THE IMAGE OF TURKEY IN THE SOUTH AMERICA TOURISM MARKET: A RESEARCH ON MERCOSUR COUNTRY CITIZENS[i]

A Imagem da Turquia no Mercado Turístico da América do Sul: Uma Pesquisa sobre os cidadãos do país do Mercosul

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ABSTRACT

The primary purposes of this research are to explain: what is the perceived image of Turkey in South America, investigate the effects of the perceived image on destination selection, and determine what needs to be done to create a positive image. Full-Member Countries of MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur – Southern Common Market) were defined as the research population. Quantitative research methods were used in data collection. The sample was determined by non-probability sampling: purposive sampling technique. Data were obtained from 508 participants through a questionnaire. The obtained data was conducted through frequency analysis, factor analysis, t-test, and regression analysis. The result points out that the country image factors affect the perceived destination image, while the cultural similarity and the perceived destination image factors affect the cognitive country image. Also, there is a reciprocal relationship between the cognitive country image and the perceived destination image variables. The conclusion is that the region's awareness of Turkey as a travel destination is limited, Turkey is not noticed among the most in-demand travel destinations, and the image of the country as a tourism destination should be built more positive than it currently is for Turkey to attract more tourists from the region.

KEYWORDS
Tourism; Country image; South America; Mercosur; Turkey.

RESUMO

O objetivo desta pesquisa é o de apresentar qual é a imagem da Turquia, percebida na América do Sul, investigar os efeitos da imagem percebida na seleção do destino e determinar o que precisa ser feito para criar uma imagem positiva. Como universo da pesquisa foram incluídos os países membros plenos do Mercosul. Metodologicamente trata-se de pesquisa quantitativa, a amostra para coleta de dados seguindo amostragem intencional de tipo não probabilística. Os dados foram obtidos por meio de um questionário, com 508 participantes. Análise de frequência, análise fatorial, teste t e análise de regressão foram realizadas com os dados obtidos. Como resultado, os fatores de imagem do país afetam a imagem percebida do destino, enquanto os fatores de semelhança cultural e de imagem percebida do destino afetam a imagem cognitiva

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do país. Também foi determinado que existe uma relação recíproca entre a imagem cognitiva do país e as variáveis percebidas da imagem do destino. Concluiu-se que a percepção sobre a Turquia na região é limitada, o país não sendo visto entre os destinos mais procurados para viagens, ou mesmo apresentando-se nas mentes dos entrevistados como destino turístico. Para atrair mais turistas da região, a imagem da Turquia deverá ser mais positiva do que a atual situação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Turismo; Imagem do país; América do Sul; Mercosul; Turquia.

INTRODUCTION

With the development of technology and fierce competition, consumers have many choices. At this point, the image of countries plays a crucial role in choosing a tourism destination. Consumers use country image to eliminate options when making purchasing decisions (Güzel, 2009). Each country is identified with various icons of its history and culture, and a country image is formed through branding (Onay, 2008). Country image can be associated with a country's domestic politics, cultural events, people, and objects, but it can also be evaluated in terms of international trade (Mossberg & Kleppe, 2005). A country's image is constructed through the experiences of tourists and visitors, visual aids presented at specific locations, and reflections of the country's economic, political, and educational systems (Öztürk & Özdemir Çakır, 2015). In previous studies, researchers concluded that consumers' judgments of product quality, value, risk perception, and willingness to purchase are strongly influenced by the product's country of origin (Allred, Chakraborty, & Miller, 1999). Country image is not only a situation that activates cognitive stereotypical thoughts in consumers' memory but can also affect consumers purchase intention with emotional evaluations about the country. Consumers can evaluate almost any topic through their emotions and shape their attitudes (Şentürk, 2018).

It is important to distinguish between country image, which is the sum of beliefs about a country and influenced by economic, political, and geographic factors, and destination image, which refers to how the country is perceived as a destination (Alvarez & Korzay, 2008). The concept of destination image encompasses individual or collective mental thoughts or concepts about a destination and plays a key role in destination selection (Sevim, et al., 2013). Destination image has a greater impact on tourists' decision to choose a destination than the tangible products offered there and plays a more crucial role. The image of a destination is much more important than the tourism products it offers. (Akdemir & Kırmızıgül, 2015). Factors such as accessibility, amenities, attractions, prices, and image; It is effective in the perception of a destination as a

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place of attraction (Çakıcı & Aksu, 2007). The importance of the image factor in choosing a destination is one of the issues that are focused on in destination management.

