

Turkey as a Destination Brand: Perceptions of United States Visitors

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Abstract

Fierce competition now characterizes the tourist industry. An increasing number of governments invest in destination branding, in order to differentiate their country, attract visitors, and increase foreign investment. Turkey attracts world attention with its political, economic, social, and cultural growth, viewed as a leader at the forefront of change in the Middle East and Central Asia. The Turkish government strongly supports marketing Turkey as a tourist destination. This study aims to identify perceptions of United States (US) based individuals regarding Turkey, and increase the understanding of the Turkish destination brand. Destination branding is one of the most powerful tools that differentiates one destination from its competitors.

Key words: destination branding, brand awareness, brand associations, Turkey.

1. Introduction

Globalization leads to the intense competition among countries that struggle to differentiate themselves from others, attract visitors, and increase foreign investment. Due to shorter travel times and improvements in communication technologies, our globe is a village. Tourist agencies that represent national governments compete with each other to attract foreign investment and increase tourism. Destination branding processes play an important role in governmental efforts to gain a competitive advantage in the tourism market. Destination image and identity play a significant role in differentiating between objectively alike alternatives (Sahbaz & Ciftci, 2011; Baker & Cameron, 2008; Hudson & Ritchie, 2009). For example, individuals would probably prefer to visit San Francisco instead of going to Istanbul, Turkey. Even though these cities are very alike with its bridges and diversity, issues such as awareness, security, and quality may affect visitors' destination preferences. Even though Istanbul is the only city that is located on two continents, a place with rich history, culture, and vivid modern life, people may not like to visit because they are not aware of its favorable attributes. In order to form a unique identity, destination touch points (e.g., people, service, and safety) need to reflect one idea and come from a single source. Consistency of identity depends on the congruence among these touch points.

Destination branding aims to underpin the uniqueness of a tourist destination, show positive images to target markets, and support forming and developing positive images (Jaliliv *et al.*, 2010; Baker & Cameron, 2008). Constant monitoring facilitates branding consistency and the ability to act quickly when problems arise. For example, Canada has recently launched a repositioning campaign under the name “Brand Canada.” Canada used experiential marketing techniques to communicate the new brand identity and promise “Come to Canada: Create Extraordinary Stories of Your Own”. An integrated campaign communicated messages that targeted domestic and international tourists. Although the effectiveness of Canada’s effort is undetermined, the campaign is memorable and shows that country goes in the right direction (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009). The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of United States visitors regarding Turkey as a destination brand. The study includes a literature review, hypotheses, methodology, and empirical results.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Destination branding and brand equity overview

According to Kotler (1997, p.443) a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” Destinations are similar to products and follow similar branding processes. Consumers use brand names and product attributes as retrieval cues for information about product performance. Brand names and offering attributes are the links to diagnostic information about the product (Hutchinson & Alba, 1991). Keller (1998) states that a physical good, a service, a retail store, a person, an organization, a place and/or an idea can be encompassed in the concept of product. Therefore, an offering should be unique and differentiated in order to attract consumers’ attention. The same concept applies to destinations. Destinations are branded like products and services (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). For example, thousands of tourists visit Los Angeles, California, each year. Hollywood is an important differentiating factor that attracts visitors, which is unique to Los Angeles flock to Los Angeles, eager to walk on Beverly Hills, visit Universal Studios, and get a memorable experience. Numerous destinations offer beautiful scenery, gorgeous beaches, friendly people, and good service. However, differentiated characteristics are required to attract tourists’ attention. It is not easy to develop a unique position for destinations. It is even harder for destinations of developing countries, as socio-cultural characteristics may still be under development. In the late 1990s, destination branding gained attention in the research of tourism management (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998, p. 17 in Jalilvand *et al.*, 2010), yet there remains little research regarding this concept (Qu *et al.*, 2011; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998).

