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The Effect of Turkey's (Türkiye) Country Image on Country Reputation: A Study From The Perspective of Citizens of The People's Republic of China*****

Türkiye'nin Ülke İmajının Ülke İtibarı Üzerindeki Etkisi: Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Vatandaşlarının Perspektifinden Bir Çalışma

ÖZ

21. yüzyılda küreselleşmeyle birlikte imaj ve itibar kavramları ülkeler için vazgeçilmez hale gelmiş ve literatürde bu kavramlarla ilgili çalışmalar hız kazanmıştır. İmaj ve itibar çalışmalarına hız veren ülkelerden biri de Asya'nın batısında yer alan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'dir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kuruluşundan bu yana birçok ülkeyle siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkiler geliştirmiştir. Bu ülkelerden biri de Asya'nın doğusunda yer alan Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti'dir. Çin ve Türkiye, 2000'li yıllardan bu yana siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel ilişkilerini sürdürmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin ülke imajının ülke itibarı üzerindeki etkisini, Çin vatandaşlarının bakış açısıyla incelemekte ve Çin vatandaşlarının Türkiye'nin imajını ve itibarını nasıl algıladıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmada, 21-31 Aralık 2023 tarihleri arasında Şanghay'da 434 Çin vatandaşıyla kolayda örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak yüz yüze anket yapılmıştır. Yanlış ve eksik veriler nedeniyle 420 katılımcının verileri analiz edilmiştir. Verilere güvenilirlik testleri, faktör analizleri, frekans analizleri ve regresyon analizleri uygulanmıştır. Analizde, Çin vatandaşlarının Türkiye algısının ülkenin itibarını önemli ölçüde etkilediği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye Ülke İmajı, Türkiye Ülke İtibarı, Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti, Şanghay

ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, with globalization, the concepts of image and reputation have become indispensable for countries, and studies on these concepts have gained momentum in the literature. One of the countries that has accelerated its image and reputation efforts is the Republic of Türkiye, located in the west of Asia. Since its establishment, the Republic of Türkiye has developed political and economic relations with many countries. One of these countries is the People's Republic of China, located east of Asia. China and Türkiye have continued their political, economic, and cultural relations since the 2000s. This study examines the impact of Türkiye's country image on the country's reputation from the perspective of Chinese citizens and also reveals how Chinese citizens perceive Türkiye's image and reputation. The study involved conducting face-to-face surveys using a convenience sampling method with 434 Chinese citizens in Shanghai between December 21-31, 2023. Due to incorrect and missing data, the data of 420 participants were analyzed. The data was subjected to reliability tests, factor analyses, frequency analyses, and regression analyses. The analysis concluded that Chinese citizens' perception of Türkiye significantly effects the country's reputation.

Keywords: Türkiye Country Image, Türkiye Country Reputation, Citizens of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai

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Introduction

In the contemporary era, states emphasize their perception among other states as a crucial aspect within the international arena. Citizens of nations interacting more with globalization have many thoughts about other countries. The country of image is a subject that has garnered significant attention and has been the focus of extensive scholarly inquiry. Previously, our understanding and perspectives regarding different nations were primarily based on hearsay or secondhand accounts. However, technological advancements, the widespread accessibility of media, and the emergence of platforms like social media have enabled individuals to form opinions about countries without physically visiting them. This exemplifies the significance of the country of image in the context of nations, underscoring the necessity for its scholarly examination.

The research generally focuses on the country's image. The general country image is the overall country image, which is all the meaningful and informed ideas that guide the country through the qualities of a country and various elements about the country (De Nisco et al., 2015). Today, the international image of a country is one of the most important tools that ensure the country's effectiveness in international public opinion.

The international community's perception today is influenced by various image values that have become ingrained in the social mentality and are often regarded as codes. These values encompass a range of factors, including countries' attitudes towards world peace, their levels of economic development and industrialization, the extent of democratization, the efficacy of the justice system, the stability of secular structures, the emphasis placed on human rights, access to news and information, freedom of thought, advancements in women's rights, environmental and animal rights consciousness, low crime rates, efforts to alleviate poverty, achievements in the realms of art and science, the prevalence of technological opportunities, a sophisticated aesthetic sensibility, cleanliness, affordability, well-planned urban environments, tourism prospects, scientific exclusivity, public participation in decision-making processes, and the trustworthiness of politicians (Yerdelen, 2017: 47).

Upon examining the literature, it becomes clear that there are limited studies on the correlation between a country's image and its reputation. Anholt (2002) emphasizes the importance of managing a country's image and reputation to transform it into a brand. The research on the reputation, image, and brand value of countries was conducted by Wang et al. (2012) and Hakala et al. (2013).