When examining the literature, it is found that perceived country image has a high influence on tourists' behavior, purchase decision process and purchase intentions (Güzel, 2009; Sevim et al., 2013; Ateşoğlu & Türker, 2013; Aydın & Biçer, 2017). The fact that the knowledge, perceptions, and thoughts of the citizens of the region where the research was conducted about Turkey as a tourism destination have not been researched before shows the original value of this research. Aim of the research is, South American citizens' perceptions about Turkey (the overall image of Turkey in their minds) and how they view Turkey as a destination. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of regional citizens' perceptions about Turkey on their preference for Turkey as a destination, with a destination management perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Country image - Studies on country image date back to the 1930s and 1940s and dealt with national stereotypes and the perception of nations. Beginning in the mid-1960s, researchers began to pay more attention to the concept of country of origin, and it became a popular topic in international marketing research. As in Roth and Diamantopoulos' (2009) study, most studies on country image are based on attitude theory. Most researchers have focused on consumers' perceptions or stereotypes about countries, which correspond to the cognitive component (Zhang et al., 2018). Country image consists of historical, cultural, military, political, and economic components (Aydın & Biçer, 2017). According to another view, country image is composed two different but interrelated components: the cognitive component and the emotional component. The scope of the cognitive component is people's ideas and beliefs about another country, while the scope of the emotional component is people's emotional reactions and feelings about another country (Maher & Carter, 2011, cited in; Taşçı, 2019).

Country image can be associated with objects, events, or people from a country, with politics and culture as well as with international affairs. Products are excluded from the definition of country image, but country image can be associated with certain products (Mossberg & Kleppe, 2005). Country image emerges with the combination of many attributes of a country such as social, political, cultural, economic, political, and geopolitical. These elements help shape the perceptions of the country image of tourists. The perception of country image has an important effect on the formation of attitudes towards the country in question. The correct management

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of the image is only possible with the correct determination of the current country image (Ateşoğlu & Türker, 2013).

Country image covers all impressions, feelings, opinions, beliefs, and simulations of the country. The associations, the news in the media about that country, the political relations with the mentioned country, the position of the artists and athletes in the world, their works, successes/failures, in summary; popularity can be obtained from different sources such as images of companies or products originating from that country (Yalçınkaya, 2006). Country image is shaped primarily based on information obtained from various channels, with experiences and thoughts about the country or country. These channels; entertainment (film), communication, politics (domestic and foreign policy), personal experiences and rumors (Şentürk, 2018).

Relation of Country Image with Tourism - An advances in technology, increase and cheapness of mass transportation vehicles have enabled people to travel more easily and frequently. Thus, people can base their images of the countries they travel on from their own personal experiences. More importantly, with the advantage of the development of communication tools, people can sometimes access a lot of information about those countries without even visiting them (Altınbaşak & Yalçın, 2008). Country images can affect tourism movements as well as political and economic relations with other countries because country image is an important factor that affects many factors from people's perspectives on products to their preferences. Consumers use the country image to eliminate possibilities in their purchasing decision (Güzel, 2009). Country image and destination image developed in parallel but unconnected with each other at roughly the same time. The results clearly showed that image is a very important concept in influencing people's product, service, and destination choices (Zhang et al., 2018). When marketing a country in a competitive industry such as tourism, it can be helpful to have a basic rating of the target market's view of the country to be promoted (Martin & Eroğlu, 1993).

Nadeau et al. (2008) put forward a country image model that is formed by the combination of the overlapping points in the destination image and product-country image. Attitudes such as beliefs, behaviors, valuations; It has been examined together with the developed model that shows a broader country image model, which is revealed from the product-country image (Nadeau, et al., 2008 cited in Taşçı, 2019). Lindblom et al. (2017), in their study investigating how individuals' cognitive and affective country images affect their destination beliefs and how these beliefs are associated with individuals' travel intentions, found that cognitive country image is

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positively related to emotional country image. The findings show that both affective and cognitive country images are positively related to destination beliefs and destination beliefs are positively related to travel intentions (Lindblom et al., 2017).

Üner et al. (2006), in their research; Istanbul is a desired destination in terms of its 'authentic cultural and historical attractions', 'impressive scenery', 'shopping opportunities' and 'hospitality of people'. They concluded that it is relatively worse than the others in terms of variables such as cleanliness, safety, adequacy of health facilities, and infrastructure quality. To Farhadi Andarabi and Meydan Uygur (2017), while the participants stated that the news sources about Turkey as TV programs and movies are highly positive about beaches, water resources, natural beauties, and outdoor activities, they negatively evaluated people's ability to speak English, security and infrastructure facilities. They stated that the general touristic image perceptions of the participants about Turkey were positive. Ateşoğlu & Türker (2013), in their research, observed that the perceived image of Turkey by tourists visiting Turkey is not high enough. Although the image perception shows a positive development with the contribution of the experiences after the visit, it is observed that the image perception especially before the visit is very low.