The aim of a destination branding campaign is to shape peoples’ perceptions regarding a particular destination (Can-Seng, 2004). Destination brands reflect values, qualities, and emotional information that recall the values and standards of any product or service that comes from that origin (Anholt, 2002). Destination branding is defined as “marketing activities that: (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates a destination; (2) convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; and (3) that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers’ decisions to visit the destination in question as opposed to an alternative one.” Branding provides benefits for both buyers and sellers (Pike, 2008), hereby for destinations and visitors, by supplying cash flow to destinations and offering safe and enjoyable trips to visitors. The literature shows the existence of six advantages of destination branding (Clarke, 2000):

- (a) As tourism is typically high involvement, branding helps to reduce the choice,
- (b) helps in reducing the impact of intangibility,
- (c) conveys consistency across multiple outlets and through time,
- (d) reduces the risk factor attached to decision-making about holidays,
- (e) facilitates precise segmentation,
- (f) helps to provide a focus for the integration of producer effort, helping people to work towards the same outcome.

Even though destination branding is important, research has not demonstrated how to best integrate it into marketing programs. The difficulty arises from the complexity of places (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998).

Visitors perceive destinations as composite products, made up of several elements that include accommodations, catering establishments, tourist attractions, the natural environment, and cultural activities. Another challenge relates to fundamental institutional differences between mainstream branding in the private and public sectors. These differences involve tighter resources and the lack of management control over product delivery (Hankinson, 2009).

Brands that hold accumulated equity, built through high advertising expenditures are more likely to be perceived by consumers as of superior quality (Aaker, 1996), and therefore satisfy the consumer. Product involvement and brand commitment are not highly related; indeed they represent unique constructs (Warrington & Shim, 2000). They serve different areas, have different scopes and have different functions. Brand equity is “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1991, p. 15). Academics apply destination branding to regions, towns, cities and countries (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Anholt, 2004). According to literature there are similarities between corporate and destination branding, researchers and practitioners can develop destination branding models by examining corporate branding models and including destination branding components from literature and also such elements as leadership, vision, resources, capabilities, understanding of competitive environment, the need for committed people and the value of alliances (Kerr, 2006, p. 282-283).

2.2 Turkey

Turkey is located in Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia and it washed up by the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. It has strategic location that controls the Bosphorus, Marmara Sea, and Dardanells Straits that link the Black and Aegean Seas. Turkey borders Syria, Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Its’ major cities are Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Izmir, and Adana. The climate of country is temperate, with a population of 78,785,548 (July 2011 est.) and median age is 28.5 years. Literacy is 87.4% (The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

The Republic of Turkey is a cradle of civilization and its’ culture is enriched by the ancient history of Anatolia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and the Aegean culture (Turkish Embassy 2011). Turkey has nine registered locations on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) World Heritage. These sites are :The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, and the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), Istanbul which straddles two continents, The East Roman, The Byzantine and The Ottoman, cities Safranbolu and Chorum, places such Cappadocia (4th century) in Nevsehir, Great Mosque and Hospital at Divrigi (11th century)in Sivas, Nemrut Mountain in Adiyaman, remains of Xanthos Letoon, capital of Lycia (2nd century BC), white travertine terraces of Pamukkale (Hierapolis) in Denizli, archeological site of Troy in Canakkale (UNESCO Heritage, 2012).

Turkey possesses values such as respect without discrimination based on religions, ethnicity, and culture. Hospitality is highly valued, making guests pleased. Courage, patriotism, passion towards elders and children, commitment to family, sharing with others are additional Turkish values. Most of people who live in Turkey are hospitable, and provide excellent services to tourists. The roots of such a behavior come from rich culture. According to World Tourism Organization (2012), “by 2030, arrivals are expected to reach 1.8 billion, meaning that in two decades’ time, 5 million people will be crossing international borders for leisure, business or other purposes such as visiting friends and family every day. International arrivals in emerging economy destinations are expected to continue growing at double the pace (+4.4% year) of advanced ones (+2.2% a year). In absolute terms, the emerging economies of Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Eastern Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East and Africa will gain an average 30 million arrivals a year, compared to 14 million in the traditional destinations of the advanced economies of North America, Europe and Asia and the Pacific. By 2015, emerging economies will receive more international tourist arrivals than advanced economies, and by 2030 their share is expected to reach 58%.”

