are defined for cities and positioned to be promoted through these identities. These identity studies aim to help cities preserve their cultural heritage, make their heritage more recognizable and generate economic income through various projects.

Since the monuments, sites, historical buildings are not the only cultural heritages, the content of the term changed in last years and UNESCO included intangible cultural heritages such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts to the cultural heritage in 2003 (UNESCO, 2022).

Now traditional Mexican cuisine, the Mediterranean diet, which goes back to socially incentivizing traditions and festivals and the gastronomic meals of the French are all classified as intangible cultural heritage. After the Mediterranean diet of Spain, Greece, Italy and Morocco was included in UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010, numerous cities began to apply UNESCO to have a place in cultural heritage classification with their original dishes and diets.

Cities became more recognizable through their dishes, and they succeeded at setting themselves apart from their rivals (other cities) with their

cuisines. Gastronomy became one of the most distinctive cultural heritage of cities, and consequently gastronomy tourism emerged as a new subtype of cultural tourism. This new environment caused an increase on activities that focus on gastronomy tourism.

The idea that cultural heritage can be promoted through tourism became an issue for Turkish political agenda in the 2000s. In 2008, to invigorate cultural tourism, fifteen cities were selected for branding studies as part of The Brand City project conducted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Ayvaz, 2009). Gaziantep, which was also selected for Brand City Project, has been carrying out activities to promote itself with its cultural heritage. With the selection of the ‘Creative Gastronomy City’ by UNESCO in 2015, the city made a great progress in the field of gastronomy tourism, and became a preferred destination for its meals by foreign and domestic tourists.

## 2 GASTRONOMY TOURISM

The word ‘gastronomy’ was formed by merging two Greek words ‘gaster’ and ‘nomas’ which mean ‘stomach’ and ‘law’ and used for representing art of food and drink (Katsoni & Spyriadis, 2020).

Gastronomy heritage is an intangible heritage that evolves and develops while the living culture around it changes. Its propensity to change and improvement via localization and globalization is the strength of

gastronomy culture. That is the reason of emergence of gastronomy tourism as a cultural tourism, where tourists could learn more by creating culture instead of consuming it. They can learn to cook, taste new flavours, and understand the link between the culture and the culinary tradition of the local society (Richard, 2011).

Long (2004) defines, gastronomy tourism as the exploration of food as the purpose of tourism (Long, 2004). According to Wolf, president and CEO of the World Food Travel Association, gastronomy tourism was 'the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences' (Wolf, 2006). The preparation of meal, cooking techniques, the equipment used during the process, how it is served, stored, transported, choices of meals for specific rituals or events, traditions, etc. are all the unique cultural traits of the societies. Gastronomy, culture, society, and the approach of these studies to tourism became the subject of cultural tourism in recent years. Finally, with recent studies, gastronomy was positioned as part of culture and began to take part in cultural tourism activities (Prentice 1993).

Tourism is seen as a source of income for many countries and instrument for development and evolution of the society. Considering that one third of all tourism expenditures are made from food and beverages, the issue is also worth considering in terms of the development of cities (Mak, Lumbers and Eves, 2012) (Tikkannen, 2007). Having discovered the budget spent in this field, local governances began organizing various activities and campaigns that include culinary activities like gastronomy tours and cooking workshops.

Traditional gastronomy heritage is an advantage for some cities which do not have sun-sea resources, it creates destinations and adds value to tourists' experiences. Beside these benefits, it also helps the regional development and economic power of the cities via cultural tourism activities.

Studies on contribution of travel and tourism show that countries make a significant part of their revenue from tourism before the pandemic. Before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the contribution of United States' travel and tourism industries was the largest amount to GDP out of any countries worldwide in 2020. In the same year, the number of jobs in the travel and tourism industry that incorporates many industries, including transport, accommodation, travel companies, food and drink services, and more, was 272 million in the worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2022).

Tikkanen (2007) states that in past studies food in tourism was seen as an attraction, experience, cultural value, but food could have a role that based on the needs of the tourist, and this could be the motivation of the tourism. She classifies sectors of food tourism in Finland by Maslow's hierarchy of need and says physiological needs, at the bottom of the pyramid, could be related to food itself and esteem needs, fourth level on the pyramid, could be visitor's

experiences when they learnt new tastes in the new cultures (Tikkannen, 2007).