This research focuses on Türkiye and China, two significant nations that serve as pivotal points connecting the eastern and western extremities of the Asian continent. The level of mutual understanding between the populations of two nations positively correlates with the likelihood of fostering collaboration and engaging in joint endeavors. By engaging in such a manner, the two nations can foster a deeper understanding of one another and effectively address and resolve their fundamental concerns. The research was developed and shaped by this idea and was revealed by considering the concepts of country image and reputation of the Chinese people regarding Türkiye.

Before starting this study, the literature was thoroughly reviewed and examined, and Turkish and English sources were analyzed. Türkiye's practical studies on this subject with other countries are limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill the literature gap and reveal the perception of Türkiye's country image. For the study to enter the field of international relations and to be evaluated from the perceptions and perspectives of the citizens of China about Türkiye, a global

study was conducted between Shanghai University from China and Afyon Kocatepe University from Türkiye.

1. Country Image And Country Reputation

1.1. Country Image and Türkiye Country Image

The concept of image has become one of the issues that people and societies attach importance to today. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, image is defined as “*a picture in your mind or an idea of how someone or something is’ and the way that something or someone is thought of by other people*”.¹ The concept of image, which is important for individuals and institutions, has also become increasingly important for countries with the effect of globalization. Countries, like institutions, are focused on building, managing, and protecting their brands (Fetscherin, 2010:468). The concept of “country image” used for countries can be evaluated as the whole of a person’s impressions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and associations about the country. Associations can be obtained from various sources such as news about that country in the media, political relations with that country, the place of that country’s artists and athletes in the world, their successes, failures, briefly the popularity of their works, and the images of products or companies originating from that country.

Various researchers have made many evaluations about the country’s image. According to Martin and Eroğlu, country image is the sum of all a person’s descriptive, inferential, and informative beliefs about a particular country (Martin and Eroğlu 1993:193). According to Verlegh, it is a mental network of emotional and cognitive associations connected to the Country (Verlegh, 2001: 25). According to Kotler and others, a country’s image is the sum of people’s beliefs and impressions about places. They are a product of the mind trying to process and select necessary information from a vast amount of data about a place (Kotler et al. 1993: 141).

Over the years, many researchers have attempted to examine the image of countries, communities, or issues, drawing on various methodologies in different research paradigms. The concept of country image has been a constant focus of academic research in marketing, but the focus has been more on the study of country of origin. However, recent interdisciplinary literature reviews show that country images, the causes and consequences of social and psychological processes, have many possible economic, cultural, and political effects, leading to studies in different fields. It covers various scientific fields (Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2015). A country’s image can be understood as a comprehensive representation encompassing various aspects, such as the country’s products, brands, companies, and other relevant factors. The perception of a country is shaped by individuals’ encounters and perspectives regarding the nation, predominantly influenced by the information they receive. This can be achieved through the utilization of diverse components. Politics is one of the elements that emerges within this context.

Politics manifests itself in domestic affairs and foreign policy. Another element is telecommunications. Another one was considered a country visual. These include national symbols, colors, clothes, typical buildings, objects, melodies, literary works, political system features, traditions, historical heritage places, and much more (Jenes, 2005: 19). According to Kunczik (1990:44), the image of a nation constitutes all of the qualities that a person recognizes (or imagines) when thinking about that nation. In other words, the image of the country is considered a concept that is blended with people's impressions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and associations about the country. Connotations may vary depending on many situations, such as

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/image>

news about those countries, political relations, successes, failures, etc. Based on the researchers' definitions, the most critical point we can evaluate is that associations and image perception may differ from person to person.

Interrelated issues that define a country and a schema we design in our minds are knowledge structures that emerge by evaluating what we know about that country and the impact triggered by this schema (Askegaard and Ger, 1998: 52). However, it would be correct to say that a country has two types of images. Countries have an internal image and an external image. The element we call internal image creates what the citizens of that country think about their own country. A foreign country's image is evaluated as what others think about that country (Jenes, 2007: 40). Another critical issue at this point is the country's brand. The most important issue in gaining positive opinions about a country's external image in other public opinion is the reflection of soft power and the development of public diplomacy practices. In this period, when global communication was accelerating, country images were mainly researched in political science concerning public diplomacy (Leonard et al., 2002; Schatz and Levine, 2010; Vickers, 2004). Public diplomacy emerged as a concept in 1965, and today, it has an essential place in research and international relations. Public diplomacy refers to the communication process governments establish with foreign publics to create sympathy for their country's ideas, ideals, and national interests (Signitzer, 2008: 206). Through public diplomacy, countries can first change the images in people's minds. Thus, positive perceptions can increase, and connections between people can be established. Thus, the country's image can be shaped positively.

