A Distorted Destination Image? The Case of Turkey

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Abstract:

Despite its Mediterranean location, Turkey has been unable to consistently achieve its tourism goals, as evidenced by fluctuating numbers in tourism earnings and a small share of the international tourism market. This discrepancy might be attributed to Turkey's image in the minds of world travelers. The main purpose of this study was to examine the role of destination image and traveler perceptions along with other behavioral variables in destination choice decisions of potential travelers. A self-administered survey was used to collect data from 552 respondents (58.6% response rate). The findings indicate that perceptions of Turkey's overall appeal, it's safe and hospitable environment, general mood and vacation atmosphere, travel experience, relaxing effect, local attractions and hospitality, authenticity of experience, social and personal communication channels, comfort/safety, and tourist facilitation are significant predictors of the likelihood of travel to Turkey. Some destination marketing strategies are suggested.

Article:

For several decades, researchers have studied tourist decision making within the framework of consumer choice processes (i.e., Um and Crompton 1992; Van Raaij and Francken 1984; Woodside and Lysonski 1989). Extant research of tourist decision making suggests that destination choices are influenced by both internal (i.e., images, perceptions, motives, attitudes, and beliefs) and external factors (i.e., time, destination attributes, perceived costs of tourism product, buyer characteristics, and benefits sought). Early theoretical models of tourist decision-making behavior (i.e., Mayo and Jarvis 198 1; Mathieson and Wall 1982; Middleton 1994; Moutinho 1987; Schmoll 1977; Um and Crompton 1990; Van Raaij and Francken 1984; Wahab, Crampon, and Rothfield 1976; Woodside and Lysonski 1989) as well as empirical research conducted in the same area (i.e., Ahmed 1991; Alhemoud and Amstrong 1996; Backman and Crompton 1991; Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Chon 1991, 1992; Hu and Ritchie 1993; Milman and Pizam 1995; Riley 1995) suggest that travelers' perceived images of destinations account for much of the error variation in destination choice decisions. Positive images of destinations help decision makers construct "awareness" and "evoked" sets and can thus serve as differentiating factors among competing destinations. Consequently, it is safe to assume that the success or failure of the tourism industry at many destinations around the world largely depends on images held by potential travelers and the effective management of those images by the destination (Sirgy and Su 2000; Fakeye and Crompton 1991). Nearly 20 years ago, the World Tourism Organization (WTO 1979, p. 3) declared the importance of positive images for tourist destinations: "while it is important to any producer of goods or services, the notion of image is of capital importance to a country. Measuring and mastering it should be placed very high in the order of priorities for planning tour-ism promotion." More than two decades later, the interest in understanding the impact of site images on destination choice decisions does not seem to be diminished, as evidenced by a new upsurge in image studies. Studies that track image changes and their structure over changing markets appear to hold over time. As the world becomes more globalized and cultures interact continuously, the study of images will certainly be a part of the growing body of tourism literature. As part of this growing body of literature, this study examined the role of images and perceptions in destination choice decisions involving Turkey. In this study, the authors adapted the definition by Crompton (1979, p. 19), who stated that an image is "a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation."

Image formation and change are widely discussed in the literature (Bojanic 1991; Chen and Hsu 2000; Crompton 1979; Gartner 1989, 1993; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Gunn 1972, 1988; Pearce 1982; Sirgy and Su 2000; Telisman-Kosuta 1989). Gunn (1972) pioneered image research in tourism during the 1970s by proposing a dimorphic theory of image. He argued that images are developed at two levels: organic and induced. The organic image develops internally because of actual experience or visitation, and the induced image forms because of externally received and processed information (i.e., advertisements, publicity, news reports, word of mouth). The underlying assumption is that image development is inextricably linked to various forms of information; this idea is further developed with Gartner's (1993) intricate description of image formation. According to Gartner, a continuum characterized by different types of information and their level of credibility, cost, and market penetration are all influential in image formation:

1. overt induced I (i.e., traditional forms of advertising),

2. overt induced II (i.e., information requested from travel intermediaries),

3. covert induced I (i.e., celebrity spokesperson's recommendation),

4. covert induced II (i.e., reports, stories, articles about a destination),

5. autonomous (i.e., independent information such as news and movies),

6. unsolicited organic (i.e., unsought information from friends, colleagues),

7. solicited organic (i.e., friends, relatives, word of mouth), and

8. organic (i.e., personal travel experience).

The discussion was further moved in a logical direction by parallels drawn between image and attitude: "destination images are formed by three distinctly different but hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective and conative" (Gartner 1993, p. 193). Cognitive images refer to intellectual evaluations of known attributes of a destination, affective images are emotional and related to individuals' motives in destination selection, and conative images are considered analogous to behavior and evolve from cognitive and affective images (Gartner 1993). Moreover, Echtner and Ritchie (1993) suggested that destination image should be conceived as having attribute-based as well as holistic components. They further proposed that these components should be viewed as having common functional and psycho-logical characteristics as well as more unique features. Using a list of 35 destination attributes, the authors created a three-dimensional image structure consisting of attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique continuums. (Interested readers may refer to Echtner and Ritchie's [1991, 1993] articles for a comprehensive review of image studies.)

Complementing the theoretical research, numerous empirical studies on destination image have been conducted that have attempted to capture destination-specific conditions in consumer choice models. Much of these studies concentrate on states and regions in the United States (Crompton and Duray 1985; Gartner 1989; Gartner and Hunt 1987; Goodrich 1978a, 1978b; Hunt 1975; McLellan and Dodd-Foushee 1983; Reilly 1990; Richardson and Crompton 1988), while very few examine the role of image in destination choice decisions for developing countries. The extant literature focusing on a handful of countries around the world is insufficient, as images change due to situational, political, and geographical factors (Andreu, Bigne, and Cooper 2000; Britton 1979; Calantone et al. 1989; Crompton 1977, 1979; Ehemann 1977; Haahti and Yavas 1983; Kale and Weir 1986; Pearce 1982; Phelps 1986; Telisman-Kosuta 1989), thus signaling the need for image research for emerging tourist destinations in developing countries. From a global perspective, developing countries interested in developing a sustainable tourism industry and increasing their share of the international tourism market in a period of increasing com-petition need to devote more attention to how they position themselves in the

international arena. A clear understanding of travelers' images is crucial for developing successful positioning strategies.