The most important aspect of gastronomy tourism is that it allows destinations to show their difference and authenticity as food and culinary culture varies among different regions. Albayrak and Gunes (2010) state that the diversity of local cuisines depends on the cultural richness of countries, and point out Turkey, located in an agriculturally rich area, has agricultural and local products in abundance and high quality (Albayrak and Gunes, 2010). Moreover, Turkey, having an old and deep-rooted history, has housed several civilizations, states, and societies throughout history thanks to its geopolitical position and developed sophisticated cuisines and authentic values in each of its regions (Orhan, 2010).

### 3 GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN TURKEY: GAZIANTEP CASE

#### 3.1 *Background of the study*

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a French politician who lived between 1755 and 1826, pointed out the relation between food and society by saying 'tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are', in his famous work, 'The Physiology of Taste', which was published in 1825. The book was emphasizing on culinary culture as data in acquiring information about a society (Brillat-Savarin, 2004).

Referring to another statement on food and society, 'if there is no society without language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food', which is reflected by French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss's (1966), it can be assumed that food is one of the most important representatives of the unique identity of a society (Levi-Strauss, 1966; pp 937).

Although globalization makes destinations more and more similar, and it is even possible to find a local dish elsewhere in the world, the dominant factors that determine gastronomic identity, climate, geography and culture make it difficult to imitate gastronomic identities (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2010). Association of regions with certain types of food and beverages benefit the culinary identity (Haven-tang and Jones, 2006).

Local foods and culinary activities that are named after the regions they are emerged in, like the Turkish cuisine, the French Cuisine, and the Italian Cuisine, also gain brand reputation to their region. When the Turkish cuisines are examined, it reveals that its dishes are a combination of the culinary culture Turks brought from the Central Asia and the one they gained after they settled in Anatolia. As the Ottoman Empire expanded, gastronomic richness of various lands was integrated into the Turkish cuisine. Fermented and dairy products brought from the

nomadic lifestyle, grains of Mesopotamia, vegetables and fruits of the Mediterranean region, and herbs of South Asia were blended into the rich Turkish culinary culture (Baysal, 1993).

One of the studies that conducted by Ankara Chamber of Commerce and Ankara Patent Office and published as 'The Taste Map of Turkey', covers the cuisines of all cities of Turkey. In the publication, the richest cuisine of Turkey is stated as the city of Gaziantep with 291 types of food, beverages, and desserts (Durlu-Ozkaya and Can, 2012). The city is also documented with its richness in the field of food by the geographical indication registration. The registrations, which started with the registration of pistachio in the city in 2000, now reached the registrations of 77 foods, including local flavours such as baklava and kebab. One of the most important milestones in the field of gastronomy in Gaziantep was that the selection of the city as 'Creative City of Gastronomy' by UNESCO in 2015.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which launched in 2004, promotes international collaboration between cities that share the goal of using creativity to promote sustainable urban development. There are seven creative areas covered in the network: handicrafts and folk arts, design, cinema, gastronomy, literature, media, and music (UCCN, n.d.). In its capacity as a Creative City of Gastronomy, Gaziantep envisions;

- fostering intercultural dialogue through the Kitchens in Districts initiative, which provides fully equipped kitchens for low-income residents to cook and share their skills with others,
- improving social inclusion through Atelier Without Obstacles project, in which vulnerable groups and disabled people receive training in creating and managing creative businesses;
- promoting multi-level cooperation with other Creative Cities of Gastronomy by conducting research and collecting data on ancient Silk Road food culture;
- organizing an International Festival of Gastronomy to exchange expertise and experience with other Creative Cities of Gastronomy (UNESCO, 2015).

The municipality cooperates with various stakeholders to implement these visions and to brand the city with its gastronomy.

### 3.2 *Research methodology of the study*

The city, Gaziantep, which was occupied by various civilizations throughout history, has always been a centre of culture and commerce, and consequently, had a rich culture (Marka Sehir Gaziantep, 2010).

While craftsmanship was a major means of income in Gaziantep, in recent years its gastronomy tourism became one of the most important driving forces of the local economy.

Since the city was centre of craftsmanship and industry, at the beginning of 2000s the local authorities were mostly focusing on the motto of 'industrialization

model that sets an example to Anatolian industrialization'. However, the surveys and the new approaches to the cities in the scope of cultural heritage changed the branding strategies of the authorities.

In this study, Gaziantep has been chosen to gain an understanding on the changes and development of the city with its historical background that shapes its cultural heritage, its versatile features and different branding approaches. Within this aim, the city has been visited in different times (2007, 2009, 2013), to observe how the branding strategies brought differences in the city's view and promotion. Apart from the documents collected during these visits and the photographs taken, interviews were held (2010) with the mayor of the city at that time. The publications were examined to delve into the city's food culture and gastronomic tourism and to collect data from archives and documents.