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The research was carried out in the South America region, in the countries Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, which are members of the Mercosur [Southern Common Market]. Since they represent approximately 60% of the South American region, were determined as the study population. The region determined as the study population is briefly explained below.

MERCOSUR [Mercado Común del Sur-Spanish / Mercado Comum do Sul-Portugues / Southern Common Market] - Mercosur was established in 1991 with the agreement signed in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay. It consists of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay (Donduran, 2020). It is a Customs Union organization that foresees free trade and common trade policies among its members and aims to create a common market in the European Union [EU] model at the final stage (Türk, 2014). Approximately 300 million people live in the region covering an area of approximately 15 million square meters and represents the 5th largest economy in the world (Mercosur, 2020). Mercosur, which represents approximately 67% of South America's geography and 47% of its population, is the most important among the integration studies carried out in the region (Özmelek, 2017).

The Permanent Secretariat of Mercosur is in Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay. The most

competent body in making political decisions regarding the integration process is the Common Market Council. The Common Market Council, which consists of heads of state, meets twice a year and its hosting changes on a rotational basis. Decisions taken by the Council are executed by the Common Market Group, which consists of foreign and economy ministers, central bank governors and country coordinators (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). Brazil, which is the largest trading partner of the member countries, ranks first in the foreign sales of other member countries. Argentina makes 31% of its total exports, Uruguay 34%, and Paraguay 38% to Brazil. Brazil, on the other hand, makes the most important part of its export to the European Union [EU] countries, which corresponds to 31% of its total export. This situation shows that Brazil is an important raw material import actor in intra-regional commercial activities, on the other hand, it is the country that realizes the most important part of the foreign sales made outside the region and has the highest foreign exchange flow (Şentürken, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

In the survey, the sample was determined to be the working population of the full member countries of Mercosur. Since the researchers in Turkey know little about the region, the general sampling methods might be ineffective, and the past experiences on these issues, professional research companies that conduct research in the region, especially in the tourism market, were used in the selection of the samples. The Mercosur member countries were considered as a whole, and a sample was drawn. One of the reasons for this is that the populations of Mercosur countries are extremely disproportionate. For example, while the population of Brazil is about 209 million, the population of Uruguay is about 3.5 million.

The fact that Mercosur represents more than 65% of the South American continent is also considered an advantage. The aim is to reach people whose income level is at a certain level. People whose income is below a certain level and people who have not traveled abroad in the last 2 years or do not plan to do so were not included in the study. For this reason, was used deliberate/decisional sampling, one of the nonprobability samples. The questionnaire was delivered online to the participants. The number of available questionnaires was 551, and the option 'I have no idea' was added to the scale on a 5-point Likert scale. Those who checked 'I have no idea' for 25% or more of the total 39 statements were excluded from the set of 43 questionnaires to avoid problems in the analysis.

As a result, 508 questionnaires with the value to be analyzed were obtained. Altunışık et al.

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(2010) stated that there are four factors that should be considered to reduce the risk of error in the selection of the sample size. The number and quality of the sample corresponds to the four elements mentioned; (1) Sample sizes of more than 30 and less than 500 are adequate for most studies; (2) If samples are divided into subgroups [e.g., education, age, gender], the sample size for each category must be at least 30; (3) For many multivariate analyzes, care should be taken to ensure that the sample size is several times [preferably at least 10 times or more] the number of variables used in the study; and (4) For the study population of 100 thousand or more, at least 384 participants should be used.

During the preparation of the scale, the literature was reviewed and previous studies on this subject were examined. In the creation of the survey form; Martin & Eroğlu (1993), Baloğlu & Mangaloğlu (2001), Altınbaşak (2004), Alvarez & Korzay (2008), Bilgin Turna (2013), Önder (2014), Aliyev (2014), Mamadou Yacouba (2017), and Zhang et al. (2018) scales were used. The questionnaire consists of 3 parts. In the first part, the expressions to measure the variables "Individual Experience," "Cognitive Country Image," "Cultural Similarity," and "Image of the Destination Country" are given. These statements consist of "1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree, 0-No Opinion" created with a 5-point Likert scale. In the second part, the expressions used to measure the variable "familiarity" are given. These statements were prepared with a 5-point Likert scale and consist of "1-I have never heard of it, 2-I have rarely heard of it, 3-I have often heard of it, 4-I know it, 5-I know it very well". In the third section, "Three words that come to his mind when he talks about Turkey and Turks", "Whether he has ever traveled to Turkey", "The sources he considers most effective for choosing a destination", "Whether he has ever traveled outside the South American continent, where he has traveled to" were given. In addition, statements with some demographic information are also provided in the third section.

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The data obtained from the survey form answered by the participants were analyzed using the SPSS program.