3. Destination brand equity model

A model developed by Aaker (1991, p. 16-17) includes five dimensions such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand assets, which are also interrelated with one another. These dimensions are basis of brand equity, which sends value for both customers and company.

We argue that brand equity be applied to destination branding even though it is consumer based. Therefore, in order to develop a unique and effective branding strategy it is important to measure the destination brand equity of Turkey in terms of the five dimensions.

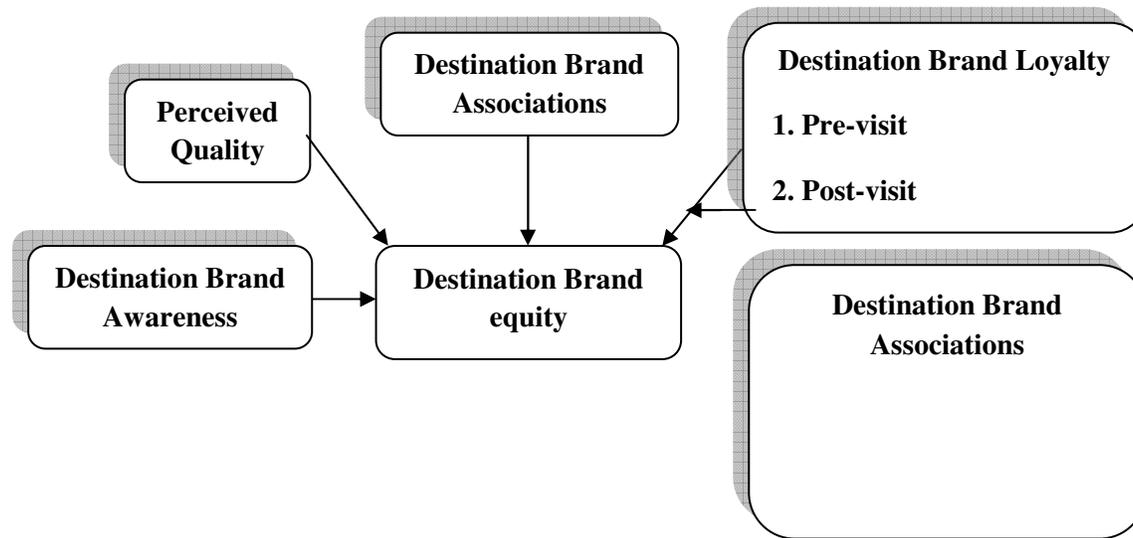


Figure 1. Destination Brand Equity (adapted from Aaker, 1991, Brand Equity Model, p. 17).

3.1. Brand awareness

“Brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recognize and recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. Brand awareness has three levels such as brand recognition, brand recall, and top of mind. While brand recognition which is lowest level based upon an aided recall, brand recall is based on unaided recall, and the first-named brand in an unaided recall test has achieved top-of mind awareness” (Aaker, 1991, p. 62). It is very important to form recognition of destination brand and make them feel that they are familiar with it. When consumers are familiar with a particular brand, it is more likely that they would consider buying further products and services associated with it. This is due to previous positive experience, as consumers are not faced with something unknown. When consumers are unfamiliar with a particular country, they are reluctant to show trust to the consumer goods product image (Lee and Ganesh, 1999). The same can be valid for destinations as people are willing to go to a place where they can feel themselves comfortable and safe and enjoy it at the same time.

H1: Brand awareness and visitors’ desire to go back to a destination are positively related.

