

## *The Image of Turkey in The Eyes of Dutch University Students\**

*Hollandalı Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Gözünde Türkiye İmaji*

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### ABSTRACT

There are various images of Turkey in the eyes of Dutch university students. There might be a lot of different factors effecting the formation of these images. The aim of this study is to determine the image of Turkey in the eyes of Dutch students of the University of Amsterdam. In the study, field survey method has been used. Data has been collected from 280 students by face-to face survey technique. A questionnaire, with questions aimed to determine the attitudes and impressions towards Turkey, has been applied. In the analysis of data, frequency distributions, chi-square, and t tests have been used. The findings of the research indicate that Istanbul is the first thing among those come to the mind about Turkey. Most of the respondents like Turkish people and Turkey as a state. Turkey has been perceived as a favorable country with its food, culture, climate, hospitality, sea and sun. Male students have more positive attitudes towards Turkish people than female students have.

### ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Image, country image, Turkish, Turkey, image of Turkey, students, Dutch university students

### ÖZET

Hollandalı üniversite öğrencilerinin gözünde Türkiye'ye ilişkin çeşitli imajlar mevcuttur. Bu imajların şekillenmesinde pek çok farklı unsurun etkisi olabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Amsterdam Üniversitesi öğrencilerinin gözündeki Türkiye imajını belirlemektir. Çalışmada saha araştırması yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veriler 280 öğrenci ile yüz yüze anket tekniğinden yararlanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde frekans dağılımları, ki-kare ve t

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*testleri kullanılmıştır. Türkiye'ye yönelik tutum ve izlenimleri belirlemeye yönelik sorulardan oluşan bir soru formu uygulanmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, Türkiye hakkında akla gelen ilk unsurlar arasında İstanbul'un birinci sırada yer aldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırmaya katılanların çoğu Türk insanını ve ülke olarak Türkiye'yi beğenmektedir. Türkiye yemekleri, kültürü, misafirperverliği, deniz ve güneşi ile olumlu bir ülke olarak algılanmaktadır. Erkek öğrencilerin Türk insanına yönelik tutumları bayan öğrencilere nazaran daha olumludur.*

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**KEY WORDS**

*İmaj, ülke imajı, Türk, Türkiye, Türkiye imajı, öğrenciler, Hollandalı üniversite öğrencileri*



## 1. Introduction

Image is a conceptual picture in the mind of a person about a person, thing or a country. It may be a product of some specific political, social, or religious background or circumstances (Saleem 2007: 136). Image can be considered as the meaning system that a person attach to a phenomenon (Kemming and Sandikci 2007: 34).

Martin and Eroglu (1993: 193) defined country image as “the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country”.

Country image may be considered as a special type of image which includes the country's products, brands, companies and much more. Country image is made on the basis of experiences and opinions about the nation or country and on, primarily, information received through the various channels such as politics (internal affairs and foreign policy), telecommunication, entertainment (movies) and rumar (Jenes and Malota 2010: 5).

There is a Turkey image in the eyes of Dutch people. There might be a lot of different elements effecting the formation of this image. The aim of this study is to determine the image of Turkey in the eyes of Dutch students of the University of Amsterdam.

The number of the academic studies concerning the image of Turkey in the eyes of Dutch people is very limited. In this respect, the study has real importance. The findings and recommendations about the image of Turkey will be useful for some instutions both in Turkey and Netherlands. The governments and the universities of both countries may benefit from the findings of the study to eliminate the misapprehensions, to change the impressions and to improve the mutual understanding and relations.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Country image is the cumulative beliefs and ideas surrounding information gathered from or about a particular country (Powers and Fetscherin, 2008: 148). It is possible to define country image as people’s beliefs, ideas and impressions about a particular country (Kotler et al. 1993: 141).

Country image is less frequently mentioned in literature than more widely known image types (Jenes and Malota 2010: 3). But many disciplines deal with

the concept of country image. The concept has been used in the studies about place branding (Amine and Chao 2005: 187), international marketing (Balabanis et.all. 2002: 582; Parameswaran and Pisharodi, 2002: 259; Laroche et all., 2005: 97), international public relations (Kunczik 1997; Becerikli 2005: 12), public relations (Peltekoğlu 2007: 576), media studies (Saleem 2007: 130), destination image, brand image, country of origin, country branding.

Country image might be considered a special type of image which is shaped by a wide range of factors (Lopez 2011: 1608). History (Boulding 1959: 122), nature, geography, national symbols, culture (Kolossoff 2002: 133), tourism, brands, economic conditions, famous citizens, people, foreign and domestic policies, cities, and natural resources are the important factors which can shape the image of a country.