RESULTS

The results of the frequency analysis, showing the demographic data of the participants and various information about their overall travel, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency values of participants' demographic information

		Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
Marital Status	Single	252	49,6	**Education**	Primary Education	7	1,4
	Married	253	49,8		High school	90	17,7
	Missed	3	0,6		Associate degree	186	36,6
	Total	508	100		Bachelor	177	34,8
		Frequency	Percent		Postgraduate	48	9,4
Income	High	107	21,1		Total	508	100
	Middle	401	78,9			Frequency	Percent
	Total	508	100	**Age**	18-29	168	33,1
		Frequency	Percent		30-44	244	48
Gender	Male	304	59,8		45-60	87	17,1
	Female	204	40,2		> 60	9	1,8
	Total	508	100		Total	508	100

Countries			**Intercontinental Travel**	
	Frequency	Percent	**Visited Regions**	**Number of Visitors**
Argentina	145	28,5	Europe	607
Brazil	145	28,5	North America	90
Paraguay	104	20,5	Asia	75
Uruguay	114	22,4	Africa	22
Total	508	100	Oceania	10
			Arabian Peninsula	7

(Non-South American) Travel Abroad			**Travelers to Turkey**		
	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
No	133	26,2	No	418	82,3
Yes	375	73,8	Yes	90	17,7
Total	508	100	Total	508	100

Source: by authors.

Considering that people above a certain income level can participate in intercontinental travel, the importance of this fact is better understood. Looking at the income of the participants, the majority (78.9%) reported that they have a middle income. The average age of the participants is mostly between 18-44 years old (81,3%). The distribution of the participants' nationalities, their travel status abroad and to Turkey, and the regions they visited are indicated. 73.8% of all participants travel abroad, except for South America. The first screening criterion applied before answering the survey is that their income status is above a certain level, while the other is whether they have ever traveled to a country other than South America and/or whether they have planned an intercontinental trip within 2 years. For this reason, the remaining 26.2% should be considered as those who plan such a trip within 2 years, even if they have not yet traveled intercontinental. For those who have traveled to Turkey before, the rate is 17.7%. This statement was included in the questionnaire because it was assumed that the responses of participants who have traveled to Turkey before would be different from those who have never

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traveled there.

The table also shows the regions that the participants have already visited. Participants were asked to indicate a maximum of three countries, but they were not required to fill in all three fields. Here it can be seen that participants have most frequently traveled to the European continent (607 times).

Factor analysis was conducted to size the expressions used to measure the participants' perception of Turkey and finally to test the research model. Factor Analysis provides the explanation of a variable that depends on more than one variable (Tetik Küçükelçi, 2019). The purpose of explanatory factor analysis is to make variables into dimensions (Akyüz, 2018). There are some conditions regarding the number of samples and expressions for factor analysis. These are (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017): (1) the number of samples should be larger than the number of variables, (2) the sample size should be at least 50, and (3) the number of observations per statement should be kept high (ideal ratio 1 to 5). The study meets all these conditions. Also, for the data to be suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value should be greater than 0.60 and the Barlett sphericity test should be statistically significant (p<0.001) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Küçük & İspir, 2017).

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Reliability test was conducted to measure internal consistency to carry out factor analysis. Reliability is the degree to which a test or scale consistently and consistently measures what it intends to measure. In the internal consistency analysis approach, internal consistency analysis is performed by looking at the correlation value between the expressions in the scale by using a Likert scale, which consists of many expressions, while measuring the concept. The most preferred method for this measurement is the alpha coefficient, also known as Cronbach's Alpha. Depending on Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient, the reliability of a scale is evaluated at certain levels. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value is between 0.7-0.8, an acceptable value, a good value between 0.8-0.9, and a value of 0.9 and above is considered excellent (Yardımcı, 2016).

In the study, scales applied to different groups in the literature were used. Since the research area is different from the scales used [region, country, nationality], it was concluded that the explanatory factor analysis would give more accurate results first. There are 39 statements regarding the perceived image of Turkey in the scale used in the research. All statements (except for Q6, which was derived from the reliability test) were analyzed. While creating the dimensions, factors with an Eigenvalue greater than one are considered, the others are not included in the model. Eigenvalue expresses the total variance explained by a factor (Karagöz,

2019).

