The Assessment of Greece's Image as a Tourism Destination

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Abstract
The importance of tourism is universally acknowledged, since it is one of the growing sectors of a country's economy and is widely recognized for its contribution to regional and national economic development. As more and more areas of the world are developed for tourism, the destination choices available to consumers continue to expand. Furthermore, today's consumers, facilitated by increased leisure time, rising levels of income and more efficient transportation networks, have the means to choose from among this much larger variety of destinations. Thus, dynamic structure and intense competition in tourism industry increase the need to understand consumer segments and their perceptions.
Greece is a favourite tourism destination in Europe. As Turkey's advantageous geographical location and its huge population, Turkish consumers are always a good opportunity for Greece's tourism industry. This study aims to determine sub-groups of Turkish consumers according to their intentions to visit Greece and also to examine their differentiating perceptions about Greece's image as a tourism destination.
The data was collected from 1023 Turkish consumers. Multiple Discriminant analysis was used in order to find whether sub-groups of consumers' evaluations vary among destination image of Greece.
In the study, it was found that Turkish consumers can be grouped into four groups that have different perceptions of Greece's destination image. It is believed that the study provides valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

Introduction

The study of tourism destination image is a relatively recent addition to the field of tourism research. Destination image has become important both for practitioners engaged in positioning destination images and for academics trying to gain a deeper understanding of the destination image construct.

The ever-increasing competitive nature of the tourism industry requires tourism destinations to develop an effective marketing plan and strategy. Destinations mainly compete based on their perceived images relative to competitors in the marketplace. Today's consumers, facilitated by increased leisure time and rising levels of income, have the means to choose from among larger variety of destinations.

Though, tourism image is critical to the success of any destinations. The tourism industry in European countries has also been growing sharply in the past few years. Greece located in Europe, is one of the

Mediterranean countries like Turkey. So it's a potential tourism destination and a nice place for Turkish people to visit. Thus, in this study similarities and differences between image perceptions of Turkish people having different intention levels to visit Greece were explored.

Literature Review

Destination Image

Image has been proven to be a critical factor in people's decision process. A commonly adopted definition of image is that it is a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place or destination (Crompton 1979; Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993). According to systematic analysis by the World Tourism organization, image is defined as an aura, an angel, a subjective perception accompanying the various projections of the same message transmitter. Research of the past two decades has demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists. Several studies centered on the relationship between destination image and preference or visitation intentions (Goodrich 1978; Mayo 1973; Hunt 1975; Milman and Pizam 1995; Scott, Schewe and Frederick 1978).

Image is also defined as a perceptual phenomenon formed through a consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation, and which has both cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feelings) components (Konecnik, 2004).

Perceptual or cognitive evaluation refers to beliefs and knowledge about an object whereas affective refers to feelings about it (Baloglu and Brinberg 1997; Burgess 1978; Gartner 1993; Holbrook 1978; Walmsley and Jenkins 1993; Ward and Russel 1981; Zimmer and Golden 1988). On the other hand affective components are emotional responses concerned with feeling and meaning attached to a destination (Pocock and Hudson, 1978). In other words, the affective component reflects an individual's general feelings or emotions toward an object (Son, 2005).

The distinction and the direction of the relationship between cognitive and affective components has been emphasized in tourism decision-making models (Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Um and Crompton, 1990). In the models, tourists form their feelings (affective image) as a function of beliefs (cognitive image). The cognitive components and affective components of image are distinct, but these two components are sequentially related in the sense that affective evaluation depends on cognitive evaluation of objects (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981; Russell and Pratt, 1980; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

In order to be successfully promoted in the targeted markets, a destination must be favorably differentiated from its competiors, or positively positioned, in the minds of the consumers. A key component of this positioning process is the creation and management of a distinctive and appealing perception, or destination image (Calantone, Di Benetto, Hakam and Bojanic, 1989).

A destination's image has been recognized as a complex and important concept in the destination-selection process. According to Sonmez and Sirakaya (2002), if a destination is interested in developing a

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

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

Measurement of Destination Image

In the last three decades tourism researchers as well as industry practitioners and destination marketers have been very interested in measuring a destination's image. In addition, the proper methodology for measuring a destination's image has been the subject of many travel and tourism studies (Kozak, 2001).