3.2. Perceived quality

“Perceived quality can be defined as the consumer judgment about the superiority or excellence of a product. Perceived quality is: 1) different from objective or actual quality, 2) a higher level of abstraction rather than a specific attribute of a product, 3) a global assessment that in some cases resembles attitude and 4) a judgment usually made within a consumer’s evoke set (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 2).” Perceived quality is an intangible, overall feeling about a particular brand. High-perceived quality increases the effectiveness of marketing programs, and leads to purchase decisions, position a brand on the perceived quality dimension, provides an opportunity to charge a premium prices, influences a channel member interest in a positive way, and offers an opportunity to introduce brand extensions (Aaker, 1991). Research study results show that perception of high quality services is directly related to the opinion of visiting a particular destination, and a perception of low quality of tourism services is related to the intention of choosing another destination (Olimpia, 2011). Brand positioning should reinforce the determinant attributes for which the destinations are already perceived positively and competitively (Pike, 2009, p. 864).

H2: Perceived quality and visitors’ desire to go back to a destination are positively related.

3.3. Brand associations

“A brand association is anything “linked” in memory to a brand and link to a brand will be stronger when it is based on many experiences or exposures to communications rather than few (Aaker, 1991, p. 109).” When people talk about France, the first thing that comes up to their mind is perfume. Perfume is an association linked to France. Fashion is linked to Italy, electronics to the USA, sushi to Japan, cheese to Holland, and pyramids to Egypt. All these associations derive from people’s exposure to communication and their or other experiences. Based upon the information received from others or communication tools, people form an image of a particular product or service, than they position it in their minds. Positioning happens in the mind of the consumer; a process that positions products and services in the consumers’ minds (Ries & Trout, 1981). For instance, the Tourism Brand Ireland initiative’s positioning strategy is based on the core values of friendly people and unspoiled nice landscape. One of the goals of this positioning, promoted “Ireland, an emotional experience” to reshape the perceptions of international consumers; emphasizing that Ireland has a macho culture where pub is of the most importance (Foley & Fahy, 2004).

The relationship between brand associations and destination brand image is influenced by cognitive, unique, and affective image components of three types of brand associations (Qu *et al.*, 2011). Cognitive image is a belief and knowledge about an object whereas affective image are feelings about an object and a unique component is about designing the overall image of a destination. In addition, total image is an essential mediator between brand associations and tourists’ future behaviors where a unique image component had the second largest impact on the overall image formation, following the cognitive evaluations. In industry, associations are quantified and measured and are distinguished between direct associations, i.e. those which extend across a variety of brand perceptions, and indirect associations, i.e. those which conclude in meanings originating in consumer responses (Aaker, 199, in Krishnan, 1996, p. 395). In addition, associations can also be distinguished between organic and created. They are usually portrayed within a network representing links between elements of consumer memory. Such networks are referred to as consumer associative networks. Direct methods provide quantifiable summaries of brand associations, whilst indirect methods support the researcher in understanding and evaluating what a brand means to people (Aaker, 1991, p. 137 cited in Krishnan, 1996, p. 397). Associations allow customers to connect memories of valuable experiences they have had directly with the company.

H3: Brand associations and visitors’ desire to go back to a destination are positively related.

3.4. Brand loyalty

“Brand loyalty is a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand and which reflects how likely a customer will switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes change either in price or product features” (Aaker, 1991, p. 39). In the context of destination branding, if visitors are satisfied with a destination, they may develop an emotional relationship with a destination, and become advocates of it. Visitor may be willing to suggest this destination to others and by doing so; they are obviously showing their commitment. Positive word-of-mouth is one of the important elements that contribute to a brand (Sarkar, 2011). Tourists often may use personal communication to share their experiences and perceptions (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2011).

Destinations have to develop, and maintain a unique image that differentiates it from competing ones. There is a strong correlation between positive image and intention to visit (Leisen, 2001). In order to maintain positive image, destinations should monitor sub-product qualities (Balakrishnan *et al.*, 2011) such as hospitality, infrastructure, and service. Memorable experience that is recalled with excitement, happiness, fun, and joy could lead to brand loyalty. Cultural values of Turkey could provide a significant clue for treating guests. Turkish traditions value guests. Hosts will do his or her best in order to please guests providing a memorable and pleasant experience. Visitors’ experiences regarding hospitality leaves positive impressions attaches emotional relationships to the destination.