Table 2. Explanatory factor analysis

	Factor Load	Eigenvalue	A. Variance (%)	Cronbach Alpha
Familiarity (ASI)		**8,029**	**27,685**	**0,853**
Important tourism centers in Turkey	,756			
Cappadocia	,738			
Mediterranean and Aegean Coasts	,730			
Tourism opportunities in Turkey	,724			
Istanbul	,713			
General level of knowledge about Turkey	,669			
Ephesus House of The Virgin Mary	,573			
Cognitive Country Image (BUI)		**2,942**	**10,143**	**0,835**
It has a stable economy.	,767			
Technology is good in Turkey.	,709			
Turkey is a safe country.	,673			
The law is well applied in Turkey.	,666			
Turks have high living standards.	,621			
Turkey's hygiene conditions are suitable.	,605			
Turkey is a democratic country.	,539			
Perceived Destination Image (ADI)		**2,307**	**7,956**	**0,816**
There is a lot to visit & see in Turkey	,770			
Turkish Cuisine is rich.	,720			
I want to travel to Turkey.	,659			
People's overall culture level is good.	,550			
People value art	,545			
Accommodation in Turkey is good.	,543			
Cultural Similarity/Difference (KB)		**1,549**	**5,340**	**0,840**
Our sense of fun is like that of the Turks	,812			
Our family structure is like that of the Turks.	,806			
Our friendship relations are like those of the Turks	,789			
Our food is like that of the Turks	,696			
Individual Experiences (BT)		**1,289**	**4,416**	**0,726**
There are Turkish artists that I love very much.	,738			
There are Turkish films that I love very much.	,671			
He became my Turkish neighbor.	,606			
I bought Turkish products.	,575			
There are Turkish teams that I love very much.	,558			

Varimaks Rotation Basic Components Analysis: Total Variance Described: 55,540%; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Proficiency: 0.908; Barlett's Globality Test: p<0,001; Square: 5801,067; Sig. 0,000; df: 406 Cronbach's Alpha= 0.905

Source: by authors.

The variance explained because of the factor analysis was determined as 55,540% and this percentage of variance was explained by 5 dimensions. In the analysis of the reliability of the scale, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index and the Barlett sphericity test were used to see its suitability for factor analysis. The KMO value has increased to 0.908. This value is a very good value in terms of reliability. Barlett's test was also significant (sig.<0.001). In other words, there

are high correlations between the variables and the data comes from a multiple normal distribution (Karagöz, 2019). The dimension explaining 27,685% of the total variance included seven statements and was named ASI "Familiarity". The dimension explaining 10,143% of the total variance included seven expressions and was named as BUI "Cognitive country image". It included the sub-dimension statement explaining 7.956% of the total variance and the ADI was named as "Perceived destination image". The dimension explaining 5,340% of the total variance included four expressions and the KB was named "Cultural similarity/difference". The dimension explaining 4.416% of the total variance was named as BT "Individual experiences", covering five statements.

Various analyzes were performed to measure the normal distributions of the variables. First, the expressions constituting each dimension were collected and their averages were taken, and the mean values of that variable were found. These found values are coded in a separate column. Normality tests were also performed on the means of the variables. When the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were examined, it was observed that there were significant differences (sig. less than 0.05) in all variables. Although this means that the variables are not normally distributed, it is known that it is not sufficient to conclude whether there is a normal distribution according to these data, especially in social sciences. As the number of participants increases, it will be concluded that even if the data is normally distributed, it is not normally distributed. Also, Hair et al. (2010), if the number of samples is more than 200, the problem that the data set does not meet the normal distribution can be ignored. The normal distribution can be reached by looking at the statistics in the table.

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Table 3. Normal distribution information about dimensions.

	ASI		KB		BT		ADI		BUI	
	Ist.	Std. Error	Ist.	Std. Error	Ist.	Std. Error	Ist.	Std. Error	Ist.	Std. Error
Average	2,9294	0,0343	2,9128	0,0359	3,0281	0,0323	4,033	0,0267	3,4986	0,0263
Std. Deviation	0,7752		0,81095		0,72848		0,60228		0,59352	
Skewness	0,107	0,108	0,027	0,108	-0,39	0,108	-1,3	0,108	-0,399	0,108
Kurtosis	-0,288	0,216	-0,129	0,216	0,222	0,216	4,55	0,216	1,444	0,216

Source: by authors.

To see the normal distribution in the table, the values of "skewness" and "kurtosis" are checked. Researchers have different ideas about the values here. Hair et al. (2013), if these values are between "-1" and "+1", there will be a normal distribution, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) indicate that these values are between "-1.5" and "+1.5", which indicates normality. George and Mallery (2010); stated that these values between "-2" and "+2" would be sufficient for normality.

Looking at the table, ASI, KB, BT, and BUI variables show normal distribution, ADI variable (Skewness -1,300, Kurtosis 4,550) cannot be said to be in normal distribution, but these values are sufficient for parametric analysis.

It has been thought and tested that there are differences in the answers given by people who have traveled to Turkey before, compared to those who have never traveled before.

Table 4. Analysis of the differences between people who have traveled to Turkey and those who have not (Independent sample test).