Regarding to its direction, the country image can be internal image (self image) and external image (mirror image). The internal country image means what citizens think about their own country, and the external country image is what others or foreigners think about the country. (Jenes and Malota, 2010: 5).

A significant part of the ideas about the foreign world is formed during the process of initial socialisation, first of all under the influence of the education system (Kolossoff 2002: 122).

The impressions about a particular country may not always match the truth. Sometimes these impressions may depend on stereotypes or prejudice. Intercultural communication may be effected by these stereotypes and prejudices (Kartarı 2006: 217).

Simon Anholt developed the Nation Brand Index as a way to measure the image and reputation of the world's nations. The questionnaire for all survey countries contains the questions about the awareness of nations and favorability to the nations. This index measures country brand value with six dimensions. These dimensions are; exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism, immigration and investments (<http://www.earthspeak.com>).

Governments should give high concern to their countries' imagees (Ganideh 2012: 101). For improving the country's image, the state must achieve democracy, improve economy, protect heritage or develop infrastructure. (Dagyte and Zykas 2008: 68).

A positive country image becomes an essential for all countries. A country may gain economic, trade, and politic advantages by a positive image among

the other international platforms (Altınbaşak ve Yalçın 2008: 2). A positive image strengthen the country in international platforms. Developing the positive images of the country bring comparative advantages to the countries. This is difficult but achievable for Turkey. Because Turkey has really valuable and strong assets.

Turkey is known as a natural bridge between Asia and Europe as they unite in the Bosphorous. Important ancient civilizations, which date back to 8000 B.C. and made their home in Anatolia, have left behind countless archeological and cultural treasures. In addition to its wealth historical and cultural inheritance, Turkey has great different richnesses and variety in terms of natural resources (e.g., the country's 8,372 km coastline includes the Aegean, Mediterranean, Black, and Marmara Seas). Turkey's natural and cultural variety, combined with the well-known traditional hospitality of its people, makes the country a very impressive tourist destination (Sönmez and Sırakaya 2002: 186).

The country image of Turkey sometimes defies a clear delineation due to its geopolitic location. In spite of 99 % Muslim population, Turkey cannot be described as a typical Middle Eastern country. Different kinds of sources position Turkey according to their own definitions. According to some organizations, Turkey is in Europe; according to others, such as the United Nations, Turkey is located in Asia or the Middle East. Meanwhile someone thinks that Turkey is European and someone thinks that it is Asian (Sonmez and Sırakaya 2002: 188).

The results of some public opinion surveys indicate that Turkey has an image problem among its target audiences (Kemming and Sandikci, 2007: 33). Many people opposite of Turkey who live in Europe otherise Turkey as Eastern and Muslim. Besides behaving like this, they don't see the reality of today's Turkey. These people try to attempt reappearing the orientalist prejudice and image that mention in the past especially 19th century. This situation damages intercultural relationships (Yıldız 2006: 44).

The general image of Turkey seems quite good in England and Spain, but a mixed image was found for Sweden and Slovenia. Also a clearly negative public image of Turkey was observed in The Netherlands and Germany. The general image of Turkey in Netherlands is not good and badly managed but improving, strong and colourful (Kemming and Sandikci 2007: 35-36).

Turkey may be a well-known country in Netherlands. Because there is a large Turkish population in this country. As of 2010, Turks form the largest eth-

nic minority in the Netherlands. The Turkish population in Netherlands is 384.164, thus 2.31% of total population.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_the\\_Netherlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_the_Netherlands)).

### 3. Methodology

In this study, survey method was used. The data was collected from 280 students of the University of Amsterdam by face-to-face survey technique. These students were from 7 different faculties of the university.

Today, with more than 30,000 students, 5,000 staff and 250 study programs, University of Amsterdam is one of the larger comprehensive universities in Europe. Teaching and research at the University of Amsterdam are conducted in seven faculties: the Humanities, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Economics and Business, Law, Science, Medicine and Dentistry ([http://www.english.uva.nl/about\\_the\\_uva/](http://www.english.uva.nl/about_the_uva/)).

The sample population shows the gender distribution as having more female than male respondents. The sample shows a distribution of age between 18 and 37 years. The following tables outlines the demographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics**

Gender	N	(%)
Male	115	41.1
Female	165	58.9
Age		
18-21	115	41.7
22-25	127	46.0
26 and above	34	12.3

Random sampling method was used in this study. Frequency distribution, Chi Square, T Tests were used to analyze data.