The measurement of destination image has been of great interest to tourism researchers and practitioners (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Driscoll, Lawson and Niven, 1994). An accurate assessment of image is a key to designing an effective marketing and positioning strategy (Reilly, 1990). A destination's image may be analyzed from different perspectives, and composed of a variety of individual perceptions relating to various product/service attributes (Kozak, 2001). The majority of destination image studies have used either structured (scale format) or unstructured (open ended, repertory grid, etc.) measurement techniques. The studies adopting a structured measurement technique employed the semantic differential and/or Likert scale for measuring cognitive and affective components of destination image (e.g. Goodrich, 1978; Haahti, 1986; Gartner, 1989; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997).

Unstructured methodologies are the alternate form of measurement used in product image research. Unstructured methodologies use free form descriptions to measure image (Boivin, 1986). Destination image researchers have a strong preference for structured methodologies. Therefore, because of the nature of structured methodologies, the majority of destination image measurement studies have focused on the common, attribute-based component of destination image (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

Methodology

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

Thus, the objectives of the study are to;

1 Explore Greece's destination image dimensions from tourism perspective.
2 Identify the consumer segments based on their intentions to visit Greece.
3 Determine perceptual differences of Greece's destination image among intention based segments.

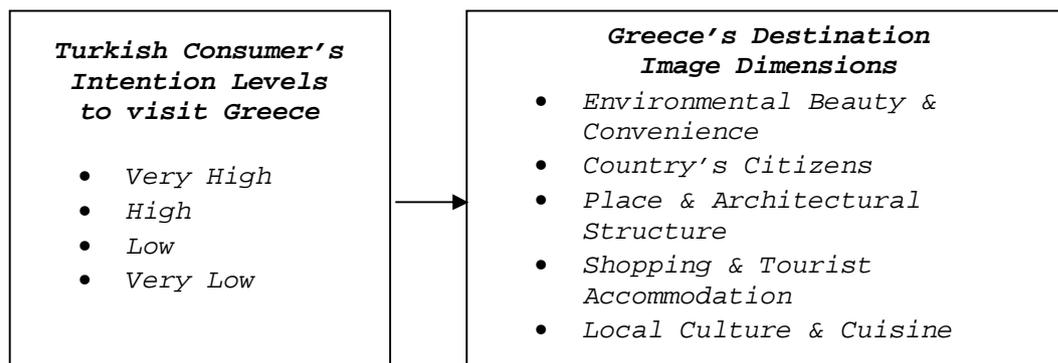In this research, consumer's evaluation of Greece's image as tourism destination is investigated.

Turkish Consumer's Intention Levels to visit Greece	*Greece's Destination Image Dimensions*
• *Very High* • *High* • *Low* • *Very Low*	• *Environmental Beauty & Convenience* • *Country's Citizens* • *Place & Architectural Structure* • *Shopping & Tourist Accommodation* • *Local Culture & Cuisine*

Figure 1: Research Model

Also, this research tries to identify consumer groups according to their intention levels to visit Greece and analyze the differences in their perceptions of Greece's image as a tourism destination as seen in Figure 1.

Research Hypotheses

In this study, consumers' destination image perceptions as environmental beauty and convenience, country's citizens, place and architectural structure, shopping and tourist accommodation and local culture and cuisine are operationalized in order to differentiate intention based segments. Based on research purpose and the model the following hypotheses were formed:

H_1: Consumer's intention based segments' will differ in terms of environmental beauty and convenience dimension.

H_2: Consumer's intention based segments will differ in terms of country's citizens dimension.

H_3: Consumer's intention based segments will differ in terms of place and architectural structure dimension.

H_4: Consumer's intention based segments will differ in terms of shopping and tourist accommodation dimension.

H_5: Consumer's intention based segments will differ in terms of culture and cuisine dimension.

Hypothesis Testing

Due to the rise of urban tourism destinations at global scale, the assessment and development of an appropriate image for countries has become increasingly important. Since, Greece is well known by Turkish people, it is chosen as subject for our study. Turkish people are one of the most important and attractive markets for the Greece because of its location. In addition, Greek culture is similar to Turkish culture.