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to assess destination images and perceptions of an emerging tourist destination (Turkey) in the minds of potential U.S. travelers and (2) to determine the combined effects of likely predictors (e.g., information sources used, images formed, and sociodemographic factors and other behavioral variables such as past travel experience and familiarity) on destination choice decisions of potential travelers.

Turkey: A Country without an Image?

Turkey, as one of the fairly recent players in the international tourism market, has done little to determine its image as a tourist destination. Consequently, Turkey has little knowledge, if at all, about the effect of its image on travelers' destination choices. Geographically, Turkey serves as a natural bridge between Asia and Europe as they unite in the Bosphorous. The numerous civilizations, which date back to 8000 B.C. and made their home in Anatolia, have left behind countless archeological and cultural treasures. In addition to its rich historical and cultural inheritance, Turkey has great wealth and variety in terms of natural resources (e.g., the country's 8,372 km coastline includes the Aegean, Mediterranean, Black, and Marmara Seas). Turkey's natural and cultural variety, combined with the well-known traditional hospitality of its people, makes the country a very attractive tourist destination.

Turkey's position as a Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Balkan country situates it in "the most significant main development axis of international tourism activities" (Alipour 1996, p. 369). Modern tourism, as a relatively recent area of economic activity, can be traced back to the early 1960s in Turkey (International Tourism Reports 1997). Over the years, international visitation to Turkey has increased from less than 200,000 in 1962 to 9.75 million in 1998, and tourism revenues have increased from about U.S.$8 million in 1962 to nearly U.S.$7.18 billion in 1998 (see Ministry of Tourism's Web site at http://www.turizm. gov.tr/). Tourism's share in Turkey's export sector is an impressive 29% and contributes 3.8% to the gross domestic product. Such substantial increases in visitation and earnings have fueled Turkey's efforts to take its tourism potential more seriously, which is evidenced by more concentrated marketing, planning, and tourism education activities. The Ministry of Tourism is principally responsible for Turkey's image-building and tourism-promoting activities in 21 countries—including such activities as the distribution of collateral materials, organization of informational/familiarization tours, participation in international tourism fairs and trade shows, and the development and implementation of media campaigns. The Ministry of Tourism's annual budget between 1991 and 1996 varied between U.S.$17 and U.S.$35 million (International Tourism Reports 1997).

Despite Turkey's success as a tourist destination over the past 30 years and its rich tourism resource base that may equal—and quite possibly exceed—those of other Mediterranean countries, the country has been unable to consistently achieve the tourism goals set by its seventh Five-Year Plan (covering the 1995-1999 period), as evidenced by fluctuating numbers in tourist arrivals and earnings and a small share of the international tourism market. This discrepancy could possibly be attributed to Turkey's image in the minds of world travelers. The literature suggests that political instability, health, safety, and security concerns at the destination— whether real or perceived—have a direct bearing on the formation of negative images, which in turn influence destination choice decisions (Sirakaya, Shephard, and McLelland 1998). In an experimental study, Sirakaya, Shephard, and McLelland (1998) demonstrated the likely effects of perceptual changes—regarding the safety and security issues—on potential travelers' destination choices. Their study showed that new information about potential safety, security, and health problems at a destination can lead to the elimination of the destination from the list of alternatives.

FIGURE 1
MAP OF TURKEY

Similarly, political conditions within and around Turkey may be responsible for some of Turkey's tourism problems, as has been the case for China, Fiji, and the Philippines. The low level of growth in Turkey's international tourism in the 1960s and 1970s has been attributed to internal political uncertainty and unrest (the 1960, 1970, and 1980 military coups). As a result of political problems, successive governments have been unable to incorporate international tourism into the country's overall economic development plans. In the 1970s, the tourism industry was energized by a spurt of domestic travel related to summer homes supported by economic prosperity for the middle class. In the 1970s, Turkey faced different challenges abroad, such as the Turkish-Greek ethnic conflict in Cyprus, which culminated in Turkey's military intervention and deployment of troops to the island (causing Turkey to be perceived as the aggressor); the U.S.- Turkish controversy over hashish farming, which drew much negative international attention to Turkey in the 1970s; and the 1978 film *Midnight Express*—an extremely damaging and biased portrait of Turkish drug laws and prisons. Although not supported by scientific studies, anecdotal inter-views with various key tourism players in Turkey suggest that Turkey may still not have fully recovered from the dam-age done by the film to its image as a hospitable country for travelers—even after all these years.

Turkey has been relatively politically stable through the 1980s and 1990s—with the exception of the immediate period before and after the 1980 military coup. Although periodic efforts by politicized religious fundamentalists to gain control of the government and extremely high inflation rates threaten Turkey's political stability, the tourism industry has recorded significant growth, with dramatic increases in international arrivals, revenues, and investment (International Tourism Reports 1997). Since 1984, a particularly persistent problem for Turkey has been the systematic terrorism initiated by an armed Kurdish separatist organization (PKK). The attacks escalated through the 1980s and 1990s, and in 1993, the PKK began to actively campaign against the Turkish government and its institutions, with a particular emphasis on the tourism industry. Tourist sites were bombed and foreign tourists were kidnapped. In addition, through a letter campaign, the terrorist group warned foreign travel agencies against sending tourists to Turkey. Graphic media coverage of terrorist activity, as well as the violent reaction of PKK members and sympathizers to the Turkish government's capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK founder and Turkey's most wanted man (currently serving a life sentence), not only exacerbated the situation but also threatened Turkey's image abroad as a safe tourist destination (BBC News,