Another important concept related to the country's image is cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy activities help people update the image in their minds and re-evaluate their undesirable thoughts. In addition, knowing the country well, creating a positive perception, and increasing gratitude towards the country by evaluating significant global problems from the same perspective effectively ensure that it is considered an attractive center for activities such as education reform, scientific cooperation, tourism, and education. In addition, by understanding and maintaining the country's values, it is possible to influence the target audience's behavior by establishing relations with them, encouraging investment, gaining public support, creating famous politicians, and creating a positive image through this effect (Cull, 2009: 9-10).

The country's image is generally located at two different points. In the concept of the image, which is considered a strong image and weak image, it is seen that countries that are not well known about and therefore do not create a concrete image perception in the minds have a weak image. On the contrary, countries with a clear image perception when their names are mentioned have a strong image (Avraham and Ketter 2008: 26). Country image is formed and developed in people in two ways. First of all, one-on-one experience comes first. Secondly, it is a secondary experience when people personally visit that country or use the products of that country. Word-of-mouth communication, media, channels, and press reports create this image (Leiva, 2014: 8). The image of a country refers to the representation formed in the minds of people in a foreign country or of that country in general. Moreover, the content of the country-related programs in the mass media in that country is another factor that determines the image (Saran and Karpal 2002: 49).

Another issue in developing a country's image is nation branding. A nation's branding activities can also be an essential image effort. Nation branding is a message that a country has positioned itself well in the international order. According to Anholt, the reputation of countries is shaped by the brand images of companies and products. It is equally essential for these areas'

development, prosperity, and good management (Anholt, 2007: xi). Nation branding includes not only marketing but also all aspects of national character. These have been evaluated as covering all political, cultural, commercial, and sports activities (Fan, 2006: 3). A solid country brand increases export rates, tourism power, investments, and migration to that country. Accordingly, just like in products and institutions, having a strong country brand creates a significant competitive advantage among country brands (Fetscherin, 2010: 475). This substantial country brand can provide many benefits to that country in terms of image.

A country's image can be understood as a comprehensive representation encompassing various aspects, such as the country's products, brands, companies, and other relevant factors. The perception of a country is shaped by individuals' encounters and perspectives regarding the nation, predominantly influenced by the information they receive. This can be achieved through the utilization of diverse components. Politics is one of the elements that emerge within this context (Wang et al., 2012). Studies on country image vary in the literature. The country's image is discussed in three different categories. These are evaluated as general country, product country, and product image (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009).

Nowadays, for a country to have a good and respected image in international public opinion, It is one of the main determining factors in its national and international interests. As well as the country's population, economy, geopolitical position, and military power, The image of that country now takes its place as one of the strategic elements (Gültekin, 2005: 127). With the impact of globalization, the country's image has become one of the most critical issues that countries pay attention to. Türkiye is also among the countries that continue to work on the country's image. A country's internal and external government policies and values are essential sources of soft power. (Nye, 2011: 84). At the same time, Türkiye is a country that can use its soft power in a comprehensive way due to its rich history and culture. The elements considered Türkiye's necessary soft power resources are values and policy. With the end of the Cold War, Türkiye's geopolitical position gained a different meaning, and its economy and identity came to the fore; Türkiye's status as a buffer country came to the fore (Keyman, 2010: 2). Country image studies of Türkiye, which has a geopolitical position and geography that only a few countries in the world can have, have accelerated with globalization and are continuing.

1.2. Country Reputation and Türkiye Country Reputation

The reputation of a country is the country's face. In essence, the focus lies on how the country portrays its image within the internal and international spheres. If an analogy were to be made, a country with a high reputation could be compared to a person with a smile. This can contribute to enhancing the well-being, success, and overall welfare of the citizens, institutions, and enterprises within the country and fostering a positive perception of the country by other nations. Furthermore, it garners the esteem and confidence of foreign nations, international entities, and individuals from diverse countries, augmenting global recognition and understanding of the nation and its circumstances. Upon examining the other perspective, it becomes evident that there is an issue with the perception of said country by other nations and international entities. To put it differently, a prevailing sense of suspicion and distrust exists. The level of awareness about that particular country is either limited or characterized by negative perceptions.

To fully comprehend the concept of a country's reputation, it is essential first to present the fundamental notions of reputation. Following an introduction to the fundamental notions of reputation, it incorporates the notion of country reputation and focuses on Türkiye's reputation about this concept.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, reputation is a term that is described as “*The condition, quality, or fact of being highly regarded or esteemed; credit, fame, distinction; respectability, good report.*” The definition given by the Cambridge Dictionary is as follows: “*The opinion that people in general have about someone or something, or how much respect or admiration someone or something receives, based on past behavior or character.*”² Upon examining the definitions, it can be said that reputation is about how someone or something is generally perceived and how it is respected, liked, and valued based on past behavior and character.