The population of this study was Turkish citizens interested in travel and tourism. The research was conducted via internet survey between 8-15 January, 2008 in Turkey. The sample for the data analysis consists 1023 Turkish people expressing their ideas about the image of Greece as tourism destination.

The respondents were asked to provide information about both their destination image perceptions of Greece and their intentions to visit it. Turkish consumers' perceptions of Greece image as tourism destination were asked by 27 Likert statements which are used to measure the functional and psychological attributes of consumers were derived from the study of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Choi, Chan and Wu (1999). A five point Likert scale was used and the scales ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Turkish people's intention to visit Greece was measured by asking them their willingness to visit this country.

A descriptive statistic analysis was employed to examine Turkish people's perception of destination image of Greece. The multiple discriminant analysis was conducted for the purpose of identifying the perceptual differences between Turkish consumer groups having different intention levels to visit Greece.

Respondents' Profile

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

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percent	Education	Frequency	Percent
1000 YTL or less	211	20.6	Primary School	12	1.2
1001 YTL-2000 YTL	462	45.2	Secondary School	18	1.8
2001 YTL-3000 YTL	205	20.0	High School	270	26.4
3001 YTL-4000 YTL	61	6.0	University	650	63.5
4001 YTL-5000 YTL	38	3.7	MS/Doctorate	73	7.1
5001 YTL-6000 YTL	17	1.7	Total	1023	100.0
6001 YTL-7000 YTL	6	.6			
7001 YTL-8000 YTL	6	.6	**Occupation**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
8001 YTL-9000 YTL	3	.3	Self employed	68	6.6
9001YTL or more	14	1.4	Civil Cervant	21	2.1
Total	1023	100.0	Merchant	337	32.9
Family Size	**Frequency**	**Percent**	Worker	285	27.9
1 person	16	1.6	Employee	21	2.1
2 people	107	10.5	Retired	12	1.2
3 people	241	23.6	Housewife	145	14.2
4 people	347	33.9	Student	134	13.1
5 people and over	312	30.5	Total	1023	100.0
Total	1023	100.0			
Age	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Gender**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
18-25	240	23.5	Male	797	0.78
26-35	429	41.9	Female	226	0.22
36-45	295	28.8	Total	1023	100.0
46-55	54	5.3	**Marital Status**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
56-65	4	.4	Single	334	32.6
66 and over	1	.1	Married	689	67.4
Total	1023	100.0	Total	1023	100.0

Data Analysis

The countries' destination images were explored by principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation giving rise to a five factor solution. The internal consistency of items were measured within each factor using Cronbach's alpha tests. To further analyze the perceptual differences between the groups having different intention levels, multivariate discriminant analysis was performed.

Results of Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was applied to determine the underlying dimensions of Greece's destination image. KMO Bartlett test with value above 0.90 showed that it was appropriate for applying factor analysis to these variables. Five factors with eigen values greater than one emerged from the factor analysis.

The reliability of each construct scale was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of factors for Greece is over 0.70, the general accepted Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 2005).

Cronbach's alpha measures of Greece were 0.890 for country's environmental beauty and convenience, 0.892 for country's citizens, 0.819 for place and architectural structure, 0.804 for shopping and tourist accommodation and 0.782 for local culture and cuisine. The items included in each factor and the factor loadings were reported in Table 2.

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

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

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

Factor called shopping and tourist accommodation included variables like "This country is a good place to shop." "Good quality of products are available in this country." "There are a wide variety of products available in this country." "Good tourist information is available." "Food is varied and exotic in this country." "Good tourist facilities and services are available." for the destination image of Greece.