February 19, 1999; see http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/English/world/Europe). The 1991 Persian Gulf War and the subsequent U.S.-Iraqi military conflicts also caused fluctuations in international arrivals to Turkey due to its proximity to the conflict. The 1999 NATO-Serb conflict in Serbia/Kosova also served as a serious threat to the actual and perceived stability and safety of the region. Similarly, the devastating August 1999 earth-quake had effects on tourism that were felt not only through-out the remaining months of the 1999 tourist season but also in the early months of 2000, following global media images of the devastation and reports of repeated aftershocks. Consequently, tourism income fell sharply, by 27.6% in 1999 to U.S.$5.19 billion, and the number of businesses that went bankrupt increased substantially following mass numbers of trip cancellations (see Ministry of Tourism's Web site: http:// www.turizm.gov.tr/). On the positive side, the recent enlisting of Turkey as a member "candidate" to the European Union may have helped boost its positive image, at least in Europe. As a result, the tourism industry seems to have rebounded back to levels preceding the 1999 earthquake, as evidenced by 9.4 million tourist arrivals during the first 8 months of the year 2000.

It would be safe to say that Turkey is less known in the United States than in Europe or the Far East. As a result, its image for travelers originating in the United States can be described as unknown or ambiguous at best. Turkey's geopolitic location sometimes defies a clear delineation of the country's image. Although the population is 99% Muslim, Turkey cannot be described as a typical Middle Eastern Islamic country. Different sources position Turkey according to their own definitions. For example, according to the WTO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Turkey is in Europe; according to other sources, such as the United Nations (UN), Turkey is located in Asia or the Middle East. So where does it belong in potential travelers' minds? Is it European? Balkan? Is it "Oriental" or Western?

With the exception of Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) study, no scientific inquiry has been made to examine the image or positioning of Turkey's tourism industry. Baloglu and McCleary's study compared images of four Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, using 1,530 potential U.S. travelers as their sample but suffered from a low response rate of 29.6%. Their sample included people who had already requested information about Turkey and therefore may have been at least partially familiar with the country. Consequently, it is safe to assume that their sample may have developed some form of image (most likely positive ones) due to exposure to the country's promotional material. Not surprisingly, the authors reported that Turkey's image was positive among their sample of travelers. Although limited, their findings indicated that Turkey was viewed as a good value for the traveler's money, with interesting and friendly people and an unpolluted/unspoiled environment.

Over the years, Turkey has failed to invest significant effort into understanding and projecting a realistic and positive image of itself. Turkey needs to determine its image in the international tourism marketplace before developing effective marketing strategies for the future. Knowing its position or image, Turkey can develop proactive strategies to manage its image and thereby its chances to become more competitive. Knowledge of touristic images may help not only the tourism industry but also Turkey's overall image, as argued by WTO (1979, p. 3):

> The tourist image is only one aspect of a country's general image. Even if there seems to be no link between them at first sight, the two are closely interrelated. Nobody is likely to visit a country for tourism if for one reason or another s/he dislikes it. Conversely, a tourist discovery may lead to a knowledge of other aspects, of an economic, political or cultural nature, of that country.

STUDY METHODS
Study Sample and Data Collection
The sampling frame for the study consisted of individuals either experienced or interested in international travel. A name and address list of individuals who responded to travel-related surveys and who contacted travel agencies for information was obtained from a professional mail list company (with a guarantee of 96% accuracy). The study's international focus necessitated a sample of individuals whose interests paralleled the research topic (rather than the general population). From a national random probability sample of approximately

3,000 names (drawn in proportion to populations of all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), a systematic random sampling was conducted (N = 3,000; interval = 3). A final sample of 1,000 was determined necessary to carry out planned statistical procedures.

Data were collected through a mailed self-administered questionnaire following a modified (three-stage) Dillman (1978) approach. An incentive (participating in a lottery to win $300 toward an airline ticket) was offered to increase the response rate. Follow-up procedures included postcards, second mailings, and telephone calls to a randomly selected group of nonrespondents. Out of 1,000 people, 586 returned the completed survey instrument, reaching an overall response rate of 58.6%. Out of 34 unusable surveys, 15 questionnaires were either partially or not at all completed, and 19 were completed by respondents who had visited Turkey in the past (leaving 552 usable surveys). The latter group was dropped from the analysis because the study's intention was to examine perceptions of potential travelers unaffected by actual experience with the destination.

The possibility of nonresponse bias was addressed through brief telephone interviews with a systematic random sample of nonrespondents (n = 31); t-tests also showed several differences for selected variables from the original instrument. Nonrespondents were found to have less international travel experience than those who responded to the mail survey (t = 5.75, p = .000) and to undertake less information search than respondents (t = 2.89, p = .028). Furthermore, nonrespondents were more likely to be women (χ^2 = 8.53, df = 1, p = .003) with lower levels of education (χ^2 = 12.63, df = 5, p = .004). However, no systematic bias between the respondents (n_1 = 552) and nonrespondents (n_2 = 31) was detected for the remaining variables, which were randomly chosen from the image list (six items) (main focus of the study) as well as other variables such as "familiarity with Turkey" and "appeal of Turkey."

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Variables
The dependent variable, likelihood of choosing Turkey as the next vacation destination, was operationalized through a single question ("How likely are you to choose Turkey as your next international vacation destination?") on a scale ranging from 1 = *very likely* to 4 = *very unlikely*. Perceptions of Turkey were measured through a combination of Likert-type and semantic differential scales. Specifically, potential travelers' affective image of Turkey was examined using a 56-item 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*) using a modified list by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993). Scale items focused on several areas of affective images, including the following: natural resources and climate; tourist attractions, facilities, services, and social-cultural characteristics; and safety and cleanliness. Twenty-six bipolar descriptors on a 7-point semantic differential scale ("As a tourist destination, Turkey is . . ." negative/ positive, secure/risky, etc.) were used to obtain measurements for cognitive images in accordance with Dichter's (1985) scale items. To avoid a response tendency, we alternated negative and positive poles of the scale (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957).

