Turkish Peoples' Evaluation of Eureopan Countries' Image as Tourism Destinations

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Abstract

In recent years, tourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy and is widely recognized for its contribution to regional and national economic development. Image has emerged as a crucial marketing tool in the tourism industry as destination marketers are increasingly confronted by product substitutability and competition within the global marketplace. In addition, tourist's destination image is important because it affects an individual's subjective perception, his/her consequent behavior and destination choice.

The purpose of the study was to analyze the image of European countries as tourism destinations. Anova was conducted to identify the differences between the image perceptions of 1023 Turkish people. Significant perceptual differences were detected with respect to Greece, Italy and France's images.

Key words: Destination image, Tourism, European countries, Turkish people, Anova.

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1. Introduction

The importance of the tourism destination image is universally acknowledged, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice. This importance has led to a growing body of research on the tourism destination image. The essential characteristic of the research line is its multidimensionality. Destination image has been considerable research during the last decades in marketing. Investigation has been commonly based on either effective destination positioning or on the destination selection process.

In particular, destination image has had a significant impact on people's selection of the places to visit. Destination image has therefore become important both for practitioners engaged in positioning destination images and for academics trying to gain a deeper understanding of the destination image construct.

Though tourism image is critical to the success of any destinations. A lot of qualitative and quantitative studies were made to explore the similarities and differences between the image perceptions of people in many countries. But, few image studies to date have focused specifically on Turkish consumers' perceptions of Greece, Italy and France. The tourism industry in those European countries has been growing sharply in the past few years. Among its visitors, Turkish citizens are one of the most important and attractive markets for the European countries. Also, those countries were the most popular ones among Turkish people for holiday destination.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Destination Image

Image is a term that has already been used differently in a large number of contexts and disciplines, thus creating different meanings (Jenkins, 1999). Some researches suggest that where prices are comparable, image is the decisive factor in holiday choice. Images form the basis of the evaluation or selection process and thus provide the link between motivations and destination selection. In practical terms, this implies that image studies are a prerequisite to a successful marketing strategy (O'Leary & Deegan, 2003). For this reason image is a critical factor and all places have images-good, bad and indifferent, that must be identified and either changed or exploited.

Whereas, a destination's image is defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place or destination. According to systematic analysis by the World Tourism organization, image is defined as an aura, an angel, a subjective perception accompanying the various projections of the same message transmitter. Image is also defined as a perceptual phenomenon formed through a consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation, and which has both cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feelings) components (Konecnik, 2004).

Doswell (2000) defines 'destination image' as the feelings, ideas and reactions which the name of a place evokes. But, Mossberg and Hallberg (1999) prefer to define 'destination image' as the 'tourist's mental picture of a specific destination.

Conceptually, destination image is an ambiguous definition within this study's framework of tourism marketing, as it applies to two different domains of reality. First, it refers to the pattern of

beliefs in a consumer's mind stimulated by associations with the destination product, and secondly, it refers to advertising or public relations messages about the destination product (Assael, 1998; Konecnik, 2004). A destination image like any other entity is open to perception by a range of observers across the tourism system, both from the supply and demand perspectives (Watkins, Hassanien and Dale, 2006; Kelly and Nankervis, 2001).

A destination's image has been recognized as a complex and important concept in the destination-selection process. In the last three decades tourism researchers as well as industry practitioners and destination marketers have been very interested in measuring a destination's image. In addition, the proper methodology for measuring a destination's image has been the subject of many travel and tourism studies. A destination's image may be analyzed from different perspectives, and composed of a variety of individual perceptions relating to various product/service attributes (Kozak, 2001).

According to Sonmez and Sirakaya (2002), if a destination is interested in developing a sustainable tourism industry in a period of increasing competition, then it needs a clear understanding of tourists' images to develop a successful positioning strategy in the competitive marketplace. Central to destination marketing is the way in which the image is perceived and acted upon by potential tourists as it is often perceptions rather than reality that motivate tourists to visit a destination (Andersen, Prentice and Guering, 1997). The tourist marketer's goal is to match the promoted image and the perceived image in the consumer's mind to avoid a distorted destination image. Indeed, a lack of knowledge of a destination's appeal from the perspective of potential tourist markets hinders the development of a destination's image (Watkins et al., 2006).