In addition to the qualitative research, an online survey was conducted; to understand how the city was perceived, to compare the results of previous surveys conducted by official institutions and other researchers, and to prove the theory of 'Gaziantep; city of gastronomy tourism'.

The online survey was participated by 283 people and each participants answered 5 multiple choice questions about their experience on visiting Gaziantep and how they perceived the city. According to the results of the survey, the city was visited by 149 participants and the main purpose of the visit was tasting the food and touring the city. The rest of the participants who have not been to the city answered the question by selecting among multiple choices and the most selected choice was 'tasting the food'.

Briefly, in this study, quantitative research methods were used to prove the validity of the data collected by qualitative methods and to verify the findings of previous researchers. Survey results and data collected from visits, interviews, visual data and literature review are part of the research that forms the basis of this case study.

### 3.3 *The city branding strategies of Gaziantep*

The branding activities in Gaziantep started long before it was selected as 'Creative Gastronomy City' by UNESCO in 2015. The city was one of the fifteen cities selected in 2008 as part of The Brand City project, which was conducted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to invigorate cultural tourism.

Occupied by various civilizations throughout history, Gaziantep has always been a centre of culture and commerce, and, consequently, had a rich culture (Marka Sehir Gaziantep, 2010). In the Ottoman era, the city was highly developed in manufacturing, commerce and handicrafts and well known with its mosques, madrasas, inns and bathhouses (Gaziantep Chamber of Industry, 2010). As an important cultural and industrial centre in the Ottoman era, Gaziantep was developed in leatherworking, bow making, dye working, oil making, weaving, and soap making, the

most famous products being carpets, rugs, motley and upholstery fabrics. Pistachio trees, which comprise 25 percent of Turkey's tree population, constitute one of the most important agricultural products of the city. Olive production recently increased in the city and olive oriented businesses multiplied in parallel. Diversity of grape types in the city helped the development of viticulture. Also, wheat, cotton (the most grown field crop), red lentil, red pepper, cumin, caper, and chickpea are the other crops that grow in the city. Craftsmanship was a major means of income in Gaziantep and several branches of craftsmanship were maintained. There are chalcographers, mother-of-pearl in layers, kutnu clothiers, rug makers, woollen clothiers, kerchief makers, woodcarvers, shrill pipe makers, silver manufacturers, embroiderers, tinsmiths, and saddle makers still operating in Antep (Gaziantep Valiligi, 2010; GAP, 2007).

Owing to its very well-known cuisines and its gastronomy which is one of the most important driving forces of the local economy, Gaziantep has been member of UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy since 2015. However, the city took its place on the agenda of Gaziantep Chamber of Industry (GSO) in 2000 with 'Brand City: Antep' project.

The Municipality, the Chamber of Commerce, the Governorate, and district municipalities were the stakeholders of the project. Factors contributing to Gaziantep as a brand city were:

- 'The power of national struggle' stemming from the War of Independence,
- Unique 'historical heritage', including Yesemek, Tilmen, Rumkale and Zeugma,
- Internationally renowned and rich culinary culture, and
- An 'industrialization model' that sets an example to Anatolian industrialization.

The Gaziantep Chamber of Industry started an online survey on its webpage in 2004 and according to the results; industry, pistachio and baklava were the top 3 brand assets of the city (Table 1) (Marka Sehir Gaziantep, 2010).

Brand city project of the city has been planned on the industrial aspects of Gaziantep, but it was observed that the city is also renowned for cultural heritage, especially for its cuisine. According to the UNESCO creative city report (2015) 60% of the active population of the city was employed by the food sector, and 49% of the enterprises are dedicated to food, including spices, cereals, and dried fruits (UNESCO,2015).

The authorities discovered that development was not possible solely through industrialization and they began working towards cultivating cultural values between the years 2005 and 2007.