The appeal of Turkey as a tourist destination was operationalized as a single-item 6-point Likert-type scale/ question ("In general, how appealing is Turkey to you as a tourist destination?") ranging from 1 = *very appealing*, 5 = *very unappealing*, and 6 = *don't know/undecided*. The degree of familiarity with Turkey was determined by a single 5- point Likert-type scale/question ("How familiar/knowledge-able do you consider yourself to be with Turkey?") ranging from 1 = *very familiar* to 5 = *not at all familiar*. Sources of knowledge about Turkey or information sources used were determined through a 17-item 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree,* 6 = *strongly disagree*). Possible information sources listed included print and visual media (e.g., TV, travel brochures), social and personal communication channels (e.g., friends, colleagues, word of mouth), and formal sources (e.g., embassy, travel agency, Internet).

Past travel experience was defined as the extent of travel to a destination outside the boundaries of respondents' country of residence (see Table 2). Both consumer and tourist decision-making literature suggests that personal experience is integrated into decision making as a passive or internal information search (Crompton 1992; Evans and Berman 1993; Um and Crompton 1990). It has been suggested that future travel behavior may be influenced by the nature as well as extent of past travel experience (Mazursky 1989); however, only the extent

of past travel experience was measured in this study. Two multiple-item questions determined the number of international trips taken by respondents in the past 5 years as well as their range of travel to worldwide regions outside of the United States. Answers were standardized and then aggregated to create an overall index of international travel experience. General intention for future travel was gauged through two multiple-item questions ("In the next 12 months, how likely are you to travel internationally for vacation purposes?" [1 = *very likely* to 4 = *not at all likely*] and "Which regions are you likely to travel to on your next international vacation trip?" [i.e., North America out-side the United States, Central America, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa]). Demographic variables, including age, education, household income, occupation, and family status, were used to provide additional background on the respondents (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
RESPONDENTS' SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE (*N* = 552)

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	235	42.6
Male	293	53.1
Age		
Younger than 24	10	1.8
25-34	58	10.6
35-44	114	20.7
45-54	104	18.9
55-64	84	15.2
65+	150	27.2
Education		
High school or less	59	10.7
Vocational/technical school	20	3.7
Some college	118	21.4
College/graduate degree	246	62.7
Occupation		
Homemaker	22	4.2
Professional	166	39.7
Executive/administrator	55	9.9
Middle management	55	9.9
Sales/marketing	17	3.3
Clerical/service	17	2.8
Skilled/technical	44	8.0
Self-employed/business owner	39	7.1
Student	17	2.8
Retired	110	19.8
Other	10	2.4
Household income		
Less than $20,000	30	5.5
$20,000-$39,999	99	18.0
$40,000-$59,999	147	26.7
$60,000-$79,999	109	19.8
$80,000-$99,999	66	12.0
$100,000 or more	76	13.8
Household structure		
Live alone	117	21.2
Live with roommate(s)	25	4.6
Couple with no children	60	17.1
Couple with children living at home	125	22.6
Couple with no children living at home	127	23.0
Single parent with children living at home	28	5.1
Single parent with no children living at home	10	1.8
Other	13	2.3
Country of birth		
United States	487	88.2
Other	65	11.8
Country of citizenship		
United States	501	90.8
Other	51	6.4
Country of residence		
United States	538	95.9
Other	13	2.3

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because of missing values. *N* does not add up to 552 because of the missing values for these sociodemographic variables.

Data Analysis

Factor analysis, using the principal component extraction method with varimax rotation, was applied to the 56-item scale of affective images, the 26-item scale of cognitive images, and the 17-item scale of information sources to reduce the data and delineate underlying constructs (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996, p. 639). A cutoff point of 0.45 was used for factor loadings, and items with eigenvalues greater than or equal to 1 were retained. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test factor loadings for reliability. Item-to-total correlations were examined and concomitantly used to eliminate unstable items. In all, 19 items from the affective image scale and 7 from the cognitive image scale were eliminated from further analysis. Information source items were all retained due to a high interitem correlation within their respective factor solutions.

Six affective image factors, four cognitive image factors, and two information source factors were used as independent variables, along with nine other variables (e.g., Turkey's overall appeal, familiarity with Turkey, past international travel experience, intentions for future travel, demographic variables) in a regression analysis to predict the likelihood of choosing Turkey as the next vacation destination.

RESULTS

Respondents were found to be mostly male (63%) and older than age 35 (79.1%), with a mean age of 42. More than 64% held college or graduate degrees, and more than 60% of the respondents held professional, executive, or middle management positions. A large portion (76.1%) of the respondents had an annual household income of $40,000 or more. Most respondents were born in the United States (88.2%), had U.S. citizenship (90.78%), and resided in the United States (97.6%). The composition of the sample is not surprising since the sampling frame that was purchased from the mail list company contained an a priori sample that screened out other portions of the traveling population and retained those who described themselves as international travelers. A more detailed description of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Respondents were found to be experienced international travelers. More than 45% had international travel experience (within the past 10 years), while only 16.6% had never traveled internationally. More than 69% expressed some likelihood of international travel outside the United States in the next 12 months. When asked about the likelihood of travel to Turkey on their next international vacation, however, nearly all respondents (87.6%) answered negatively. When asked about likelihood of travel to Turkey at any time, about 29% responded that there was some likelihood. This may be explained by the degree of familiarity of the respondents with Turkey as a vacation destination. Nearly 46% said they were not at all familiar with Turkey, and about 41 % said they were only slightly familiar. Only about 2.7% had higher degrees of familiarity with the country. This may explain the level of appeal—or lack thereof—Turkey has for potential travelers. Around 41% found Turkey unappealing or very unappealing, more than 20% were neutral, and 21% did not know (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
RESPONDENTS' TRAVEL EXPERIENCE
AND INTENTIONS ($N = 552$)