		Levene Variance Equality Test		T-test for Equality of Averages						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tail)	Avg.	Std. Error Variance	95% Confidence Range of Difference	
									Low	High
ASI	E.V.+ *	,124	,725	-9,131	506	,000	-,76288	,08355	-,92703	-,59874
	E.V.-**			-8,752	124,846	,000	-,76288	,08716	-,93539	-,59038
BUI	E.V.+ *	3,714	,055	-1,801	506	,072	-,12396	,06882	-,25916	,01124
	E.V.-**			-1,584	116,018	,116	-,12396	,07826	-,27896	,03104
ADI	E.V.+ *	2,984	,085	-,572	506	,568	-,04005	,07003	-,17764	,09755
	E.V.-**			-,455	108,370	,650	-,04005	,08792	-,21431	,13421
KB	E.V.+ *	1,311	,253	-1,685	506	,093	-,15851	,09407	-,34331	,02630
	E.V.-**			-1,582	122,472	,116	-,15851	,10021	-,35688	,03987
BT	E.V.+ *	,789	,375	-5,572	506	,000	-,45832	,08225	-,61991	-,29672
	E.V.-**			-5,061	119,041	,000	-,45832	,09057	-,63765	-,27899

* E.V.+ = Equal variances assumed / ** E.V.- = Equal variances not assumed
Source: by authors.

Looking at the table; While a significant difference was found between BT and ASI and traveling to Turkey, no difference was found in other variables. There are significant differences between people who have visited Turkey before and those who have never traveled to Turkey, between their familiarity with Turkey and their individual experiences with Turkey and Turks. In other words, to countries outside the South American continent; The analysis of the differences between the answers given by those who have traveled intercontinental and those who have not yet traveled to the statements is given in Table 5.

Looking at the table; While a significant difference was found between BT and ASI and having traveled abroad before, no difference was found in other variables.

Table 5. Differences between people who have traveled abroad and those who have not (Independent Groups T-Test).

		Levene Variance Equality Test		T-test for Equality of Averages						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tail)	Avg.	Std. Error Variance	95% Confidence Range of Difference	
									Low	High
ASI	E.V.+ *	1,622	,203	-8,237	506	,000	-,60572	,07354	-,75020	-,46125
	E.V.-**			-8,644	254,607	,000	-,60572	,07008	-,74373	-,46772
BUI	E.V.+ *	6,145	,014	,154	506	,878	,00925	,05996	-,10855	,12704
	E.V.-**			,172	290,126	,864	,00925	,05377	-,09658	,11507
ADI	E.V.+ *	,900	,343	-1,856	506	,064	-,11256	,06064	-,23169	,00657
	E.V.-**			-1,978	262,662	,049	-,11256	,05692	-,22463	-,00049
KB	E.V.+ *	4,692	,031	-1,051	506	,294	-,08602	,08184	-,24680	,07476
	E.V.-**			-1,149	277,442	,252	-,08602	,07488	-,23342	,06138
BT	E.V.+ *	,273	,602	-3,693	506	,000	-,26817	,07262	-,41084	-,12549
	E.V.-**			-3,824	247,865	,000	-,26817	,07014	-,40631	-,13003

* E.V.+ = Equal variances assumed / ** E.V.- = Equal variances not assumed
Source: by authors.

While performing the regression analysis, it is necessary to determine whether there is a multicollinearity problem between the variables. Because multicollinearity causes more than one variable to be perceived as a single variable due to the strong correlation between the variables. Thus, as the percentage of variance increases, the explanatory power decreases (Eroğlu, 2017). The "VIF-Variance Inflation Factor" value is checked to see if there is a multicollinearity problem. In addition to studies stating that the VIF value should be 2.5 or less (Allison, 1999), some studies suggest that this value should be 4 or less (Hair, et al., 2010) and 5 or less (Craney & Surles, 2002) is specified to take a value. A situation above these values indicates the existence of a multicollinearity problem.

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In regression analysis, the problem of autocorrelation should not be overlooked. Although there are many tests used to test autocorrelation, the most used is the Durbin-Watson (DW) test. DW takes a value in the range of 0 to 4. The fact that the DW value is close to 2 indicates that there is no autocorrelation in the model (Çil, 2020). As a result of the regression analysis, dimensions that affect each other significantly were determined and a model was drawn in line with this information.

As a result of the analysis of the variables that are related to the ADI variable and the hypothesis tests, the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses is made. In the analysis, ADI was determined as the dependent variable, and other variables (ASI, KB, BUI, and BT variables) were determined as independent variables. The table contains the correlation values between the variables.

Table 6. Coefficient of relationships and model summary.