H4: Brand loyalty and visitors’ desire to go back to a destination are positively related.

3.5. Other Proprietary Destination Brand Assets

Ingredient elements that need to be addressed when formulating a unique position are features, benefits, and differentiators (LePla & Parker, 1999).

- Features: They represent the physical offering that appears of use to the customer. The most beneficial features are the simple ones that work.
- Benefits: They represent the added value that the customer receives when using the offering.
- Differentiators: Characteristics that uniquely differentiate the offering in competition.

Companies should consider linking have to link consumer perception, and brand experience in creating a unique experience that the consumer could understand and identify with. This is possible through the correct design approach focused around the consumer (Sackett & Kefallonitis, 2003). This is translated for the consumer in terms of perceived experience through the senses. Terms that the consumer experiences with are:

- Visual – Colors, new shapes, new materials, new design concepts.
- Olfactory – Clean and fresh environments, familiar positive smells (coffee smell, aromatherapy etc.).
- Taste – Food, organic products, regional delicacies.
- Aural – (music, announcements, etc.)
- Touch – (new materials, etc.)

Associative networks reflect consumers' brand image perceptions. Brand image research is often based on the associative network model (Farquhar & Herr, 1993), in which a person's memory is made up of links and nodes: Links represent relationships (positive or negative, weak or strong), and nodes represent concepts (e.g., brand associations) and objects (e.g., brands). Distinguishing these key associations is essential for addressing the differential advantage of the organizations offerings against competition (Maio, 1999; Waters, 1997). These key associations suggest a method of projecting the unique identifying elements of the company's offerings, an answer to brand differentiation needs.

H5: Visitors' emotional relationship and visitors' desire to go back to a destination are positively related.

4. Method

We designed the Destination Branding Survey (DBS) to measure brand awareness, brand recognition, brand loyalty, brand quality, and brand feelings as described above. Each of these variables consisted of several survey items. The DBS also contained questions that asked respondents to indicate the extent that they agreed with the following three questions: "Turkey was worth the effort to visit," "I would visit Turkey again," and "I would advise others to visit Turkey." These three items were measured using five point Likert scales, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 indicated "strongly agree." Open-ended items asked respondents to list countries they would like to visit, list adjectives that describe Turkey, and describe what scents, smells, sights, sounds, and tastes they associate with Turkey.

We used SurveyMonkey[®] to administer the DBS. We fielded the surveys from March 7, 2012 to May 25, 2012. We contacted with Turkish Cultural Centers and asked for assisting us with our research. They sent our surveys to individuals who have visited Turkey. We received 253 completed surveys.

4.1. Sample

Seventy-five respondents indicated that they visited Turkey, and were therefore qualified for the study. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were female, 48% were between 24 and 44 years of age, 38% had Masters Degrees, 28% had Bachelor's Degrees, and 52% were married.

4.2. Analysis

We ascertained brand awareness, recognition, loyalty, perceived quality, and feeling scale reliabilities using Cronbach's Alpha. The three dependent variables were then regressed separately onto these five brand variables. As all variables were measured using survey responses, multicollinearity (variance inflation factors) was determined to access the independency among the independent variables (brand scales), and hence their suitability for the regression analysis.

4.3. Results

Table 1 contains DBS scale reliabilities using Cronbach's Alphas, which is a measure of the scales' internal consistency. The scales varied regarding the number of items, ranging from two to seven items. Each of the five brand scales achieved an acceptable level of reliability, ranging from .73 to .91.