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

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha and Factor Loadings

	Greece
Environmental Beauty & Convenience (9)	
Highways and roads are in good condition in this country.	.716
This country has well-developed transport system.	.712
It is easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels in this country.	.663
There are many gardens and parks in this country.	.660
This country is clean and green.	.595
This country is an orderly country.	.580
This country is a progressive country.	.558
This country is a safe place to visit.	.557
This country is a politically stable country.	.462
Cronbach's Alpha	**.890**
Country's Citizens (4)	
The local people are courteous.	.823
The local people are hardworking.	.812
The local people are honest.	.789
The local people are friendly.	.730
Cronbach's Alpha	**.892**
Place & Architectural Structure (5)	
There are many interesting places in this country.	.784
There are lots of natural scenic beauty in this country.	.773
There are many restful and relaxing places in this country.	.744
There are lots of places of historical or archeological interest to visit.	.533
This country's cities are attractive.	.454
Cronbach's Alpha	**.819**
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation (6)	
This country is a good place to shop.	.728
Good quality of products are available in this country.	.698
There are a wide variety of products available in this country.	.617
Good tourist information is available.*	.474
Food is varied and exotic in this country.	.468
Good tourist facilities and services are available.	.442
Cronbach's Alpha	**.804**
Local Culture & Cuisine (3)	
The lifestyles and customs in this country are similar to those in my home country.	.814
The food in this country is similar to ours.	.738
The architectural styles of the buildings are similar to those in my home country.	.721
Cronbach's Alpha	**.782**
KMO	**.937**
Total Variance Explained	**%61.785**

Results of Multiple Discriminant Analysis

In order to verify the differentiating destination image variables among intention based groups, multiple discriminant analysis was performed.

As seen in Table 3 canonical discriminant functions explain 100% of the variance. Function 1 explains the most of the variance by 95.4 %.

The canonical correlation of function 1 was 0.586, canonical correlation of function 2 was 0.127 and canonical correlation of function 3 was 0.093.

Table 3: Summary of Canonical Discriminant Function

Function	Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percentage	Canonical Correlation
1	.523(a)	95.4	95.4	.586
2	.016(a)	3.0	98.4	.127
3	.009(a)	1.6	100.0	.093

The significance of discriminant functions were tested by using Wilk's Lambda. Large values of Wilks' Lambda indicated that group means were significant. The value for Wilks' Lambda for all variables were less than 1.00 and also revealed that group means differed significantly for all variables. As seen in Table 4, first two canonical discriminant functions were found significant at 0.00 significance level and the third function was found significant at 0.05 significance level. Wilk's Lambda value for function 1 was 0.640, Wilks' Lambda value for function 2 was 0.975 and Wilks' Lambda value for function 3 was 0.991.

Table 4: Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 3	.640	453.628	15	.000
2 through 3	.975	25.366	8	.001
3	.991	8.792	3	.032

Structure matrix shows the discriminant function coefficients of the destination image variables. The higher the coefficients absolute value the higher it distinguishes these groups. Table 5 shows that place & architectural structure, environmental beauty & convenience,local culture & cuisine were the most powerful differentiating variables in function 1. Country's citizens dimension for function 2, shopping & tourist accommodation dimension for function 3 were the other important distinguishing variables.

Table 5: Structure Matrix

	Function		
	1	2	3
Place & Architectural Structure	.918(*)	−.322	.104
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	.672(*)	.249	.269
Local Culture & Cuisine	.549(*)	.153	−.055
Country's Citizens	.527	.768(*)	.335
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	.506	−.016	.841(*)

To determine the perceptual differences in destination image of Greece among intention based groups, F test was used. In Table 6, it was seen that five dimensions of destination image were discriminated intention based groups at 0.00 significance level.

Table 6: Tests of Equality of Group Means

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	.808	80.878	3	1019	.000
Country's Citizens	.865	52.986	3	1019	.000
Local Culture & Cuisine	.864	53.688	3	1019	.000
Place & Architectural Structure	.693	150.327	3	1019	.000

Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	.877	47.624	3	1019	.000

Table 7 shows the intention based groups' statistics of their perceptions of Greece's destination image. Very high intention consumer group perceived the environmental beauty & convenience, country's citizens, local culture & cuisine, place & architectural structure and shopping & tourist accommodation dimensions of Greece's destination image the highest among other intention based groups. Conversely, consumer group having very low intention level has the lowest perceptions about the destination image dimensions of Greece.

Table 7: Group Statistics

	Intention to visit			
	Very High	**Very Low**	**High**	**Low**
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	2.364	3.263	2.584	2.940
Country's Citizens	2.819	3.760	2.930	3.324
Local Culture & Cuisine	2.321	3.328	2.593	2.926
Place & Architectural Structure	1.650	2.790	2.031	2.446
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	2.428	3.058	2.584	2.955

Classification results showed that 48 percent of subjects were classified correctly by discriminant functions. Thus, it is indicated that destination image variables successfully discriminated intention based groups.