The idea that cultural heritage could be promoted through tourism became an issue for political agenda of Turkey in 2008. Within the scope of the Brand

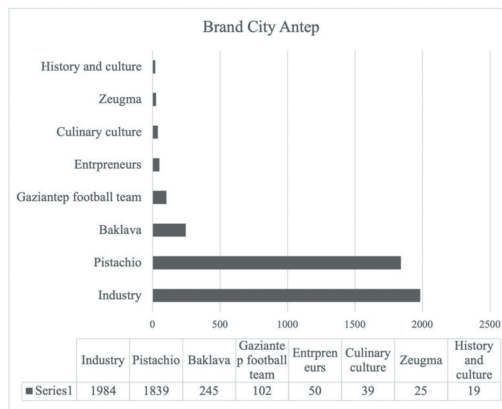


Table 1. Results of the online survey conducted at the 'brand city' webpage since 2004 arranged by the The Gaziantep Chamber of Industry (Marka Sehir Gaziantep, 2010).

City project carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 15 cities, including Gaziantep, were selected for branding activities to invigorate cultural tourism (Ayvaz, 2009).

The goals of 'City Branding Strategy for the year 2023' include declaration of one city as 'Cultural Tourism City' each year, restoration of historical, cultural and architecturally significant structures and sites, development of local events in compliance with international standards, construction of facilities and venues for cultural and artistic performances, raising public awareness of the importance and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and implementation of national and international publicity and marketing campaigns to emphasize on the rich cultural heritages of the cities (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011). To that end;

- Municipality of Anakent and the Foundation for the Protection and Promotion of the Environment and Cultural Heritage (CEKUL) initiated 'Sanitization of the Copper Bazaar Project',
- Historical inns Sire and Yemis were transformed into boutique hotels,
- Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce signed a protocol with the Ministry of Culture for the 'Cultural Heritage Development Project',
- A registration document was obtained from the Turkish Patent Institute for the Geographical Indication of 'Antep Pistachio',
- The Chamber of Commerce founded 'the Society for the Promotion of Antep Pistachio',
- It was decided to obtain another Geographical Indication document for 'baklava', which is a major means of income (Mortan and Arolat, 2009).

Indeed, geographical indications in gastronomy are particularly important for the protection of local products and tastes. They are also used in local economic development, invigoration of gastronomy

tourism, and preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage (Durlu-Ozkaya, Sunnetcioglu and Can, 2013).

Within the scope of this study, during the interview with Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Mayor in 2010, the Mayor stated that Gaziantep, which was branded as an industrial city in 2003, has started to become a brand with different values. In the previous years, when branding activities were carried out in Gaziantep, cultural values were not embraced in Gaziantep, so branding was mostly identified with the industry, in 2010, branding was designed as a modern industrial city that embraces its past and culture and looks to the future with confidence (Guzelbey, 2010).

In this context, the Metropolitan Municipality has conducted important museum studies, restored old Gaziantep houses, inns, neighbourhoods and several historical structures and used them in the publicity of the cultural heritage. Based on the motto ‘the city of museums’, Gaziantep attracts culinary tourists of the city, especially with ‘Emine Gogus Gaziantep Culinary Museum’. Emine Gogus Gaziantep Culinary Museum exhibits the kitchenware used in Gaziantep’s traditional cuisine and the dishes.



Figure 1. Emine Gogus Gaziantep Culinary Museum (Hocaoglu, 2007).

The museum building was built in 1905 and belonged to Kethuzade Gogus Ibrahim Efendi. The mansion was called ‘Kethuzade Gogus Ibrahim Efendi Konagi’ at the time. It was donated to Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality in 2005 by Ali Ihsan Gogus, Turkey’s first Minister of Tourism who served as a minister and a member of the parliament for thirteen years. The museum was restored in 2007 and opened to public visits in 2008 by the Municipality.

### 3.4 The gastronomy tourism in Gaziantep

Gastronomy tourism allows the city to distinguish itself from its competitors with its cuisine, which is one of its unique features, and constitutes one of the main reasons for visitors to visit the city. In parallel with this idea, the aim of the online ‘city branding’ survey, that conducted for this study and completed in 2022, was to examine whether the city Gaziantep could be mentioned as a gastronomy tourism city and whether the studies conducted in this context were consistent.

According to the results of the survey, it was determined that Gaziantep is famous for its cuisine. The main purpose of the visit of the participants was tasting the food and touring the city. The rest of the participants who have not been to the city was also planning to visit the city to taste the foods (Table 2).

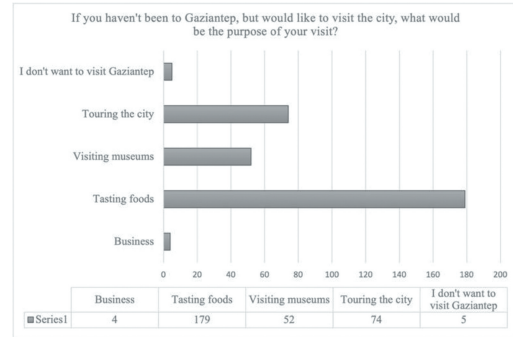


Table 2. Results of the online survey question ‘If you have not been to Gaziantep, but would like to visit the city, what would be the purpose of your visit?’ (Hocaoglu, 2022).