Table 1. The Destination Brand Survey (DBS) Scale Items and Reliabilities

Brand Awareness (.73)¹
TV ²
Newspapers
Magazines
Internet
Movies
Friends
Festivals
Brand Recognition (.91)
I am familiar with Turkey.
I know a lot about Turkey.
Brand Loyalty (.87)
I respect Turkey.
I like Turkey.
Brand Quality (.88)
Turkey is the best destination to go.
Accommodation is of good quality in Turkey.
Food is of good quality in Turkey.
Turkish people are very helpful.
Turkey has a unique architecture.
People are respectful.
Turkey is a value for money as a destination.
Brand Feelings (.76)
My visit to Turkey was just what I expected.
I developed positive feelings towards Turkey prior to my visit.

¹Cronbach Alpha reliabilities are in parentheses.

²Respondents indicated places where they learned about Turkey.

Table 2 contains Intercorrelations among the three dependent variables and the five brand scales. In support of several of the hypotheses, Brand Recognition, Loyalty, Quality, and Feelings were significantly related to respondents' belief that their trip was worth the effort, that they would visit again, and that they would advise others to visit Turkey. On the other hand,

Table 2. Destination Brand Survey (DBS) scale and dependent variable correlation matrix

	D.V.	1	2	3	4	5
Turkey trip worth the effort	1.00					
1. Brand Awareness	-.02	1.00				
2. Brand Recognition	.43***	.01	1.00			
3. Brand Loyalty	.58***	-.02	.48***	1.00		
4. Brand Quality	.66***	-.05	.60***	.74***	1.00	
5. Brand Feelings	.47***	-.08	.62***	.63***	.61***	1.00
Visit Turkey again	1.00					
1. Brand Awareness	-.02	1.00				
2. Brand Recognition	.65***	.01	1.00			
3. Brand Loyalty	.45***	-.02	.47***	1.00		
4. Brand Quality	.58***	-.05	.59***	.73***	1.00	
5. Brand Feelings	.66***	-.07	.62***	.63***	.60***	1.00
Advise others to visit Turkey	1.00					
1. Brand Awareness	-.05	1.00				
2. Brand Recognition	.58***	.01	1.00			
3. Brand Loyalty	.72***	-.02	.47***	1.00		
4. Brand Quality	.74***	-.05	.59***	.73***	1.00	
5. Brand Feelings	.57***	-.07	.62***	.63***	.60***	1.00

* $p \leq .05$
 ** $p \leq .01$
 *** $p \leq .001$

Brand Awareness was not significantly related to any of the depend variables, nor to any of the other brand scales.

Table 3: Respondents' Belief That Their Turkey Trip was Worth the Effort, That They Would Visit Turkey Again, and that They Would Advise Others to Visit Turkey¹ Regressed on Brand Awareness, Recognition, Loyalty, Quality and Feelings ($N = 75$)

	Turkey trip worth the effort ²		Visit Again ³		Turkey Advise others to visit Turkey ⁴		
	β	t	B	t	β	t	
Brand Awareness	.01	.09	.01	.16	-.03	-.44	
Brand Recognition	.03	.27	.32	2.78	** .19	1.94	
Brand Loyalty	.19	1.33	-.14	-1.06	.37	3.17	**
Brand Quality	.47	3.11	*** .24	1.79	.35	2.96	**
Brand Feelings	.04	.31	.40	3.28	*** .01	-.01	

* $p \leq .05$
 ** $p \leq .01$
 *** $p \leq .001$

¹The dependent variables were measured using five point Likert scales, where (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

² $R^2 = .42, F_{(5, 63)} = 10.74, p \leq .001$

³ $R^2 = .60, F_{(5, 62)} = 15.86, p \leq .001$

⁴ $R^2 = .62, F_{(5, 63)} = 23.90, p \leq .001$

Table 3 contains the results of the three regression analysis. In support of hypothesis X, Brand Loyalty predicted respondents' belief that their trip to Turkey was worth the effort. Brand recognition and Brand Feelings beta coefficients were significant with respect to respondents' desire to visit Turkey again. Brand loyalty and Quality beta coefficients were significant with respect to respondents' intention to advise others to visit Turkey. The variance explained (R^2) by the brand scales were significant for each regression equation ($p \leq .001$).