The creation of a distinctive and unique destination in the tourism industry plays a vital role in positioning the destination in the consumer's mind and holds the key to destination differentiation (Watkins et al., 2006). An important step in the destination management process is an understanding of the attitudes of visitors and potential visitors of a destination (Deslandes, 2006). So, tourist destination images are important because they influence both the decision-making behavior of potential tourists and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience (Jenkins, 1999). An accurate assessment of destination image is a prerequisite to designing an effective marketing strategy and helps the destination marketer to offer what its visitors are expecting and create more realistic expectations if necessary. Destination images are a major factor forming the link between an individual's motivations and destination selection process (Watkins et al., 2006).

2.2 The Components of Destination Image

In the field of marketing, tourist destination image has been subject to considerable research during past three decades (Tak and Tai, 2003). A destination's image has been recognized as a complex and important concept in the destination-selection process. In the last three decades tourism researchers as well as industry practitioners and destination marketers have been interested in measuring destination image (Konecnik, 2004). A key theme within tourist destination image research has been that of the components of the destination image.

Gunn (1972) referred to two levels of image-organic and induced. Goodrich (1978) also identified two levels of image-the primary destination image formed by a visit, and the secondary image formed by information received from external resources. Furthermore, Phelps (1986) referred to the same two levels of image (primary and secondary). Building on theory, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) developed a model to describe the relationships between organic, induced and complex images that incorporated experiences at the destinations. Milman and Pizam (1995) suggested that a destinations' image has three components: the product (ie. quality, variety, price); the behavior and attitude of employees who come into direct to contact with tourists; and the environment such

as weather, the quality and the type of accommodation and physical safety. In completing the image-measuring technique, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) acknowledged the existence of three continuums that support the image of any destination: 1.functional-psychological, 2.unique-common and 3.attribute-holistic (Tak and Tai, 2003).

Nonetheless, an examination of several image studies revealed that none of the researchers had been successful in capturing all the components of destination image. The majority of image studies is structured or quantitative in nature, and has tended to focus only on the common, attribute-based aspects of destination image. Unstructured or qualitative methodologies are more conductive to measuring the holistic components of destination image and also capturing unique features and auras. Cognizant of this fact, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) developed a system of measurement using quantitative and qualitative methods, that is a set of scales to measure the common attribute-based components of destination image along both functional and psychological dimensions and a series of open-ended questions to capture the holistic components of destination image along both functional and psychological dimensions and, as well as the presence of distinctive or unique features or auras (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003).

However, after almost three decades, research on its meaning and measure, there is still no consensus on the process and nature of destination image formation. Consequently, although this topic has a significant number of contributions, there is still a need for better understanding of the concept and dimensions of tourism destination image (Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002).

Destination image researchers have a strong preference for structured methodologies. In fact, almost all have used either semantic differential or Likert type scales in the measurement of destination image. Therefore, because of the nature of structured methodologies, the majority of destination image measurement studies have focused on the common, attribute-based component of destination image. Also in this study, this structured methodology is preferred.
The statements were quoted from Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Choi, Chan and Wu (1999)'s studies.

3. Methodology

Previous research on destination image has concluded that each destination offers a variety of products and services to attract visitors and each tourist has an opportunity to choose from a set of destinations. Different factors may have an influence on destination choice. The destination choice process might therefore be related to tourists' assessments of destination attributes and their perceived utility values. Numerous attempts have been made to classify major elements of destinations. Among these elements are climate, ecology, culture, architecture, hotels, catering, transport, entertainment, cost and so on. Destination-based attributes could be many and differ from one destination to another (Kozak, 2002).