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Date of last international trip		
1997	47	8.5
1991-1996	204	37.0
1985-1990	66	11.9
Before 1984	21	3.9
Total international trips over lifetime		
None	92	16.6
1-5	313	56.7
6-10	33	6.0
11-15	18	3.2
More than 16	19	3.4
Likelihood of international vacation travel in next 12 months		
Very likely or somewhat likely	381	69.1
Not very likely or not at all likely	165	29.9
Likelihood of choosing Turkey as next international vacation destination		
Very likely or somewhat likely	66	11.9
Not very likely or not at all likely	484	87.6
Likelihood of choosing Turkey as an international vacation destination at any time		
Very likely or somewhat likely	163	29.5
Not very likely or not at all likely	384	69.5
Degree of appeal Turkey has as a vacation destination		
Very appealing or appealing	120	21.7
Neither appealing nor unappealing	117	21.2
Unappealing or very unappealing	226	41.0
Don't know/undecided	51	9.2
Degree of respondent familiarity with or knowledge of Turkey		
Very familiar	5	0.9
Quite familiar	10	1.8
Fairly familiar	56	10.1
Slightly familiar	226	41.0
sNot at all familiar	254	46.1

Affective Images

Six factors explaining 58.3% of the variance were extracted from the initial 56-item Likert-type affective image scale (see Table 3), following the elimination of 19 items due to factor loadings of less than .45 or because they loaded on several factors simultaneously, making the interpretation difficult. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from a high of 0.92 (Factor 1) to a low of 0.65 (Factor 3), indicating strong correlations between variables and their respective factor groupings. The factors were labeled as Local Attractions and Hospitality, Socioeconomic and Cultural Distance, Natural Attractions and Tourist Services, Comfort/Safety and Tourist Facilitation, Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, and Perceived Value of Vacation.

TABLE 3
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF AFFECTIVE IMAGES

Factor Name	Factor Loading	Mean[a]	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Affective Image (Local Attractions and Hospitality)					
Turkey has unique architectural styles.	.7733	4.709	11.166	31.0	.92
Turkey has many interesting local festivals.	.7492	4.257			
There are many places of interest to visit in Turkey.	.7415	4.171			
Turkey has many archeological treasures.	.7311	4.667			
Turkey offers a lot in terms of natural scenic beauty.	.6923	4.164			
Turkey's cities are attractive.	.6912	3.842			
Turkey has important museums and art galleries.	.6726	4.196			
A holiday in Turkey is a real adventure.	.6377	4.079			
Turkey has pleasant weather.	.6031	4.216			
Turkey has rich cultural heritage.	.5931	4.669			
Turkey has plenty of places to get away from crowds.	.5685	3.700			
The local people in Turkey are friendly.	.5516	3.865			
Good-quality restaurants and hotels are easy to find in Turkey.	.5469	3.448			
Turkey is a restful and relaxing place to visit.	.5369	3.552			
Grand mean		4.120			
Factor 2: Affective Image (Socioeconomic and Cultural Distance)					
The food in Turkey is similar to ours.	.7732	3.269	3.932	10.9	.89
Local architectural styles in Turkey are similar to ours.	.7668	3.280			
Turkish lifestyles and customs are quite similar to ours.	.7228	3.201			
Turks have a high standard of living.	.6370	3.940			
Turks dress similar to Americans.	.6025	3.713			
Turkey's highways and roads are in good condition.	.5918	4.024			
Turkish standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high.	.5683	3.923			
In general, Turkey is a safe place to visit.	.5083	4.154			
Many people speak English in Turkey.	.5283	4.234			
Turkish culture is mainly European.	.4683	3.996			
Women are socially liberated in Turkey.	.4867	3.733			
Grand mean		3.678			
Factor 3: Affective Image (Lack of Natural Attractions and Tourist Services)					
Shopping facilities are poor in Turkey.	.7136	3.371	2.230	6.2	.65
Turkey lacks nature preserves and wilderness areas.	.6965	3.767			
It is difficult to get good service in restaurants/hotels in Turkey.	.6724	3.655			
Turkey has mostly small towns and villages.	.5591	2.996			
Grand mean		3.450			
Factor 4: Affective Image (Comfort/Safety and Tourist Facilitation)					
In general, Turkey is a safe place to visit.	.7551	3.498	1.392	3.9	.79
Good tourist information is readily available in Turkey.	.5537	3.371			
Tours/excursions are readily available in Turkey.	.6541	3.842			
Grand mean		3.570			
Factor 5: Affective Image (Outdoor Recreation Opportunities)					
Turkey has excellent skiing opportunities.	.7528	2.653	1.208	3.4	.80
Turkey has many national parks.	.6869	3.052			
Grand mean		2.850			
Factor 6: Affective Image (Perceived Value of Vacation)					
Prices are low in Turkey.	.7356	3.812	1.065	3.0	.74
There are many inexpensive hotels in Turkey.	.6693	3.919			
Turkey offers good value for my holiday.	.5441	3.582			
Grand mean		3.770			
Total variance explained				58.3	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.91. n = 461-484. Nineteen of 56 original items were eliminated from the analysis.
a. On a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*.

The first factor, Local Attractions and Hospitality (Cronbach's α = 92), explained 31 % of the variance in the model. The second factor, Socioeconomic and Cultural Distance (α = .89), explained an additional 10.9% of the

variance. This factor refers generally to perceived similarities and/or differences between the Turkish and U.S. cultures and ways of life. The safety item in Factor 2 appears to be out of place; however, a close inspection reveals that the safety item in Factor 2 is well suited because it indicates that the respondents associated finding a "safe place" with "being in an environment akin to their own home." They may feel safe in the United States, and to the extent that Turkey is similar to their culture, Turkey is perceived to be safe as well. An inspection of the way the items loaded on respective factors reveals that some items loaded on two factors at the same time. Rather than dropping the correlated items, they were left within their respective factors (2 and 3) since their inclusion theoretically made sense. In fact, when this item was dropped from either one of the factors, the alpha coefficient decreased substantially. By leaving the item in both factors, we allowed some room for correlation between the factors, thus making the analyses oblique rather than orthogonal. Nevertheless, this manipulation seemed statistically plausible. Lack of Natural Attractions and Tourist Services ($\alpha = .65$), the third factor, included four items and explained an additional 6.2% of the variance. Respondents answered statements such as "Shopping facilities are poor in Turkey" and "Turkey lacks nature preserves and wilderness areas."

