EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With nearly 300,000 active members, Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICOC) is one of the largest chambers of commerce in the world and an active member of the international business community since 1882. Each year, ICOC hosts around 100 foreign trade delegations, organizes around 15 fairs and exhibitions abroad in order to contribute to the introduction of Turkish companies and products to foreign markets. Additionally, ICOC leads intensive research projects in every field related to commercial life and economy and holds more than 100 seminars and events. ICOC actively seeks to preserve the city's historical heritage and cultural identity, while promoting its reputation as Turkey's premier center for commerce, fashion, tourism, finance, etc.

ICOC endeavours to meet the needs and expectations of its member companies operating in different business sectors. To ensure this, it allocates its resources to develop, implement and disseminate sectoral projects aimed at enhancing the productivity and export growth of enterprises.

As one of the locomotive sectors of Turkish industry, textiles is one of the priority sectors of ICOC. Turkey stands as the 6th exporter in ready-to-wear sector with 13,5 billion USD world-wide. Although Turkey is already a center of attraction for global clothing brands, its reputation is owed and limited to high-quality raw material such as fabric, rather than the end-product such as a fashionable jacket. The new policy should be therefore to add value and intellect to the process and thus designing clothes, rather than manufacturing the imported designs. To ensure this, the recent move forward of the young designers should be supported both intellectually and financially so that they can convert their passion and talent to business.

In line with this, ICOC has initiated "Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project" to improve the sustainability and competitiveness of the young entrepreneurs in fashion industry by training them in designing, styling, branding, marketing even logistics.

Overall Aim Of The Project:

Today, the global cities differentiate not only through their history, architecture or culture, but also through existence of a creative economy. Therefore, creating and introducing original designs has become essential to survive in the increasingly competitive global market. London, Milan, New York and Paris are widely regarded reputable fashion capitals in the world. But this situation is changing since other cities like Shanghai, Berlin, Amsterdam, Istanbul are emerging with their unusual and unique fashion sense, where inspiration derives from their cultural heritage and cosmopolite lifestyle. This project aims at making Istanbul one of the leading fashion centers in the global market, through young fashion designers becoming world-wide-known entrepreneurs and creating contemporary works inspired from historical and cultural heritage of Istanbul.

Specific Aim Of The Project:

Within this framework, the specific aim of the project is to support young fashion designers between the ages of 24 to 30 in creating strong brands from their initial ideas. The project activities are designed as to equip them with necessary tools to produce their collections, develop business, make market research, and eventually open-up to international markets with their authentic Turkish brand.

HOW DID THE STORY START?

Young population is one of the major assets of Turkish economy. 53,8 % of young population (age between 20-24) are actively involved in the economy. Being aware of the potential of youth in Istanbul, ICOC puts a major importance of education and training of young people, especially supporting their entrepreneurial spirit.

Istanbul Fashion Atelier was borne as the successor of a previous project “Start Exporting Program” which is successfully run by ICOC for the last 7 years. The idea of supporting small enterprises for becoming exporters was taken as it is and adapted to young designers who have the potential to be new entrepreneurs.

Since fashion was a new brand area for experts of ICOC, the Fashion and Design Department of Istanbul Commerce University (ITICU) was efficiently involved in the partnership and gave support in developing the project. Luckily, the funding opportunity of Istanbul Development Agency with its “Financial Support Program for Improving Creative Industries” was available and upon application, the project was found eligible for a financial support of around 260.000 USD.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project was initiated in July 2011 by Istanbul Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Fashion and Design Department of Istanbul Commerce University and was successfully completed in one year period by following these steps:

-**Establishment of Implementation Team**

The team of staff from ICOC, technical consultants from ITICU, professional fashion design consultants and a member of ICOC ready-to-wear committee representing the sector was established to brainstorm and make critical decisions. This team reviewed all the activities throughout the project, made the selection of the participants, monitored the preparation of the collections by them, and supported the promotion of these collections.

- Selection of Young Fashion Designers

Call for applications was done via ICOC web site, sending invitation letters and e-mailing to the relevant institutions/persons such as fashion magazines, designers, universities, private fashion schools and associations and via the web site of various counterparts. Besides, a twitter account and a facebook profile were created (www.facebook.com/Istanbulmodaatolyesi) to reach more young people. We ultimately received around 100 applications and eliminated the candidates according to their education, field-experience and their motivation, their portfolio of 20 printed out sketches with technical specifications and aesthetic drawings, and interviews. Eventually, 11 of the applicants were found eligible for participating in the Atelier.

-One-to-One Consultancy to Selected Fashion Designers

The technical consultants of the Atelier prepared a two-phases program as common and customized. Common consultancy program covered lectures on aesthetic design, colour and design foundations, fashion textiles, fabric, pattern cutting, fashion management, fashion marketing, fashion trends, environmental factors in fashion industry etc.