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound	95,0% Confidence Interval for B Upper Bound	Correlations Zero-order	Correlations Partial	Correlations Part	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	Collinearity Statistics VIF
1 (Constant)	1,516	,133		11,361	,000	1,254	1,778					
ASI	,145	,030	,187	4,915	,000	,087	,203	,395	,214	,166	,791	1,264
BUI	,482	,039	,475	12,270	,000	,405	,560	,584	,480	,415	,761	1,314
KB	-,027	,029	-,036	-,935	,350	-,084	,030	,284	-,042	-,032	,755	1,324
BT	,159	,034	,193	4,748	,000	,093	,225	,437	,207	,160	,692	1,445

a. Dependent Variable: ADI

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,652[a]	,425	,421	,45840

a. Predictors: (Constant), BT, BUI, ASI, KB

Source: by authors.

Looking at the value in the "VIF" column regarding whether there is a multicollinearity problem in the table, it is seen that there is no variable with a value of 4 or more. This value should be 2.5 and below (Allison, 1999), 4 and below (Hair, et al., 2010), and 5 and below (Craney & Surles, 2002) in the literature. A situation above these values indicates the existence of a multicollinearity problem.

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ASI variable (B=0.145), BUI variable (B=0.482) and BT variable (B=0.159) have a positive effect on ADI (as all B values are positive). The KB variable, on the other hand, has a negative relationship (B=-0.027). The KB variable did not have any effect on the ADI variable but was affected by other variables. Affecting variables; ASI variable (Sig. 0.00), BT variable (sig. 0.00) and BUI variable (sig. 0.00). A summary of the model is also given at the end of the table. It is seen that the independent variables in the model explain 42.1% of the variance in the dependent variable. In the model, ADI is the dependent variable, ASI, BUI and BT are the independent variables. There is a positive relationship between the ADI variable and these three variables, and accordingly, the strongest relationship with ADI is BUI.

In the other analysis, BUI variable was determined as the dependent variable and the other variables (ASI, KB, ADI, and BT variables) were determined as independent variables. The table contains the correlation values between the variables.

Table 7. Coefficient of relationships and model summary.

							95,0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients									
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	,875	,144		6,092	,000	,593	1,157					
ASI	,001	,030	,001	,037	,971	-,058	,060	,279	,002	,001	,755	1,325
KB	,191	,027	,262	6,968	,000	,137	,245	,422	,297	,238	,827	1,210
BT	,045	,034	,055	1,325	,186	-,022	,112	,371	,059	,045	,665	1,504
ADI	,478	,039	,485	12,270	,000	,401	,554	,584	,480	,419	,747	1,339

a. Dependent Variable: BUI

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,644[a]	,414	,409	,45608

a. Predictors: (Constant), ADI, KB, ASI, BT

Source: by authors.

As seen in the table, the variables affecting the BUI variable; The ADI variable is (sig. 0.00) and the KB variable is (sig. 0.00). The ADI variable (B=0.478) and the KB variable (B=0.191) have a positive effect on the BUI variable (as all B values are positive). It is seen that the independent variables explain 40.9% of the variance in the dependent variable. In the model, BUI is the dependent variable, while ADI and KB are the independent variables. There is a positive relationship between the BUI variable and these two variables, and according to this, the strongest relationship with the cognitive country image is the perceived destination image. The relationships between the variables are given as an outcome model in the figure.

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Figure 1. Outcome Model of the Study
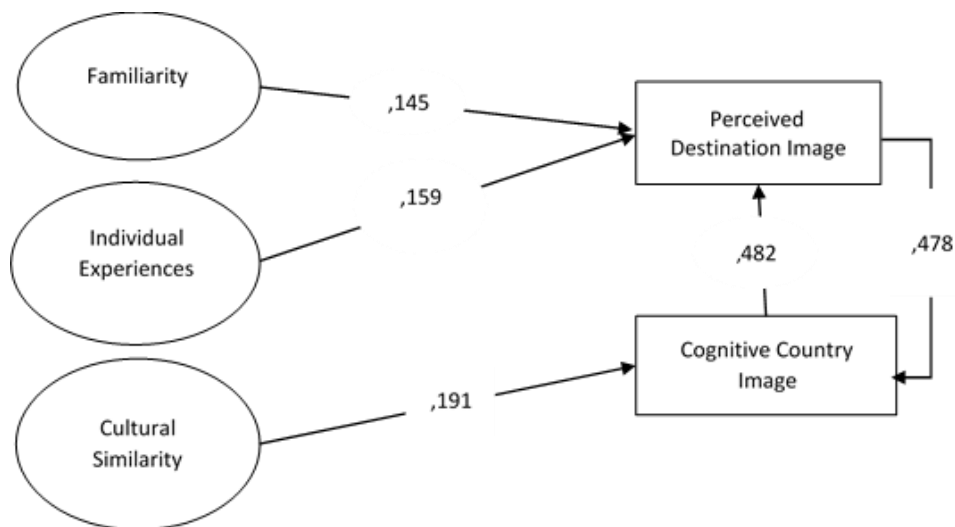
Source: by authors.