TABLE 4
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF COGNITIVE IMAGES

Factor Name	Factor Loading	Mean[a]	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Cognitive Image (Safe and Hospitable Environment)					
As a tourist destination, Turkey is . . .					
Scary/reassuring	−.7256	4.637	8.051	42.4	.87
Safe/dangerous	.6998	3.316			
Clean/dirty	.5879	3.398			
Secure/risky	.5797	3.228			
Hospitable/inhospitable	−.5496	3.888			
Undeveloped/developed	.5360	4.393			
Stressful/calming	.5259	4.109			
Grand mean		3.850			
Factor 2: Cognitive Image (General Mood and Vacation Atmosphere)					
As a tourist destination, Turkey is . . .					
Important/unimportant	.7571	4.482	2.467	13.0	.93
Valuable/worthless	.7505	4.743			
Meaningful/meaningless	.7022	4.829			
Interesting/uninteresting	.6886	4.847			
Good/bad	.6592	4.448			
Attractive/unattractive	.6490	4.510			
Grand mean		4.645			
Factor 3: Cognitive Image (Relaxing Effect)					
As a tourist destination, Turkey is . . .					
Relaxing/stressful	.9827	4.279	1.389	7.3	.87
Comforting/terrifying	.7371	3.793			
Grand mean		4.036			
Factor 4: Cognitive Image (Authenticity of Experience)					
As a tourist destination, Turkey is . . .					
Artificial/authentic	.6541	2.630	1.092	5.7	.76
Boring/exciting	.6348	3.369			
Ordinary/exotic	.6073	2.847			
Unpleasurable/pleasurable	.5047	3.800			
Grand mean		3.162			
Total variance explained				68.4	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.91. n = 484-494. Nine of 26 original items were eliminated from the analysis.
a. On a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*.

Interestingly, the respondents appeared to associate small towns with lack of services and lack of attractions and services, a rather odd conclusion, it seems. However, according to the central place theory, lower order places such as small towns and villages are expected to have less opportunity for a variety of services. In this respect, the results make sense; however, the low Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates that the stability of this factor is an issue in this analysis, even though theoretically the items included in the factor make intuitive sense. The

fourth factor, Comfort/Safety and Tourist Facilitation ($\alpha = .79$), explained another 3.9% of the variance. The mean score of factor items (grand mean = 3.57) indicates that respondents slightly disagreed with domain items. This finding implies that potential travelers to Turkey may not have access to adequate information about the country, which further fuels negative perceptions regarding its safety. The fifth factor, Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, contained only two items and explained 3.4% of the variance. While it is preferable for a factor to include a minimum of three items, a careful evaluation of mean values for each item (grand mean = 2.85), and Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.80), it was decided that the factor was relevant and should not be discarded. The sixth factor, Perceived Value of Vacation ($\alpha = .74$), explained an additional 3% of the total variance. Respondents' answer means for such statements as "Prices are low in Turkey," "There are many inexpensive hotels in Turkey," and "Turkey offers good value for my holiday" (grand mean = 3.77) suggest their slight disagreement with items.

Cognitive Images

Four factors explaining 68.4% of the variance were extracted from the initial 26-item semantic differential, cognitive 14-item image scale. Table 4 illustrates domain descriptors, factor loadings, means, eigenvalues, percentage of explained variance, and reliability coefficients. Seven of the initial scale items were eliminated from further analysis due to loadings below .45 or simultaneous loadings. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from a high of 0.93 (Factor 1) to a low of 0.76 (Factor 4), indicating that the variables exhibited very high correlations within their respective factor groupings. The four conceptually meaningful factors were labeled as Safe and Hospitable Environment, General Mood and Vacation Atmosphere, Relaxing Effect, and Authenticity of Experience.

TABLE 5
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Factor Name	Factor Loading	Mean[a]	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Information Source (Social and Personal Communication Channels)					
Turkish acquaintances	.8515	3.735	10.209	60.1	.93
Social organizations	.6473	4.244			
Business colleagues	.8116	3.931			
Turkish embassy/consulate	.7542	4.294			
Internet	.7310	3.845			
Friends and family members	.7123	3.478			
Travel agent/tour operator	.6224	3.874			
General word-of-mouth information	.4858	3.524			
Grand mean		3.847			
Factor 2: Information Source (Printed and Audio/Visual Media)					
Television/radio news about Turkey	.8390	3.401	1.442	8.5	.94
Newspaper articles about Turkey	.8031	3.455			
Magazine articles about Turkey	.7754	3.327			
Newspaper/magazine advertisements about Turkey	.7097	3.874			
Television shows about Turkey	.6999	3.685			
Travel programs/videos about Turkey	.6920	3.496			
Movies about Turkey	.6707	3.731			
Books in library	.5062	3.686			
Brochures/pamphlets about Turkey	.5144	3.625			
Grand mean		3.590			
Total variance explained				68.5	

Note: KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measure of sampling adequacy = 0.95. *n* = 484-494.
a. On a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*.

Information Sources

Factor analysis of the 17-item Likert-type information source scale produced two factors explaining 68.5% of the variance (see Table 5). The factors were labeled Social and Personal Communication Channels and Printed and Audio/ Visual Media. Social and personal sources (i.e., social organizations, business colleagues, friends, family members) explained 60. 1 % of the variance, while formal sources (i.e., television/radio news, books,

movies, travel brochures) explained the remaining 8.5% of the variance. Top information sources used by respondents were magazine articles about Turkey (57.1%), newspaper articles (54%), television and radio news (54%), and friends and family members (48%). The least used sources used were the Turkish embassy or consulate (30%) and social organizations (32.4%).