Thus, the objectives of the study are to;

1. Explore destination images from tourism perspective
2. Identify the underlying dimensions of European countries' images
3. Determine Turkish people's perceptual differences between the images of France, Italy and Greece.
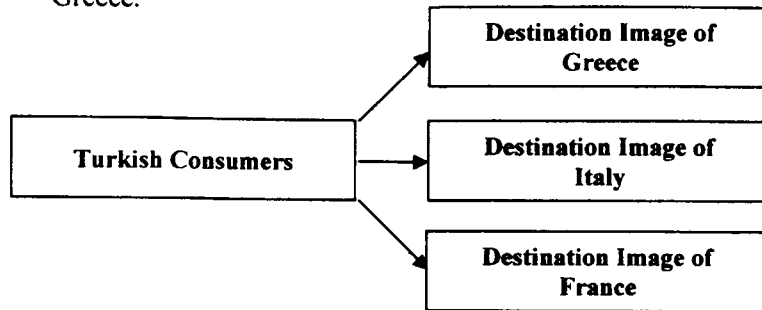
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                                          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                      ┌──→│  Destination Image of   │
                                      │   │         Greece          │
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└─────────────────────────┘          │   │          Italy          │
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                                      │   ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                      └──→│  Destination Image of   │
                                          │         France          │
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Figure 1: Research Model

In this study, it is aimed to find the differences between the destination images of Greece, Italy and France. The following hypothesis was tested:

H_1: There is significant difference between the destination images of France, Italy and Greece.

3.1 Hypothesis Testing

There are many ways of measuring tourist destination image. These approaches can be divided into two categories: 1.qualitative 2.quantitative techniques. The first category encompasses methods such as free elicitation and open-ended questions, focus groups and in-depth interviews and expert discussions. The second category mainly consists of statistical procedures involving bivariate such as t test and correlation analysis and multivariate methods such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, Anova and Manova (Tak and Tai, 2003).

In general, multivariate techniques predominate because they allow for the determination of latent multidimensional structure (components) of destination image as well as average scoring as a numeric measurement of image (Tak and Tai, 2003).

In this study, respondents were asked to evaluate the destination images of Greece, Italy and France. A descriptive statistic analysis was employed to examine perceptions of destination images of Turkish people. The Anova multiple comparison analysis was conducted for the purpose of identifying the significant differences in perceptions of Turkish people among Greece, Italy and France.

Consumers' images of destinations are known to be complexly determined and to be multidimensional. So, a destination's image can be analyzed from different perspectives, and composed of a variety of individual perceptions relating to various product service attributes. Due to the rise of urban tourism destinations at global scale, the assessment and development of an appropriate image for European countries has become increasingly important. Since, those countries are well known by Turkish people France, Italy and Greece are chosen for our study.

In addition, Turkish people are one of the most important and attractive markets for the European countries by location. The population of this study was Turkish citizens interested in travel and

tourism. The research was conducted via internet survey between 8-15 January, 2008 in Turkey. The sample for the data analysis consists of 1023 Turkish people expressing their ideas about the image Greece, Italy and France as tourist destinations.

The respondents were asked to provide information about their destination image perceptions. Turkish consumers' perceptions of the countries-Greece, Italy and France - image as tourist destinations were asked. 27 Likert statements which are used to measure the functional and psychological attributes of consumers were derived from the study of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Choi et. al. (1999). A five point Likert scale was used and the scales ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). The final part of the questionnaire was about their personal information.