Principal questions of this study are:

-What is the first thing that comes to the minds of university students when they think about Turkey?

-Which features of Turkey are most liked by the university students?

-Who is the most favorite Turkish personolity among Dutch university students?

-Do the students like Turkey and Turkish people?

-Do the attitudes towards Turkey and Turkish people differentiate according to gender, having been to Turkey, students' communications with a Turkish citizen in the past?

#### **4. Findings**

Basic findings about the image of Turkey and and Turkish people in the eyes of Dutch university students are presented below.

##### **4.1. The Students' Impressions about Turkey and Turkish People**

In this part of the study, the first thing that comes to the minds of students when they think about turkey, the most favorite feature of Turkey, the best brands of Turkey and the favorite Turkish personality among Dutch students has been mentioned.

##### **4.1.1 The First Thing that Comes to the Minds of Students When They Think about Turkey**

A question was asked to the students to determine the first thing that comes to their minds when they think of about Turkey. According to the answers, Istanbul (%20.1) is the first, holiday (%11.0) is the second, Turkish food (%10,7) is the third most given answer. The other answers are; Doner kebab (%4.9), sun (%4.9), Islam (%4.2), Turkish national flag (%4.2), Ataturk (%3.8), Lahmacun (%3.0), Turkish community in the Netherlands (%2.7), cheap vacation (%1.9), mosques (%1.5), nice weather (%1.5), Ankara (%1.1), Antalya (%1.1), beautiful country (%1.1), border between Europea and Asia (%1.1), Galatasaray (%1.1), Hagia Sophia (%1.1), Turkish people (%1.1).

##### **4.1.2 The Most Favorite Feature of Turkey**

To the question, what is the most favorite feature of Turkey, the subjects answered as following; %26.9 Turkish food, %15.5 culture, %7.6 its climate, %6.3 hospitality, %6.3 sun, % 5.5 Istanbul, % 5.5 holiday, % 2.9 its beaches, %2,7 nice people, %2,1 beautiful country. The most favorite feature of Turkey is its food. The second most important feature is culture.

##### **4.1.3 The Best brands of Turkey**

To the question, what is the best brand of Turkey for you, students gave the following answers; % 40.6 don't know a specific brand, % 9.8 doner kebab,

% 9.0 Turkish Airlines, % 8.3 Efes Pilsen, % 6.8 Galatasaray, % 2.3 Fenerbahce, % 2.3 Onur Air, % 2.3 Tarkan, % 2.3 yoghurt. According to the students the best brands of Turkey are Doner kebab and Turkish Airlines.

#### 4.1.4 The Most Favorite Cities of Turkey as a Destination

When the question “Which city in Turkey is a good destination” was asked, the students gave the following answers.

**Table 2: The Most Favorite Cities of Turkey as a Destination**

Order		n	%
1	İstanbul	189	75.9
2	Alanya	23	9.2
3	Antalya	12	4.8
4	Bodrum	9	3.6
5	Ankara	5	2.0
6	Marmaris	5	2.0
7	Others	6	2.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>249</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen on the table, according to 75,9 % of the students İstanbul is the best destination in Turkey. Although the concept “city” was used in the question, the answers of the students included some districts’ names such as Alanya, Bodrum and Marmaris. These districts are accepted as popular touristic destinations of Turkey.

#### 4.1.5 Favorite Turkish Personality among Dutch Students

A question was asked to the students to determine the favorite Turkish personality for them.

**Table 3: Favorite Turkish Personality among Dutch Students**

Order	Favorite Turkish Person	n	%
1	Tarkan	48	33.6
2	Ataturk	34	23.8



3	My Turkish friend	18	12.6
4	Hakan Sukur	10	7.0
5	Orhan Pamuk	8	5.6
6	Nebahat Albayrak (Dutch Minister)	4	2.8
7	Rustu Rençber	4	2.8
8	Others	17	11.8
<b>Total</b>		143	100

As seen on the table 3 the students gave the following answers; Tarkan (% 33.6), Ataturk (% 23.8), my Turkish friend (% 12.6), Hakan Sukur (% 7.0), Orhan Pamuk (% 5.6), Nebahat Albayrak (% 2.8), Rustu Rençber (% 2.8). The most favorite persons of the students are Tarkan and Ataturk.

#### 4.2. The Students' Attitudes Towards Turkey

In this part of study distributions of students whether they like turkey as a state or not, students' attitudes about items towards Turkey and distributions of students whether they like Turkish people or not has been determined.