Test of the Predictive Model

To determine predictive powers of the affective and cognitive images along with information sources, we calculated factor scores for respondents on each of the 12 factors. For-ward multiple regression was subsequently performed using the scores along with other independent variables to predict respondents' likelihood of choosing Turkey as their next vacation destination (see Table 6). Twenty-one independent variables were entered into the regression model, including affective and cognitive image factors, information source factors, Turkey's overall appeal, familiarity with Turkey, past travel experience, intention for future travel, and demo-graphic variables. The F-statistic was calculated for each variable while evaluating its unique contribution to the model as all factors were simultaneously used to predict the likelihood of choosing Turkey (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996, p. 50). The forward regression analysis identified nine independent variables as statistically significant in explaining the error variation in the dependent variable. The independent variables that met the criteria and were consequently added to the model, in order of importance, were as follows: (1) Turkey's overall appeal, (2) safe and hospitable environment (Factor 1: Cognitive), (3) general mood and vacation atmosphere (Factor 2: Cognitive), (4) travel experience, (5) relaxing effect (Factor 3: Cognitive), (6) local attractions and hospitality (Factor 5: Affective), (7) authenticity of experience (Factor 4: Cognitive), (8) social and personal communication channels (Factor 1: Information Sources), and (9) comfort/ safety and tourist facilitation (Factor 4: Affective). The regression model ($F = 36.24$, $df= 9,542$, $p =.0001$) explained nearly 38% of the variation in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.376$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.365$). The model can be considered parsimonious since the difference between the values of adjusted R^2 and multiple R^2 is not large. Hence, one might conclude that the independent variables in the model are sufficient to account for significant error variation in the model (Gujarati 1988).

Similar to t-values, the standardized estimates (beta coefficients) of each variable indicate its relative importance in explaining the likelihood of choosing Turkey as a vacation destination. In this model, the standardized estimate of Turkey's appeal suggests that this variable was positively related to the likelihood of choosing Turkey as a destination.

TABLE 6

FORWARD MULTIPLE REGRESSION MODEL FOR TURKEY'S IMAGE AS A VACATION DESTINATION

Step	Independent Variable Entered	Standardized Coefficient Beta	Bivariate R	F-Value	p-Value	t-Value	p	Standard Error	Tolerance
1	Turkey's overall appeal	0.244	0.288	223.37	.000	9.40	.000	.025	.717
2	Perception of safe/hospitable environment (Factor 1: Cognitive)	−0.145	0.311	123.62	.000	−4.07	.001	.036	.845
3	General mood and vacation atmosphere (Factor 2: Cognitive)	−0.133	0.326	88.40	.000	−3.74	.002	.035	.869
4	Past international travel experience	−0.026	0.341	70.90	.000	−3.42	.007	.007	.973
5	Perception of relaxation (Factor 3: Cognitive)	−0.083	0.352	59.31	.000	−2.71	.007	.031	.965
6	Local attractions and hospitality (Factor 5: Affective)	0.073	0.359	50.96	.000	2.39	.010	.031	.966
7	Perceptions of authenticity of experience (Factor 4: Cognitive)	0.090	0.365	44.77	.000	2.45	.049	.037	.884
8	Influence of social/personal communication channels (Factor 1: Information Sources)	0.064	0.371	40.03	.000	2.08	.014	.031	.957
9	Perceptions of comfort/safety and tourist facilitation (Factor 4: Affective)	−0.063	0.376	36.25	.000	−2.04	.042	.031	.931

Note: Dependent variable = likelihood of choosing Turkey as next vacation destination. Overall model: $F = 36.24$, $df = 9,542$; $R^2 = 0.38$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$; $p = .0001$.

Furthermore, it contributed the most to the regression model by carrying a weight almost three times more than Factor 3 (0.323/.119 = 2.71). Similarly, the standardized estimates of Factor 2 ($\beta = 0.301$) suggests that this factor contributes almost two and a half times more than Factor 3 (0.301/.119 = 2.5) or seven times more than Factor 1 to the model. The resulting regression coefficients indicated that Turkey's overall appeal had a positive relationship with the dependent variable and was the most important factor ($\beta = 244$) in explaining potential travelers' choices involving Turkey. On the other hand, respondents' perceptions of Turkey as a safe and hospitable environment (Factor 1: Cognitive) were negative ($\beta = -0.145$). Consequently, the likelihood of choosing Turkey decreased by 14%. Turkey's general mood and vacation atmosphere (Factor 2: Cognitive) had an inverse relationship with the dependent variable; in fact, the likelihood of choosing Turkey decreased by 13% ($\beta = -0.133$).

Past travel experience (total number of trips taken) decreased scores in the dependent variable by 17 (2.6%) ($\beta = -0.026$). $H2_0$ was rejected. Respondents' perceptions that Turkey lacks a relaxing effect (Factor 3: Cognitive) decreased their likelihood of choosing it as a destination by 8.3% ($\beta = -0.083$). Affective images about Turkey's local attractions and hospitality (Factor 5: Affective) were positively related to its selection as a vacation destination. Similarly, perceptions of experiencing authenticity (Factor 4: Cognitive) ($\beta = 0.09$) and the influence of social and personal communication channels (Factor 1: Information Sources) ($\beta = 0.064$) were positively related to the dependent variable. Affective images of comfort and safety and tourist facilitation (Factor 4: Affective), representing the weakest variable in the model, decreased the likelihood of choosing Turkey as a destination ($\beta = -0.063$). Regression results indicate that none of the assumptions of the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression were violated; therefore, the obtained parameters are BLUE (best, linear, unbiased, and efficient) (Gujarati 1988).