3.2 Respondents' Profile

Out of 1023 respondents surveyed, males constitute of 78% and females constitute of 22%. This ratio in gender is not surprising, since the questionnaire was conducted via internet. Women's usage rate of internet in Turkey is low when compared to men. The majority of tourists belong to 26-35 years age group (41.9%), followed by the 36-45 years age group (28.8%). Of the respondents, 63.5% had at least finished university degree and another 26.4% finished high school. Some 67.4% of the respondents were married and 32.6% were single. Similar proportions for low and medium incomes were found. Most of the respondents were merchant or workers. Family size was mostly four people with 33.9%. The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percent	Education	Frequency	Percent
1000 YTL or less	211	20,6	Primary School	12	1,2
1001 YTL-2000 YTL	462	45,2	Secondary School	18	1,8
2001 YTL-3000 YTL	205	20,0	High School	270	26,4
3001 YTL-4000 YTL	61	6,0	University	650	63,5
4001 YTL-5000 YTL	38	3,7	MS/Doctorate	73	7,1
5001 YTL-6000 YTL	17	1,7	Total	1023	100,0
6001 YTL-7000 YTL	6	,6			
7001 YTL-8000 YTL	6	,6	Occupation	Frequency	Percent
8001 YTL-9000 YTL	3	,3	Self employed	68	6,6
9001YTL or more	14	1,4	Civil Cervant	21	2,1
Total	1023	100,0	Merchant	337	32,9
Family Size	Frequency	Percent	Worker	285	27,9
1 person	16	1,6	Employee	21	2,1
2 people	107	10,5	Retired	12	1,2
3 people	241	23,6	Housewife	145	14,2
4 people	347	33,9	Student	134	13,1
5 people and over	312	30,5	Total	1023	100,0
Total	1023	100,0			
Age	Frequency	Percent	Gender	Frequency	Percent
18-25	240	23,5	Male	797	0,78
26-35	429	41,9	Female	226	0,22
36-45	295	28,8	Total	1023	100,0
46-55	54	5,3	Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
56-65	4	,4	Single	334	32,6
66 and over	1	,1	Married	689	67,4
Total	1023	100,0	Total	1023	100,0

4. Data Analysis

The countries' destination images were explored by principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation giving rise to an five factor solution. The internal consistency of items were measured within each factor using Cronbach's alpha tests. To further analyze the differences between the destination images of countries, Anova was performed.

4.1 Results of Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was applied to determine the underlying dimensions of Greece, Italy and France's destination images. KMO Bartlett values for countries are all above 0.90, which are significant at 0.01. Thus, KMO Bartlett test showed that it is appropriate for applying factor analysis to these variables. Five factors with eigen values greater than one emerged from the factor analysis.

The reliability of each construct scale was assessed by computing Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of factors for Greece, Italy and France are over 0.70, the general accepted Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Hair et al., 2005).

Cronbach's alpha measures of Greece are 0.890 for country's environmental beauty and convenience, 0.892 for country's citizens, 0.819 for place and architectural structure, 0.804 for shopping and tourist accommodation and 0.782 for local culture and cuisine.

Cronbach's alpha measures of Italy are 0.886 for country's environmental beauty and convenience, 0.868 for country's citizens, 0.864 for place and architectural structure, 0.779 for shopping and tourist accommodation and 0.800 for local culture and cuisine.

Cronbach's alpha measures of France are 0.912 for country's environmental beauty and convenience, 0.886 for country's citizens, 0.876 for place and architectural structure, 0.815 for shopping and tourist accommodation and 0.846 for local culture and cuisine.

The items formed five factors that explained 61.785 percent variance for Greece, 61.726 percent of the variance for Italy and 66.668 percent variance for France. The items included in each factor and the factor loadings were reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha and Factor Loadings

	Greece	Italy	France
Environmental Beauty & Convenience (9)			
Highways and roads are in good condition in this country.	.716	.635	.696
This country has well-developed transport system.	.712	.658	.749
It is easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels in this country.	.663	.520	.630
There are many gardens and parks in this country.	.660	.549	.733
This country is clean and green.	.595	.530	.669
This country is an orderly country.	.580	.726	.724
This country is a progressive country.	.558	.706	.741
This country is a safe place to visit.	.557	.539	.619
This country is a politically stable country.	.462	.604	.561
Cronbach's Alpha	.890	.886	.912
Country's Citizens (4)			
The local people are courteous.	.823	.755	.769
The local people are hardworking.	.812	.721	.761
The local people are honest.	.789	.770	.763
The local people are friendly.	.730	.673	.716
Cronbach's Alpha	.892	.868	.886
Place & Architectural Structure (5)			
There are many interesting places in this country.	.784	.826	.807
There are lots of natural scenic beauty in this country.	.773	.774	.791
There are many restful and relaxing places in this country.	.744	.808	.773
There are lots of places of historical or archeological interest to visit.	.533	.577	.600
This country's cities are attractive.	.454	.556	.584
Cronbach's Alpha	.819	.864	.876
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation (6)			
This country is a good place to shop.	.728	.677	.663
Good quality of products are available in this country.	.698	.686	.661
There are a wide variety of products available in this country.	.617	.603	.547
Good tourist information is available.*	.474	.588	.533
Food is varied and exotic in this country.	.468	.668	.654
Good tourist facilities and services are available.*	.442	.606	.513
Cronbach's Alpha	.804	.779	.815
Local Culture & Cuisine (3)			
The lifestyles and customs in this country are similar to those in my home country.	.814	.853	.840
The food in this country is similar to ours.	.738	.795	.785
The architectural styles of the buildings are similar to those in my home country.	.721	.719	.800
Cronbach's Alpha	.782	.800	.846
KMO	.937	.929	.941
Total Variance Explained	%61.785	%61.726	%66.668