Customized consultancy courses were tailor-made according to the individual needs of each designer taking into account own styles of each in shaping the content of the courses. They made themselves available for instant questions of the designers, shared their experience in the sector and opened their network to them for 5 months of the consultancy period and later. Once the necessity was seen, the designers were also supported by additional trainings on international trade, banking legislation, customs formalities that are crucial to their success in international markets.

-Manufacturing of Collections

The designers completed drawings of their collection of 10 looks and fitting shoes, bags and accessories, and specified the appropriate material to be used for each piece. The support of the consultants at this stage was critical for converting the designs into

sewable and wearable clothes. Special treatment of the fabrics and sewing of 175 different pieces was contracted to sewing plants with the support of members of ICOC in relevant sector.

-Design and Printing of Catalogues
Within the context of the project we produced a common catalogue displaying 3 outfits of each designer and individual catalogues displaying 10 outfits of each designer in English and Turkish. After some fruitful discussion among the group on the theme of the catalogues, the colour and shape of the flower *Judas Tree* was selected to reflect the unique beauty of Istanbul and this concept was consistently used in further visual outputs of the of the Istanbul Fashion Atelier such as background of the show-stage and fair-booth.

For the individual catalogues, the production company arranged photo-shootings with professional models for each designer according to their genre. The designers were ready at the studio during photo-shootings and experienced the backstage, setting up the background, selection of models, make-up and styling, retouching of photos. In addition to the layout of individual catalogues, a short movie was prepared showing the backstage of photo-shootings.

The catalogues were distributed to the visitors at the Pure London Fashion Fair and to the leading ready-to-wear companies in Istanbul and have been a very effective tool for the designers to do the marketing and public relations of their brand on their own. During this process, the designers gained experience on creating professional and effective catalogues for the promotion of their collections. In line with their personal catalogues, they also designed customized business cards and labels as part of their institutionalization process.

-**Participation in International Fashion Exhibition**
Obviously, fashion shows are the most important venues to meet with potential buyers and to introduce new designs. After making a research on international trade fairs, Pure London was selected which is Europe’s favourite fashion destination with over 1000 brands presenting their collections, gathering many designers and buyers from around the world.

The Istanbul Fashion Atelier booth was designed by the aesthetic consultant, reflecting Istanbul's inspiring atmosphere and displaying one look of each designer on it. The booth was visited by around 100 buyers every day. The outfits of the designers were displayed at the catwalk shows twice a day with an impressive choreography. Consequently, the Istanbul Fashion Atelier captured attention of buyers especially the buyers from Japan, Ireland, Kuwait and England from which some of the designers got orders. The designers were publicized in media via TV shootings and private interviews at the fair.

This was a unique experience for young designers on how to arrange participation in an international fair from travel to logistics, from labelling to pricing. This activity also revealed further needs and deficits especially in terms of commercial transactions. As soon as the team was back from London, they started to work on arranging training on the basic principles of international trade such as pricing of a product, negotiating with buyers, customs procedures, payment formalities, etc.

-Organization of a Fashion Event In Istanbul
Within the context of the project, a fashion event was held in one of the most attractive shopping malls of Istanbul where the collections of the young designers were introduced to the fashion community including fashion associations, magazines and media. A PR company was hired to organize the event more professionally but both the consultants

and the designers were involved in every detail from model selection to invitations. The event drew attention from local buyers as well as fashion magazines where some news and interviews about the Atelier were published. The project also used advantage of partnering with other stakeholders such as Boyner, one of the main store-chains in Turkey displaying the collections at the windows of its stores.

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Thanks to Istanbul Fashion Atelier, young fashion designers have been equipped with necessary tools and skills to convert the patterns in their imaginations into clothes worn in other parts of the world with their own brands. Therefore this one year-project has not only changed lives of 11 young people, but its impact has gone beyond. It has proven that once encouraged, any idea can become a business. Support for young entrepreneurship will thus positively contribute to employment, export volume, value addition, etc.

The tangible outputs of the project are:

(1) 11 young designers trained in the Atelier have become entrepreneurs with knowledge of designing, producing, pricing, labelling, marketing and transporting
(2) 11 authentic collections of 10 outfits each with fitting shoes, bags and accessories have design and produced
(3) 1.000 pieces of common catalogues introducing the Atelier in Turkish and English have been printed
(4) 1.000 pieces of individual catalogues per each designer have been printed and distributed to local and international buyers
(5) Customized business cards and labels have been produced in line with their brands
(6) Young designers have had the experience of exhibiting in an international fashion fair Pure London, where they collected their first orders from international buyers
(7) Most of them made their first export trade after they receive their first orders.
(8) Some of them established their own brandname
(9) Young designers have been introduced to local fashion business with the fashion event in Istanbul
(10) Media visibility have been provided throughout the project

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED DURING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

These results did not come without problems. The main challenge was the time restriction. The whole project was expected to be completed in a year due to the conditions of the co-financer, the Istanbul Development Agency. Additionally, the fair was pre-scheduled and they were expecting the collections to be submitted earlier. However, in a creative industry, it is hard to push the designers with time-stress. Furthermore, the lack of experience of young designers caused need for modification, repetition and intervention of experts. At this point, the assistance of the consultants was very critical.