##### 4.2.1 Distributions of the Students Whether They Like Turkey as a State or not

To the question, "Do you like Turkey as a state", % 85.8 of the students answered as "yes", and % 14.2 of the students answered as "no". Most of the students like Turkey as a state.

**Table 4: Distributions of Students Whether They Like Turkey as a State or not**

Do you like Turkey?	n	%
Yes	205	85.8
No	34	14.2
<b>Total</b>	239	100

Chi-square test has been applied to understand whether there was a significant relationship between communicating with a Turkish citizen and liking Turkey as a state.

**Table 5: Relationship Between Communicating with a Turkish Citizen and Liking Turkey**

Have you ever communicated with a Turkish citizen?	Do you like Turkey as a state?		Total (%)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Yes	88.8	11.2	100
No	60.0	40.0	100
$\chi^2=12.93, df=1, p< 0.01$			

There is a statistically significant difference between communicating with a Turkish citizen and liking Turkey as a state. The students who communicate with a Turkish citizen like Turkey more than the students who don't communicate with a Turkish citizen ( $\chi^2=12.93, df=1, p< 0.01$ ).

There is no statistically significant relationship between having been in Turkey and liking Turkey as a state. There is also no statistically significant relationship between liking Turkey and gender, age, departments of students.

#### 4.2.2 The Students' Attitudes about items towards Turkey

Some items has been presented to the students to determine the attitudes of the students towards Turkey. The percentage of the students whether they agree the items or not has been determined. Mean scores of attitudes towards Turkey are showed on table 6.

**Table 6: Students' Attitudes towards Turkey (5= strongly agree, 1=strongly disagree)**

	Mean	Standart deviation
I can visit Turkey as a tourist	4.62	0.65
Turkey is well developed in science	3.06	0.63
Turkey is a democratic country	3.06	0.83
Turkey has a strong economy	3.04	0.67

As seen on the Table 6, the item which has the highest mean score is "I can visit Turkey as a tourist" with 4.62. According to this result it can be argued

that Turkey is an attractive touristic country for Dutch students. On the other hand, the item which has the lowest mean score is “Turkey has a strong economy” with 3.04.

The attitude “Turkey is a democratic country” differentiate according to gender ( $t=2.19$ ,  $df= 274$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The mean scores of male students (3.19) are higher than female students (2.96).

### 4.3 The Students’ Attitudes Towards Turkish People

In this part of study, the students’ attitudes towards Turkish people has been determined.

#### 4.3.1 Distributions of Students Whether They Like Turkish People or not

To the question, “Do you like Turkish people”, % 96.5 of the students answered as “yes”, and % 3.5 of the students answered as “no”.

**Table 7: Distributions of Students Whether They Like Turkish People or not**

Do you like Turkish people?	n	%
Yes	247	96.5
No	9	3.5
<b>Total</b>	256	100

As seen on table 7 the percentage of the students who like Turkish people is quite high. Thus, it can be understood that most of the students like Turkish people.

**Table 8: The relationship Between Communicating with a Turkish Citizen and Liking Turkish People**

Have you ever communicated with a Turkish citizen?	Do you like Turkish people		Total (%)
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Yes	98.3	1.7	100
No	73.7	26.3	100
$\chi^2=31.01$ , $df=1$ , $p< 0.01$			

There is a statistically significant difference between liking Turkish people and communicating with a Turkish citizen. The students who have communicated with a Turkish citizen like Turkish people more than the students who don't communicate with a Turkish citizen ( $\chi^2=31.01$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

There is no statistically significant relationship between having been in Turkey and liking Turkish people. There is also no statistically significant relationship between liking Turkish people and age and departments of students.

#### 4.3.2 The Students' Attitudes Towards The Items About Turkish People

Mean scores of the students' attitudes towards the items about Turkish people are showed on the following table.

**Table 9: The Students' Attitudes Towards The Items About Turkish People**

	Mean	Standart deviation
I can be neighbour with a Turkish citizen	4.51	0.63
I can make friends with a Turkish citizen	4.50	0.58
I don't hesitate to communicate with a Turkish citizen	4.49	0.63
I can be a guest of a Turkish citizen	4.32	0.68
I can host a Turkish citizen	4.15	0.79
I can marry with a Turkish citizen	3.34	1.13

As seen on table 9, the item "I can be neighbour with a Turkish citizen" has the highest mean score. The item "I can marry with a Turkish citizen" has the lowest mean score. So it can be said that Dutch students have strong attitude to be a neighbour with a Turkish citizen.