*These items belong to the "place & architectural structure" factor in Italy's destination image.

Country's environmental beauty and convenience factor comprises nine items such as "Highways and roads are in good condition in this country.", "This country has well-developed transport system.", "It is easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels in this country.", "There are many gardens and parks in this country.", This country is clean and green.", "This country is an orderly country.", "This country is a progressive country.", "This country is a safe place to visit." and "This country is a politically stable country.".

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Country's citizens factor is composed of five items relating to "The local people are hardworking.", "The local people are honest.", "The local people are friendly." and "The local people are courteous".

Environmental beauty and cleanliness factor includes four items relating to "This country is clean and green.", "There are many gardens and parks in this country.", "This country has pleasant weather." and "There are lots of natural scenic beauty in this country."

Items regard to place and architectural structure is captured in another factor. It consists of five items such as "There are many interesting places in this country.", "There are lots of natural scenic beauty in this country.", "There are many restful and relaxing places in this country.", "There are lots of places of historical or archeological interest to visit." and "This country's cities are attractive.".

The personal safety and convenience factor, relates to "Highways and roads are in good condition in this country.", "This country is a safe place to visit.", "It is easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels in this country.", and "This country has well-developed transport system.".

Factor called shopping and tourist accommodation includes variables like "This country is a good place to shop." "Good quality of products are available in this country." "There are a wide variety of products available in this country." "Good tourist information is available." "Food is varied and exotic in this country." "Good tourist facilities and services are available." for the destination images of Greece and France. The items called "Good tourist information is available." and "Good tourist facilities and services are available." are grouped in the place and architectural structure factor of Italy's destination image.

Lastly, local culture and cuisine factor, is concerned with "The lifestyles and customs in this country are similar to those in my home country.", "The food in this country is similar to ours." and "The architectural styles of the buildings are similar to those in my home country."

The variables were mostly grouped according to the literature, but there were some exceptions like: "Food is varied and exotic in this country." variable seems more appropriate to be grouped in local culture and cuisine factor, also, "There are lots of natural scenic beauty in this country." variable seemed more appropriate for country's environmental beauty and convenience factor. But in this study, these variables were grouped in different factors because of their factor loadings.

4.2 Results of Anova

The Anova was conducted in order to identify significant differences between perceptions of destination image of Greece, Italy and France. Results from Anova reveal that there is significant differences in perceptions between destination images of Greece, Italy and France, so H_1 is accepted.

Table 3: Anova Table

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Environmental Beauty &	Between Groups	102.005	2	51.002	120.550	.000
Convenience	Within Groups	1297.169	3066	.423		
	Total	1399.174	3068			
Country's Citizens	Between Groups	87.764	2	43.882	68.095	.000
	Within Groups	1975.801	3066	.644		
	Total	2063.566	3068			
Place & Architectural Structure	Between Groups	30.168	2	15.084	34.097	.000
	Within Groups	1356.365	3066	.442		
	Total	1386.534	3068			
Shopping & Tourist	Between Groups	72.314	2	36.157	81.374	.000
Accommodation	Within Groups	1362.308	3066	.444		
	Total	1434.621	3068			
Local Culture & Cuisine	Between Groups	228.345	2	114.172	150.686	.000
	Within Groups	2323.067	3066	.758		
	Total	2551.412	3068			

Respondents perceived that environmental beauty and convenience image of France is higher with the mean of 2.248 than Italy and Greece. Respondents also perceived that country's citizens image of Italy is higher than France and Greece with the mean of 2.636. Place and architectural structure dimension of destination image of Italy is also higher than Greece and France. Shopping and tourist accommodation dimension is higher for France compared to Italy and Greece. Local culture and cuisine dimension of destination image of Greece is higher than Italy and France by 2.646.