The survey results also shows that when the values of cities asked, the participants again selected ‘Baklava’ which is related with a very well-known Turkish desert made in Gaziantep (Table 3).

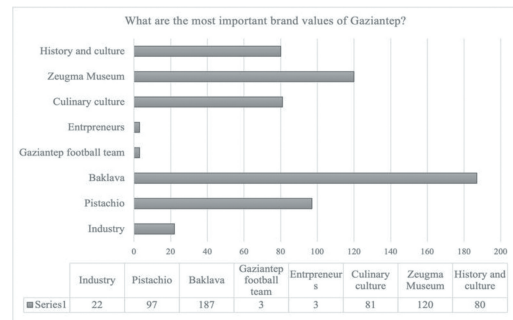


Table 3. Results of the online survey question ‘What are the most important brand values of Gaziantep?’ (Hocaoglu, 2022).

As it is seen on the survey results, Gaziantep cuisine has a major place in city’s culinary culture. Therefore, Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce initiated the ‘Gastronomy World’s Discovery of Gaziantep Cuisine’ project as part of the Silk Road Development Agency Financial Support of Tourism Program to promote Gaziantep cuisine and to make the city a tourism destination with its rich culinary culture.

Project activities included:

- the book ‘A Taste of Sun and Fire: Gaziantep Cookery’ prepared by Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce,
- a 12-minute-long publicity video of the Gaziantep cuisine was filmed in English-Turkish with recipes from the book,

- a webpage was prepared to promote the Gaziantep cuisine in all aspects, including the book and the video, to reach large masses (Gaziantep Mutfagi, 2015).
- it was planned to organize culinary tours to Gaziantep and extend the staying periods of tourists in the long term. (Gaziantep Mutfagi, 2015).

Objectives of the ‘Gastronomy World’s Discovery of Gaziantep Cuisine’ project were;

- development of gastronomy tourism as an alternative model of tourism in Gaziantep and diversification of regional tourism,
- branding Gaziantep through the city’s brand value of gastronomy tourism,
- increasing the number of culinary tourists visiting Gaziantep along with the number of overnight stays in the city, and, as a result, the added value contributed by the tourism sector in the city and the region, and
- contribution to transformation of the region into a touristic centre of attraction (Gaziantep Mutfagi, 2015).

Within the project, various original dishes of Gaziantep were promoted at ‘Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery’ in London and the cookbook of local recipes was introduced at another international event, Torino - Salone Internazionale del Gusto - Terra Madre in 2012 (Hurriyet Daily News, 2012).

Moreover, businesses in Gaziantep organize events to promote the culinary heritage. Gaziantep, the first city to represent Turkey in the Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of gastronomy, organized the GastroAntep – International Gaziantep Gastronomy Festival, where local flavours from the sun, soil and history were introduced to the world for the first time in 2018. While 250 thousand people visited the festival in 2018 in the first year, this number quadrupled in 2019 and 1 million people visited the festival in its second year (Hurriyet, 2019). Visitors from various cities learnt how to prepare original dishes from Gaziantep, what materials to use and their quantities, specific kebabs to be prepared in each season, what dishes made from each season’s vegetables, and the important of and how to use grains in Gaziantep cuisine and practice what they learn during three-day-long events.

Beside the program to promote Gaziantep cuisine, another project in line with the national and regional economic development strategies of the city, was conducted to contribute local entrepreneurship. The project, named as ‘Gaziantep Food & Gastronomy Entrepreneurship Hub’, was aimed to create an entrepreneurship hub and community centre in which entrepreneurs would access to services they needed on gastronomy and food entrepreneurship. Within the scope of the project, the food and gastronomy entrepreneurship hub would have a mentor pool that comprises food-business mentors. Entrepreneurs would receive mentorship, people would attend 7 specific

informative activities on food and gastronomy and 2 demo-days would be organized (Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, nd).