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify literature in support of the destination branding efforts of Turkey. In particular, shed some light on perceptions of foreign visitors regarding this country and provide important insights to governmental agencies of Turkey who are involved in improving image of country. According to the study results, TV was the most important tool in forming brand awareness among the United States citizens. Therefore, news, advertising, or movies regarding Turkey should be continuously transmitted through TV channels in order to advance brand awareness.

While brand recognition, loyalty, quality, and feelings were significantly related to respondents' belief that their trip was worth the effort, that they would visit again, and that they would advise others to visit Turkey, brand awareness was not significantly related to any of these dependent variables. The finding can be explained, as visitors were satisfied with their visit to Turkey. Natural beauty, wonderful beaches, friendliness of local people, and their well-known hospitality are probably among the factors that lead to visitors' positive experience. On the other hand, brand awareness is not enough to move people towards choosing Turkey as a destination. Marketing communications should be arranged in such a way that will communicate Turkey as a destination brand into a consideration list of visitors, which in turn will lead to a brand recall. Advertising and other tools of marketing communications should not simply focus on the beauties of country, but should also demonstrate reasons why visitors should come. For many years, destinations were advertised as places for escape; however, this trend changes as discovery theme is mostly used nowadays.

Turkey has more than just beautiful beaches and nice weather. Turkey is full of unique differentiating characteristics such as natural landscapes, rich history, and culture that span the great civilization that lived and wandered. Turkey uses "explore" as a motto for its advertisings. In order to be distinguished among other destinations Turkish advertising messages should be distinguishable and memorable. There is a necessity for cues to visitors in order to recall them their time in Turkey. One of these can be a blue eye bid that is believed to catch negative energy that comes from eyes. Tourism companies can provide this cute bead to all visitors and by doing so they will make them recall Turkey with their every look on it. Celebrities should be used in advertising campaign in order to stimulate positive feelings that further will be transmitted to a destination. For instance, Dr. Mehmet Oz is such a person. He is very talented surgeon and at the same time, he is famous in the USA. Association of Dr. Oz with Turkey will lead to the evolvement of positive feeling towards Turkey. Mr. Muhtar Kent, CEO at the Coca-Cola, is also can be as a spokesperson for Turkey. In order to enhance positive feelings of visitors, it is important to provide them memorable experiences. These experiences will associate with Turkey in the future.

Advertisements and marketing communications campaigns are very important in the process of forming and improving image of a particular destination, yet they are not sufficient. The position of Turkey in international arena, relations with other countries, of economic development, exports and imports status, quality of life, and human rights are important elements that shape Turkey's image internationally. There can be seen significant difference between Turkey fifteen years ago and Turkey today. Much of mentioned above has been accomplished in 15 years by the government under the leadership of Prime Minister of Turkey Mr. Erdogan.

Destination branding success incorporates not just satisfying needs of incoming visitors but at the same time internal visitors. Internal visitors' satisfaction is highly important as affects satisfaction of external visitors. Image and identity firstly should be promoted among external visitors and should be inserted in their minds. This process should start in elementary school and go through middle- and high schools, colleges, universities, governmental agencies and private companies in order to seed this culture among people. Cooperation and collaboration between government and private sector is necessary.

6. Implications and limitations

This study employed a convenience sample. Future studies should investigate more diversified sample. In addition, future studies should be replicated by reaching bigger numbers of respondents. Second, this study was conducted in upstate New York; therefore, it should be conducted in other states too in order to be able to generalize findings.

Branding is important as a tool that differentiates destinations and attracts visitors and investors. Consistency is an important element that makes a brand desirable. Turkey strongly invests in developing a strong destination brand.

Branded destinations depend on loyal visitors. Visitors prefer destination brands that convey consistent themes, provide unique experiences, and present minimal security risks. Turkey's destination branding efforts should communicate safety, respect visitor origins and nationality, ethnicity, religion and philosophies of life.

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