Table 4: Mean Score of Perceptions

	Greece	Italy	France
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	2.649	2.278	2.248
Country's Citizens	3.049	2.636	2.872
Place & Architectural Structure	2.067	1.901	2.137
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	2.645	2.327	2.313
Local Culture & Cuisine	2.646	2.993	3.314

The Anova multiple comparison analysis was conducted to explore the significant differences in the destination image perceptions of Turkish consumers.

Significant differences were found between Greece. Italy and France in "environmental beauty and convenience" image of countries. But, there is no significant difference in the "environmental beauty and convenience" image of Italy and France.

On the other hand, there are significant differences between Greece, Italy, and France in their "citizens' image".

In addition. there are significant differences between Greece and Italy and also between Italy and France in "place and architectural structure" image but, there is no significant difference in the

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"place and architectural structure" image of Greece and France.

The significant differences were found between Greece, Italy and France in "shopping and tourist accommodation" image of countries. But, there is no significant difference in the "shopping and tourist accommodation" image of Italy and France.

Lastly, there are significant differences between Greece, Italy and France in countries' "local culture and cuisine" images.

Table 5: Multiple Comparisons Scheffe Test

Dependent Variable	(I) Ülke	(J) Ülke	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	Greece	Italy	.37070(*)	.02876	.000	.3003	.4411
		France	.40100(*)	.02876	.000	.3306	.4714
	Italy	Greece	-.37070(*)	.02876	.000	-.4411	-.3003
		France	.03030	.02876	.574	-.0401	.1007
	France	Greece	-.40100(*)	.02876	.000	-.4714	-.3306
		Italy	-.03030	.02876	.574	-.1007	.0401
Country's Citizens	Greece	Italy	.41276(*)	.03549	.000	.3258	.4997
		France	.17620(*)	.03549	.000	.0893	.2631
	Italy	Greece	-.41276(*)	.03549	.000	-.4997	-.3258
		France	-.23656(*)	.03549	.000	-.3235	-.1496
	France	Greece	-.17620(*)	.03549	.000	-.2631	-.0893
		Italy	.23656(*)	.03549	.000	.1496	.3235
Place & Architectural Structure	Greece	Italy	.16685(*)	.02941	.000	.0948	.2389
		France	-.06940	.02941	.062	-.1414	.0026
	Italy	Greece	-.16685(*)	.02941	.000	-.2389	-.0948
		France	-.23625(*)	.02941	.000	-.3083	-.1642
	France	Greece	.06940	.02941	.062	-.0026	.1414
		Italy	.23625(*)	.02941	.000	.1642	.3083
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	Greece	Italy	.31826(*)	.02947	.000	.2461	.3904
		France	.33252(*)	.02947	.000	.2603	.4047
	Italy	Greece	-.31826(*)	.02947	.000	-.3904	-.2461
		France	.01426	.02947	.890	-.0579	.0864
	France	Greece	-.33252(*)	.02947	.000	-.4047	-.2603
		Italy	-.01426	.02947	.890	-.0864	.0579
Local Culture & Cuisine	Greece	Italy	-.34734(*)	.03849	.000	-.4416	-.2531
		France	-.66797(*)	.03849	.000	-.7622	-.5737
	Italy	Greece	.34734(*)	.03849	.000	.2531	.4416
		France	-.32063(*)	.03849	.000	-.4149	-.2264
	France	Greece	.66797(*)	.03849	.000	.5737	.7622
		Italy	.32063(*)	.03849	.000	.2264	.4149

5. Conclusion

The success of countries as tourism destinations depends on whether the country knows the dimensions, improves its strengths and overcomes its weaknesses. This study has theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical standpoint, the study developed and tested a conceptual model of the determinants of destination image. It added to the existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence for the elements contributing to the development of tourism destination images.