As seen in Table 8 the classification results had correct classification rates of 67.5 percentage for very high intention group, 55.8 percentage for very low intention group, 38.3 percentage for high intention group and 34.5 percentage for low intention group.

Table 8: Classification Results

	Cluster Number of Case	Predicted Group Membership				Total
		Very High	**Very Low**	**High**	**Low**	
Original Count	**Very High**	197 (67.5)	10 (3.4)	59 (20.2)	26 (8.9)	292
	Very Low	8 (6.7)	67 (55.8)	17 (14.2)	28 (23.3)	120
	High	155 (32.8)	43 (9.1)	181 (38.3)	93 (19.7)	472
	Low	17 (12.2)	41 (29.5)	33 (23.7)	48 (34.5)	139
	Total	377	161	290	195	1023

Table 9 shows the hypotheses tested along with the conclusions whether the hypotheses were supported or not.

Table 9: Summary of Results

Construct	Hypotheses	Support
Environmental Beauty & Convenience	H_1	Supported
Country's Citizens	H_2	Supported
Local Culture & Cuisine	H_3	Supported
Place & Architectural Structure	H_4	Supported
Shopping & Tourist Accommodation	H_5	Supported

Conclusion

This research was conducted with an aim to examine whether the destination image perceptions of Turkish people differ according to their intentions to visit Greece. To achieve this purpose, a structured method of destination image measurement was applied. The variables contained in destination image scale were reduced into five dimensions named "environmental beauty and convenience", "city's citizens", "local culture and cuisine", "shopping and tourist accommodation" and "place and architectural structure" by factor analysis. Then multiple discriminant analysis was conducted in order to find the differences between the groups having different levels of intentions to visit Greece.

Four groups were formed based on consumers' intention levels to visit Greece as people having very high intention, high intention, low intention and very low intention levels. The results of the study indicate that there were differences between those groups.

People having very high intention levels to visit Greece value all of the tourism destination image dimensions. But, people having low or very low intention levels do not value any of the image dimensions of Greece.

According to the results of multiple discriminant analysis, all three discriminant functions were statistically significant as measured by the chi-square statistics. This suggested that the independent variables were responsible for the perceptual differences in tourism destination image of Greece. Also, the first function accounts for the highest eigen value and correspondingly the highest percent of explained variance.

Place & architectural structure, environmental beauty & convenience, local culture & cuisine were the most powerful differentiating variables for function 1. Country's citizens was the differentiating variable for function 2. In addition shopping & tourist accommodation was the distinguishing variable for function 3.

Thus, Greece's place & architectural structure, environmental beauty & convenience and local culture & cuisine were the mostly differentiating dimension among intention based groups. Since Greece is a neighbour country of Turkey, some people see their cuisine, lifestyles and architectural styles more similar to Greece but on the contrary the other groups that has negative perceptions about the Greece as a tourism destination did not prefer to visit it. High intention people may want to visit Greece and its cities, because this country seemed more interesting and attractive to them with its natural scenic beauty, restful and relaxing places. The other differentiating destination image perceptions for the groups were also stated as Country's citizens and shopping & tourist accommodation although they were not as powerful as the rest of dimensions.

Based upon the findings, the recommendation for destination management authorities could be that Greece should concentrate its efforts on place & architectural structure, environmental beauty & convenience,

local culture & cuisine to make itself more competitive in the Turkish market.

This research showed that image perceptions of people differ according to their intention levels. Efforts to understand the factors pushing tourists to visit a particular destination could help destination management to set right marketing strategies. So, the findings of the study might help Greek tourism agencies targeting Turkish people.

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

As this study tried to compare Turkish people's perception across Greece's destination image both the methodology and the findings could be helpful for other researchers who will probably undertake similar research in the future.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As many other research studies, the current study has some theoretical and methodological limitations. First, the research was carried out in Turkey and therefore the findings are culturally bound and are likely to have limited application to other destinations, regions or countries.

Second, most of the respondents were men, since the survey was conducted via internet. It could be a limitation, because this rate does not reflect the Turkish population structure. Thus, the results of the study could not be generated to Turkey.

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

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