The results of study indicate that there are statistically significant differences between some attitudes towards Turkish people according to gender. Mean scores of male students are higher than female students who agree with the following attitudes:

The attitude "I don't hesitate to communicate with a Turkish citizen" differentiate according to gender ( $t= 2.03$ ,  $df= 275$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). The mean scores of male students (4.58) are higher than female students (4.42).

The attitude “I can be neighbour with a Turkish citizen” differentiate according to gender ( $t= 2.72$ ,  $df= 277$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). The mean scores of male students (4.63) are higher than female students (4.42).

The attitude “I can make friends with a Turkish citizen” differentiate according to gender ( $t= 3.93$ ,  $df= 277$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). The mean scores of male students (4.66) are higher than female students (4.39).

The attitude “I can marry a Turkish citizen” differentiate according to gender ( $t= 3.54$ ,  $df= 276$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). The mean scores of male students (3.62) are higher than female students (3.14).

The attitude “I can host a Turkish citizen” differentiate according to gender ( $t= 2.43$ ,  $df= 272$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). The mean scores of male students (4.29) are higher than female students (4.05).

The attitude “I can be a guest of a Turkish citizen” differentiate according to gender ( $t= 2.18$ ,  $df= 273$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). The mean scores of male students (4.42) are higher than female students (4.24).

These findings indicate that male students tend to set up close relationships more than female students.

#### 4.4 The Students’ Behaviours Towards Turkey and Turkish People

In this part of the study, the percentages of the students who have been in Turkey, communicated with a Turkish citizen and read any literature from a Turkish writer have been determined.

##### 4.4.1 The Percentages of the Students Who Have Been in Turkey

To determine the percentages of the students who have been in Turkey, a question was asked.

**Table 10: The Percentages of the Students Who Have Been in Turkey**

Have you ever been in Turkey?	n	%
Yes	139	49.8
No	140	50.2
<b>Total</b>	279	100

According to the given answers, 49.8 % of the students have been in Turkey. 50.2 % of the students have never been in Turkey (Table 10). The important result for the study is the students whose approximately half of have been in Turkey.

#### 4.4.2 The Percentages of the Students Who Have Communicated with a Turkish Citizen

A question was asked to determine whether the students have communicated with a Turkish citizen or not.

**Table 11: The Percentages of the Students Who Have Communicated with a Turkish Citizen**

Have you ever communicated with a Turkish citizen?	n	%
Yes	251	91.9
No	22	8.1
<b>Total</b>	273	100

As seen on the table, 91.9 % of the students have communicated with a Turkish citizen. This result shows that most of the students tend to communicate with Turkish citizens.

#### 4.4.3 The Percentage of the Students Who Have Read A Literature from a Turkish Writer

A question was asked to learn whether they have read a literature from a Turkish writer or not.

**Table 12: The Percentage of the Students Who Have Read A Literature from a Turkish Writer**

Have you read any literature from a Turkish writer?	n	%
Yes	60	22.3
No	209	77.7
<b>Total</b>	269	100

As seen on the table, the percentage of the students who have read a literature from a Turkish writer is only 22.3 %.

## 5. Results And Discussion

In this study, it is observed that approximately half of the university students have been to Turkey. More than 90 % of the students have communicated with a Turkish citizen. 22.3% of them have read one of the Turkish literature author's work. The most favorite Turkish people for them are Tarkan and Atatürk. The best Turkish brands for them are Doner kebab and Turkish Airlines. But 40.6 % of the students don't know a specific brand.

Most of the students like Turkey, and Turkish people. The students who have communicated with a Turkish citizen before, like both Turkey and Turkish people more than the students who have not communicated with a Turkish citizen.

Male students feel more close themselves to the Turkey and Turkish people more than female students. Male students tend to set up close relationships with Turkish citizens more than female students.

It can be stated that the impressions of the students on Turkey are related with Turkey's cities, tourist attractions, food culture, religion, national flag, citizens, geographical position, climate, leaders, sport, history, social life and culture. The first words come to the students' mind are Istanbul, holiday and Turkish food. The most liked features of Turkey are its food, culture and climate.

In the light of this findings; in order to reinforce the Turkey's and Turkish people's image in the eyes of Dutch university students, requirements can be ordered as following:

-The university students in Netherlands and the Turkish citizens should make more contact with each other.

-Turkish enterprises should make more efforts to produce and promote international brands.

-Image campaigns should be arranged towards female university students in Netherlands. Studies should be made to gain the sympathy of the students.

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