In the test, in which the relationships between the variables are examined, the effects on the BUI are examined. Here, BP (.191) and ADI (.478) variables were found to be positively related to BUI. In the other analysis, the effects of the variables on the ADI were examined. ASI, BT, and BUI variables were found to have positive effects on ADI (0.145, 0.159 and 0.482, respectively).

DISCUSSION

Country image has been handled by researchers in many paradigms, including tourism, and common results have been obtained, especially that it has an impact on consumers' purchasing behavior and travel intentions (Güzel, 2009; Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Lindblom et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Aydın et al., 2021). Knowing where a country's own image is in the region where it aims to increase tourism demand and creating a more positive image will help it attract more tourists. As a result of this research, it is seen that the perceived destination image is high when Turkey is considered as a destination, besides, it is observed that there is a very high rate of those who think that they can choose Turkey for a holiday. Therefore, it can be concluded that the cognitive country images of the participants about Turkey are also high and the image of Turkey in the region is positive. However, the same high average value is not achieved when cultural similarities and familiarities are considered.

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The assumptions that there are positive relationships between the dimensions should be confirmed by hypothesis testing. Here, two different dimensions are considered as dependent variables. These are the perceived image of the destination and the cognitive image of the country. When the perceived image of the destination was tested as a dependent variable, it was found that there were positive relationships with familiarity, cognitive image of the country, and individual experiences. Some research show that there is a relationship between the familiarity of the destination and its image (Martin & Eroğlu, 1993; Baloğlu, 2001; Yang, et al. 2009; Kömür, et al., 2021). Turkey is not well known in the region and is not considered a highly sought-after destination. The reason for this is the lack of information about Turkey's tourism opportunities, the lack of self-presentation of Turkey in the region, and the fact that information about Turkey is mostly manipulated and communicated in a negative way. People in the region are affected by the disinformation about Turkey in the media and have negative thoughts about Turkey.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research, it is aimed to measure the perceived Turkey image of the South American continent tourism market. In addition to this purpose, it was desired to obtain information on how to attract more tourists from the region to Turkey, and how the perception of Turkey as a tourism destination could be more positive. The characteristics of tourism, such as being a supra-political phenomenon and taking on missions such as an ambassador for peace, are also evident here. The fact that this effect of tourism is the most important phenomenon that can break the prejudices about Turkey in the region should not be ignored. It has been concluded that South American citizens have little knowledge about Turkey, they are not familiar with Turkey, and they do not have cultural similarity. However, it is seen that their perceptions about Turkey are not negative. It is understood that they want to travel to Turkey, and they want to see Turkey. The fact that the previous intercontinental travels of the participants were mostly to Europe shows that Turkey's geographical distance from the region will not pose a disadvantage.

Considering the answers given in the part where the participants were asked "What are the 3 words that come to mind when they think of Turk and Turkey", it is seen that they generally have good thoughts about Turks and Turkey. The fact that the participants use words showing that they know Turkey's gastronomy, various tourism destinations in Turkey, TV series and religion gives the result that they have a general impression about Turkey. The answers given are mostly related to tourism. This situation shows that there is a curiosity about Turkish tourism in the region.

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Considering the results, recommendations were made and given below:

- The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey and the Ministries of Tourism of the countries in the region are in contact and carry out joint projects to promote mutual travel,

- Increasing communication with the media and media channels in the region and providing accurate news about Turkey in the region,

- Increasing the number of Spanish and Portuguese speaking staff in Turkey (especially in areas such as Istanbul, Cappadocia, Ephesus, which is preferred by people in the region) to provide better service to those traveling to Turkey from the region,

- Although some attractions in Turkey are known, this information is limited. Presentation of attractions in Turkey as a whole,

- A more comprehensive study that includes South and Central America. Researchers working in the field of tourism in the South American region should conduct similar studies in Turkey,

- Conduct research on people who have traveled to Turkey from the region and compare their thoughts before and after traveling to Turkey,

- It is recommended to study the opinions of those who travel to the region from Turkey about the region.

It was desired to carry out the research on a continent with more participants, but this was not possible in terms of both time and costs. The geographical distance of the researched region to Turkey, the excessive increase in costs due to exchange rate differences, and the possibility that the research to be conducted in the whole region may take many years are the reasons limiting the research.

Suggestions for researchers can be listed as follows; A larger study can be done, including South America and Central America. A study can be conducted to compare the thoughts of people who have traveled to Turkey from the region before and after traveling to Turkey. A study can be conducted to analyze the news about Turkey in the region and to measure its effect on the perception of Turkey.

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NOTE

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