The project of boosting the quality of gastronomy tourism in the city, which was launched by Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce in 2019 with the participation of local government and non-governmental organizations such as Silk Road Development Agency, Tourism Development and Education Foundation, Gastronomy Society of Turkey, and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, focused on the service quality of businesses operating in the field of gastronomy tourism and to develop innovation capacity in gastronomy. Activities to be carried out within the scope of the project were:

- establishment of Gastronomy Centre (Kitchen)
- organizing panels, conferences, and workshops to raise awareness of employers about innovations in the field of gastronomy,
- providing consultancy services to companies operating in the field of gastronomy,
- ensuring sector employees to get professional competence certificate (Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, nd).

Although the city was initially positioned as a brand to become an industrial city and attract investments, the strategies changed direction in following years to incorporate the cultural tourism. Projects conducted in recent years were aimed for the same objective.

The city has a very special position not only with its industry but also with its culture and cuisine, which are one of the most important parts of its identity. Surveys show that Antep pistachio and baklava are prominent items in association with the city’s culinary culture; even, Gaziantep Pistachio Culture and Art Festival which is combination of gastronomy, music, literature, and folk art, is one of the most attractive events that happens in the city. Beside events, pistachio and baklava were emphasized upon in the city’s logo (Figure 2), which, naturally, determines the image of the city, perceived as the identity and shaping people’s perception.

However, the logo of the city changed in 2016, with the letter ‘G’ which is based on a grid structure consisting of hexagons and triangles, just like all the other letters in the Gaziantep font (Figure 3). The centre of the letter used as a placeholder to add icons for co-branding. The new logo designed by USA



Figure 2. The previous logo of Gaziantep (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, nd).



based design consultancy which was experienced in destination marketing campaigns and city branding projects.



Figure 3. New logo and font of Gaziantep (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, 2020).

Within the scope of the project, the agency aimed to create a more liveable, more creative and more visited city, and to achieve this the agency first created the touristic values map of the city and prioritized four categories: culture and history, gastronomy, family and children, and fair and congress tourism (Kocasu, 2016). During the city branding process, the experts from the agency interviewed with the key policy makers and notables of the city. The photographs were taken and outdoor, magazine and newspaper advertisements were designed using these sources. The agency gained an understanding on how masterly people build the spirit of the city and then tagged the city as ‘Turkey’s masterly people’. An extensive advertising campaign was prepared, a mini-documentary series was created. A commercial film was prepared that captures the concept of ‘productivity’, explains the roots of mastery and reflects the skills of the local people (I Mean It, n.d.).

The new logo has started to be used in all local businesses and public organizations in the city, and a common identity perception has been created. The promotional films were prepared in details such as the images and music used in the films, and the message that the city intended to give to the local people and visitors was conveyed by creating a language based on the city-culture-brand combination.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

In recent years, intangible cultural heritage has been considered and deeply studied by researchers and authorities in context of gastronomy tourism. Since the expansion of the content of cultural heritage and the inclusion of intangible values to preservation by UNESCO, the cultural heritage took its place on the local governments’ agendas. Local authorities and the non-governmental organisations created attractive touristic destinations to generate revenue from tourism and therefore they conducted projects that would emphasize indigenous qualities and values of their cities, establish and promote their identity.

Culinary culture, as an intangible cultural heritage, plays a key role in tourists’ destination preferences. Due to its availability all year round, difficulty of imitating original culinary identity, having a big share in tourist expenditures, the culinary heritage is a prominent tourism value for cities. When the contribution of tourists’ travel and tourism expenditures to the GDP of countries is examined, it will be clearly seen that gastronomic tourism is an indispensable income for many countries such as the USA.

Gaziantep, the city where various civilizations lived throughout history, has always been a cultural and commercial center and therefore has a rich culture. The city has been the subject of this study due to its tangible values such as its industrial and historical buildings, and its intangible values such as the culinary heritage, which is more dominant in its new identity. However, the city branding projects built on the industrial identity of the city in the past, the visitors of the city and new policies in recent years have supported the gastronomic identity of the city and triggered tourism activities. With workshops, culinary museum, cookbooks, specially designed restaurants, restored old inns, Gaziantep’s local cuisines were introduced, and the city’s culture and identity were reinforced with its culinary heritage. Thanks to the culinary heritage and the associated development of gastronomic tourism, this identity has become consolidated and popular.

The activities carried out in the city and the collaboration of all stakeholder, boosted the cultural assets of the city beside its industry. In fact, the city’s culinary heritage has become more visible than the city’s industrial activities. Gaziantep is an example for cities which have deep-rooted culinary cultures and are working on strategies for branding and differentiating themselves from other cities. This case study also shows how a city can become a brand by collaborating with different stakeholders and incorporating gastronomy tourism into its strategies.

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