In addition to designs of the collections, the production of them also required more time and effort than expected. The work was contracted to sewing ateliers that were not much willing to manufacture samples, instead of mass quantities. Here, the support and network of the ICOC committee members was very critical. Furthermore, Istanbul Fashion Atelier was the first project of ICOC in the fashion sector and thus was a challenge for the Chamber that was used to deal with conventional sector and businessmen. The expectations and working attitudes of the young designers were quite different and incompatible with the procedures of the Chamber. At this point, the experience and flexibility of the Chamber staff was very critical in dealing with crisis arising from these differences. Furthermore, cooperating with retailers and big Turkish brands such as LC Waikiki and Boyner was beneficial in terms of both publicity and experience.

Financial aspect was one of the most important challenges of the Atelier. The cost of all the activities described above was around 260.000 USD which is beyond the capability of many young entrepreneurs. Therefore, the financial support of the Chamber in cooperation with the Istanbul Development Agency was very critical in realizing all those activities.

SUSTAINABILITY OF ISTANBUL FASHION ATELIER PROJECT

Based on the experience gained in this unconventional sector and the success of the first round of the project, ICOC is committed to sustain the Atelier by adapting it to arising needs of commercial life of Istanbul. This "Atelier" format may be used for supporting young designers in other fields such as industrial design, material development or environmental design. Concerning the financial necessities, ICOC is committed to fund the relevant projects with its own resources, like it did at the Start Exporting Program initially supported by the EU, but continued with its own budget for the last 7 years.

CAN YOUR IDEA BE APPLIED IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD?

Not only the cultural factors that feed the designers but also the socioeconomic status of the country are the most important factors affecting the success of the project. Therefore, this project is quite applicable and will make successful results in developing countries with emerging markets, rather than countries like France or Italy that have already proven the centres of fashion industry. Furthermore, the government policies of support for creative industries and new ideas with investment opportunities are crucial.

On the other hand, having fashion consultants who are both experienced in sector as not only being academics and but also being juries by attending to the most important fashion platforms of Turkey; having a change of starting from the first sketch of any design until having one complete collection including 10 hall pieces without even thinking about any cost for fabrics, whether it is silk or latex, cost for moulding, cutting, sewing, printing; having any accessories, shoes etc. that a designer think that should go along with anyone of his designs; taking a part both in Turkey and abroad and have a chance to exhibit the collection both in internal market and abroad by attending an international fair and catwalk shows; having all the above mentioned opportunities as a young designer for free; and last but not least having a support of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, we believe this is one in a million case that you may see around the world and not easy for any other countries to implement.

WHY THIS PROJECT SHOULD BE SELECTED AS A NOMINEE?

The most important idea behind this project proposal was to support young entrepreneurs for entering the competitive global market where talent is necessary but not sufficient. Especially when it comes to a creative industry like fashion, it is hard for new-comers to open a place for them, the tools of which are quite expensive such as high-quality material, display in fashion fairs, visibility in magazines, etc.

Istanbul Fashion Atelier gave young designers the necessary financial resources and networking opportunities to enter the magic world of fashion by establishing their own company. Furthermore its flexible structure enabled the team to see the deficiencies and the needs of the participants and adapt the program accordingly. For instance a training on company establishment and international trade was added later to the courses, once it was realized that designers were so much focused on their collections that they missed important factors such as pricing of their products, company establishment, invoicing, etc.

Finally, the most important asset of this Atelier compared to other private courses or schools is that it provides the connection between the designers and businessmen. Istanbul Fashion Atelier opened the member network of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce to young entrepreneurs willing to enter the fashion business. This advantage was used both during the implementation of the project and afterwards.

PURE LONDON

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my satisfaction and positive review of the Istanbul Fashion Atelier designers' collections that took part in Pure London, February 2012.

The support given to the designers from the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce was a key to the success of the project, and enabled 11 young, new designers to showcase their collections in London.

The support included space for each designer within a bespoke stand which allowed the designers to have their own platform to meet new buyers and press, to get feedback on their designs and to write orders with any contacts they had made. The stand looked fabulous and reflected the diversity of the collections, while at the same time ensuring that the Istanbul Fashion Atelier attracted attention from over 12,000 buyers who attended the show.