It was found that a destination image was formed by five factors. Its uniqueness was to illustrate the dynamic structure of image and simultaneous treatment of the elements contributing to destination image development. In this sense, the study shed some light on image formation theory. It empirically demonstrated that the elements that influence destination images are multi-dimensional.

The objectives of this study were, to explore destination images from tourism perspective, to identify the underlying dimensions of European countries' images and determine Turkish people's perceptual differences between the images of Greece, Italy and France. To achieve these, a structured method of destination image measurement was applied. The variables contained in destination image scale were reduced into five dimensions named "environmental beauty and convenience", "country's citizens", "place and architectural structure", "shopping and tourist accommodation", "local culture and cuisine" by factor analysis. Then Anova was conducted in order to find if countries' destination images differ.

The findings suggest that all of the countries' destination images differ mostly by the dimensions "country's citizens" and "local culture and cuisine". The other three factors are also differentiating the countries' destination images.

Greece's local culture and cuisine dimension is the mostly accepted dimension by Turkish people, since Greece is neighbor country of Turkey. So, Turkish people see their food, lifestyles and architectural styles more similar to Greece.

"Country's citizens" and "place and architectural structure" dimensions of Italy's destination image are perceived better than other two European countries by Turkish people. This may arise from the reason that Italy is also a Mediterranean country like Turkey. Thus, Italians are more courteous, friendly, honest and hardworking in the eyes of Turkish people. Italy and its cities seem more interesting and attractive to Turkish people with its natural scenic beauty, restful and relaxing places.

Destination image of France stand out with "environmental beauty and convenience", "shopping and tourist accommodation" dimensions. It is not surprising, since almost everyone perceives France as the hearth of fashion and romance. Therefore, Turkish people also accept France as a good place to shop with its various and fashionable products.

This research showed that image perceptions of people differ from one destination to another. Efforts to understand the factors pushing tourists to visit a particular destination and how likely it is to be different from those of others visiting other destinations could help destination management to set marketing strategies. So, the findings of the study might help tourism agencies targeting Turkish people.

The differentiating destination image perceptions for each of the countries were stated in this study. Based upon the findings, the recommendation for destination management authorities could be that Greece should concentrate its efforts on the shopping and accommodation services to make itself more competitive in the Turkish market. France can be a better resort city by creating more interesting and fun events, improving tourist information at strategic places, creating attractive tour packages, promoting its cuisine to make it more known by Turkish people. Italy has almost perceived well by Turkish people in all destination dimensions. But, this does not mean that Italy will always be a preferred destination by Turkish people. It should also take measures for improving its destination image factors. Italy can be better in tourism by ensuring efficient transportation system, enhancing cleanliness of the country, offering variety of food and restaurant.

Countries seeking to increase their tourism share should consider the characteristics of their target markets and tailor their image development and positioning efforts to motivate them. Destinations should spend considerable time and money to create and enhance a favorable image. Focusing on the most important factors will provide more efficiency in tourism demand stimulation expenditures and more effectiveness in attracting tourists who are evaluating new potential destinations.

As this study has been amongst the first to compare Turkish people's perception across various destinations and across various nationalities both the methodology and the findings could be helpful for other researchers who will probably undertake similar research in the future.

6. Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As many other research studies, the current study has some theoretical and methodological limitations. First, the research was carried out in Turkey and therefore the findings are culturally bound and are likely to have limited application to other destinations, regions or countries. Second, most of the respondents were women, since the survey was conducted via internet. It could be a limitation, since this rate does not reflect the Turkish population structure.
Third, only France, Italy and Greece were taken as European countries. So, the findings are limited upon those countries studied.

Lastly, measurements of tourists' image were both to those currently visiting and also potential tourists who did not visit those countries. The study would be better if the questionnaire was taken only by people who visited those countries.

It is hoped that this study will stimulate further research on destination image in the tourism industry to provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

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