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turkey as an emerging tourist destination has an undefined position in the regional and global tourism market. Its image among potential travelers is particularly hazy and needs to be investigated to generate more travelers from significant markets, such as the United States. Potential travelers' purchase decisions are often influenced by cognitive and affective images (MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997). The cur-rent study has attempted to measure and evaluate images of Turkey using potential travelers from the United States as the sample population. The results indicate that Turkey has not been favorably positioned in the minds of these consumers. The number of significant factors in the cognitive domain (all four) indicates that cognitive images are prevalent in determining travelers' intentions to vacation in Turkey. Only two of the six affective image domains were significantly related to travel decisions. The findings confirm earlier claims (Dann 1996; Gartner 1993) that cognitive images (organic) are formed prior to affective images—which may develop during the information search process. We suspect that the respondents did not have Turkey in their consideration set among other alternative destinations and thus were not at the stage of developing affective images. However, they did form organic images through a variety of sources. Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is that respondents highly valued the information gained through personal and social communication channels in developing an interest in vacationing in Turkey.

Because tourism embodies services and experiences designed for travelers that cannot be evaluated prior to purchase, word of mouth becomes an important factor when deciding which destinations to choose. In this respect, this finding is not surprising—personal and social communication channels are the source of trustworthy information about a potential destination. This finding supports the belief that tourists' experiences must be enhanced and well managed so that travelers return home from their vacation destinations holding positive images in order to be able to spread positive word of mouth.

The present study has both practical and theoretical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the factor analysis and subsequent regression analysis of both affective and cognitive image items revealed that these two domains may be evaluated as separate entities, in that they had high tolerance coefficients when used simultaneously in the predictive model. In other words, low multicollinearity among these image factors suggests that these images can be treated individually. When designing advertising campaigns, a careful

selection of words that would capture the essence of these seemingly separate image factors might help tourism marketers and destination managers to reach the intended target market.

From a more practical perspective, Turkey's destination marketers must pay particular attention to the country's image as a safe and secure environment. The reality of having a safe and secure place for vacationers may not translate into positive perceptions about the same destination since image is so subjective (MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997). Factors mostly beyond the control of any particular destination play an important role in shaping the organic images of potential travelers about destinations. For example, an ordinary movie (i.e., *Midnight Express*) may create an almost permanent negative image of Turkey in the minds of potential travelers that lasts many years. Although, no scientific study has been conducted to measure the impact of the movie, its impact continues to echo in Turkey's tourism circles. In this regard, managing perceptions of human rights (e.g., prisoner rights) issues can have an impact on whether Turkey is viewed as safe and secure—or a friendly or hostile country. Instead of passive reaction to any kind of negative events or media coverage, Turkish tourism officials and industry leaders should take proactive measures to deal with possible problems. Sirakaya, Shephard, and McLelland (1998), reporting on their results of an experimental study, argued that inaction on the part of destination marketers can be counterproductive as decision makers constantly reevaluate their decisions on obtaining new information. Their evidence suggests that decision makers are very sensitive toward issues of safety and security at a destination. For example, in early 1999, broadcast news coverage of PKK's attacks in major cities in Europe and around the world, combined with threats against tourists visiting Turkey, resulted in thousands of trip cancellations in Turkey during the winter season of 1999 and 2000. Similarly, Sönmez and Graefe (1998) as well as others (i.e., Burns and Cleverdon 1995; Edgell 1995) have suggested that international terrorism and an unstable political environment have major impacts on travelers' image formation process. The same can be said for natural disasters—the devastating earthquake in Turkey that killed more than 30,000 people in 1999 had a similar impact on bookings and perhaps images of Turkey's safety held by potential travelers.

The marketer's challenge is how to manage destination images that would ultimately result in positive behavioral outcomes in a climate of numerous events (natural or human caused) that influence image formation. Experimental studies that isolate the impact of a single-image factor on destination choices and understand the role of images in decision-making processes would enhance the body of knowledge in the area of image research. So far, this and other studies in the same area have not been able to establish a clear causal relationship between images and travel behavior due to the method of investigation (mostly survey research), which can be considered a limitation for this study as well. Thus, experimental studies that would isolate the cause of changes in consumers' perceptions might establish clear causal relationships.

The measurement of images has been limited to verbal responses, but evidence from related literature suggests the existence of limitations on individuals' capacity for expressing their behavior in a discursive mode. Thus, measurements of images should not only include verbal responses but also visual measurement devices. Understanding the image formation process using innovative and holistic approaches that combine quantitative methods along with qualitative approaches (in-depth interviews, pre-interviews and post-interviews, etc.) would increase the reliability and validity of the studies. Moreover, since travel behavior is a complex phenomenon, future studies must involve not only images of a single destination such as Turkey but also the relative position of that destination among competing destinations—in this case, per-haps contrasting images of other Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Egypt, Israel, Tunisia, Italy, and Spain as Baloglu and McCleary (1999) have done. In this study, while the degree of familiarity with the destination was not found to be significant, it is inherently logical that the more travelers know about a destination, the more comfortable they will feel—just as travelers may be intimidated by places about which they know little. It was difficult to determine the effect of familiarity on destination choices, but this relationship needs further investigation. In addition, it is also logical that potential travelers' personal values and lifestyles have a bearing on the types of vacations and destinations they select. The understanding of the role of image and the interaction of image with variables such as values and lifestyles of individuals certainly would provide a more complete picture of travelers' decision-making processes.

A clear understanding of travelers' images of a destination is crucial for developing successful marketing and positioning strategies. It is equally important to study travelers' behaviors, motivations, and perceptions and images of destinations across subsegments. Marketing researchers argue that consumer groups segmented by sociodemographic or psychographic variables may represent a subculture because of their distinctive value systems, motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles; accordingly, it appears that there may be significant differences in needs, wants, and behaviors between age groups and their images of products, services, and destinations (Michman 1991; Sirakaya, Shephard, and McLelland 1998). Future studies could use a priori segmentation of a potential market (e.g., cohorts, student market) before assessing the images of destinations.

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