An additional extension of the support from Istanbul Chamber of Commerce came in the form of the Pure London catwalk shows which took place several times over the three days of the show. The catwalk included all 11 designers and meant they could bring their beautiful and unique designs to life. Buyers were then able to engage with the pieces on show and visit the stand after the catwalk.

The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce fully understood that the key to the success of the young designers' participation was to ensure that they were commercially ready to take part in a tradeshow such as Pure London. The show is a transactional event where over 80% of brands will write orders with new or existing buyers.

It is always important for buyers attending Pure London to be inspired by the originality and creativity they see in new collections and the Istanbul Fashion Atelier certainly achieved this. The designers' lines were sophisticated, young & dynamic, and combined materials such as silk with metals, metal fibre-knitwear with jeans, denim and leather, shantung / crepe / chiffon, silk / cupro and bengaline. What was most interesting was that the designers' inspiration came from a mix of their cultural background as well as their own dynamic ideas. To see inspiration come from Istanbul was really impressive.

The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce has done a fantastic job in the co-ordination and delivery of this initiative and it was a pleasure to work with Ms. Bahar Ozsu and her team. Their enthusiasm and commitment was admirable and I very much hope they will receive funding in the future so we can work together in 2013.

Many Thanks

Katy Davis
Event Manager
Pure London

I2i Events Group
Greater London House,Hampstead Road,
London NW1 7EJ, United Kingdom

To Whom It May Concern;

I have found an opportunity to create my own collection through to Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project that was carried by Istanbul Chamber of Commerce with the partnership of Istanbul Commerce University within the scope of Improving Creative Industries Financial Support Program of Istanbul Development Agency.

While I was preparing my collection, inspiration was the Bosporus Bridge that connects Europe to Asia. The colours and traces of these two cultures can be found on my 2013 summer collection for women. In my collection, I wanted women to be strong characters who are inspired by their own past by using both women and men cuttings together.

As a part of the project, I exhibited my own collection during Pure London Fashion Fair in London at project's bespoke stand along with catwalk shows which took several times over the three days of the show. After the fair, I took orders from England, Ireland and Turkey.

With my collection under the brand name of Mehtap Kurnaz, I also took place in the catwalk show of Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project that was held in Istanbul Forum Mall. In addition, I exhibited my collection in vitrines of Boyner Stores that are in Capital, Akbatı and Istanbul Forum Mall.

Through Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project, I managed to prepare my own brand name and collection. Now I work as a stylist for Boyner Stores where I used to work as the Assistant Stylist before the project. I wish to carry my brand up to the international level in the future.

MEHTAP KURNAZ

To Whom It May Concern;

I have found an opportunity to create my own collection and brand name through to Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project that was carried by Istanbul Chamber of Commerce with the partnership of Istanbul Commerce University within the scope of Improving Creative Industries Financial Support Program of Istanbul Development Agency.

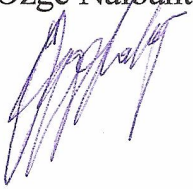
My collection tells about the journey that goes from dream to reality and is composed of two groups. First one is a silk group that symbolizes the power of the dream; second one is my own production knitting group along with special metal yarn that symbolizes the reality.

With the context of the Project, I exhibited my own collection at Pure London Fashion Fair in London at project's fair stand along with 6 catwalk shows. After the fair, I took orders from England and Turkey. I also took place in the catwalk show of Istanbul Fashion Atelier Project that was held in Istanbul Forum Mall with my brand "sareertoglu". In addition, I exhibited my collection in vitrines of Boyner Stores that are in Capital, Akbatı and Istanbul Forum Mall.

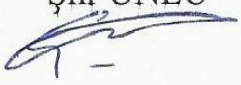
Through Istanbul Fashion Atelier I created my own brand name and my collection. Recently, apart from my own brand, I also prepare women collections for a brand "called In the future, I wish to carry my brand up to international level in the future. Tiffany".

Istanbul Fashion Atelier has taught me to be a part of an atelier and to make progress all together for an aim which militates in favor of each single participant.Istanbul Chamber of Commerce gave me the opportunity that i can not have by myself as early as i had last year.Just at the beginning of my career,i took a strong step by Pure London Fashion Fair.I`ve been given 130 pieces of orders from a boutique in Qatar-Doha.So I could create a capital for new collections and orders,in fact for the way I always want to follow in textile and fashion sector.

Ozge Nalbantoglu



I can say that I am very proud to be in the Istanbul Fashion Atelier project.
I had the chance to show myself by having my first collection with the help of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to this, they supported me in marketing my collection to the Public. For instance, my collection was exhibited in Pure London and I had the chance to exhibit my collection at Boyner's window display. Both were great experience for me that I wouldn't imagine otherwise without the help of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce.

Yours Sincerely,
Şiir ÜNLÜ