The concept of reputation possesses the capacity to both accrue and diminish in value. People strive to avoid a negative reputation while also trying to build a positive reputation in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, individuals modulate their behavior based on the reputations of others. Specifically, those with favorable reputations tend to engage in cooperative behaviors and avoid interactions with individuals with unfavorable reputations (Wu, Balliet, & Van Lange, 2016: 350). A positive reputation is associated with various benefits, including prestige, reliability, visibility, positive beliefs, and the capacity to serve as a favorable reference. It encompasses various aspects that hold significance for individuals, such as self-esteem, happiness, employment, and financial well-being. It also serves as an investment for firms and brands, offering chances and competitive benefits while leaving a lasting impression. Put differently, reputation is a social gain, as well as an individual one, in relationships and perspectives.

On the other hand, the primary cause of deterioration and dissolution in relationships is the loss of reputation (Özodaşık, 2012: 148). Due to this rationale, certain conduct expectations exist for individuals, corporations, institutions, and nations that have acquired a recognized standing. Reputation is valuable because reputation, which is an abstract value, produces concrete values in the long term (Ural, 2012: 9). Reputation also means that the institution or individual stands out from others and provides gains such as respect, attractiveness, and image (Green, 1996: 55). Unlike the image, it is seen as a strategic concept formed around various corporate images and based on long-term impressions about the institution (Öztürk and Çakır 2015: 322). It is essential to acknowledge that the notion of reputation is inherently subjective and interconnected with the construction of perception (Fomburn & Van Riel, 1997: 10).

Although the number of studies published on corporate reputation is increasing, country reputation and corporate reputation are interrelated concepts (Yang et al., 2008: 421). These two conceptions mutually influence each other. For instance, the presence of businesses that produce high-quality products and services within a country’s reputation might favorably influence its overall standing. Put differently, they can create a country-of-origin effect. Similarly, if a country has a reputable research institution, this helps it increase its reputation. Due to these reasons, some approaches consider countries as institutions in country reputation studies (Boztepe, 2013: 35).

Generally, a country’s reputation refers to the opinions held by the general public at both domestic and global levels based on firsthand information. The representation of a country through images can be classed along a continuum ranging from “personal” to “public” images, depending on the degree to which images of a country are publicly shared or exclusive to the individual. (Kang & Yang, 2010: 53). For instance, even if they have never seen a country, people can form judgments about its economic, social, cultural, and political values based on common perceptions such as investment, product purchase, travel, or the country’s strong image. Governments, public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and objective events and actions of entities

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/reputationi>

outside of its control, like businesses, organizations, institutions, and ordinary citizens, all contribute to forming a country's reputation (Szwajca, 2017: 104).

While the country may possess a favorable image among the global public, it is essential to identify the eight key elements contributing to its international reputation. These criteria are as follows (Gültekin, 2005: 129):

1. *The influence of a country in the global sphere:* The level of influence a country possesses inside international decision-making bodies is of significant importance since it impacts the decision-making process. An illustrative instance can be observed in Türkiye's inclusion within NATO. NATO, being widely recognized as a prominent international organization, has significantly contributed to the attainment of a reputable standing for Türkiye within the global community.

2. *The ability of a country to shape public opinion on specific matters:* It refers to a country's aptitude to proficiently tackle global challenges, devise resolutions, and highlight matters that pertain to its interests. This may encompass several entities such as the media, influential figures, or governmental policies and their implementers, all of which can galvanize public sentiment.

3. *The geostrategic significance of a country:* For instance, situated in a geographically advantageous position between two continents, Türkiye has significant importance as a transit country for oil and gas (Austvik & Rzayeva, 2017: 539).

4. *The effective leaders of a country:* Leaders who possess leadership abilities, a broad vision, personal appeal and charisma, and well-developed diplomatic skills have the potential to enhance the country's reputation. It is also contingent upon how its image is constructed, encompassing its leaders' activities, its citizens' collective action, and factors operating at multiple levels of engagement. Ensuring alignment between the behaviors of a nation's leader and employees and the intended brand image the government actively seeks to project is paramount (Fullerton & Holzhausen, 2012: 272).

5. *The notable accomplishments in the domains of culture, art, and sports of a country:* As an illustration, the Turkish women's national volleyball team has garnered heightened awareness and enhanced the prestige of Türkiye through their recent triumphs in many prestigious competitions, including the Nations League, the European Championship, and the Olympic Qualification Round / FIVB World Cup. According to Yağmurlu (2019: 1375), the quantity of medals obtained by a country at a significant sporting event determines the country's reputation.

6. *The act of hosting significant international organizations within a country:* For instance, countries who undertake the organization of the Olympic Games seek to use the esteemed status associated with hosting such an event while simultaneously aiming to bolster their international standing through the acquisition of medals (Yağmurlu, 2019: 1375).

7. *Human factor (The human profile in that country captures transformation):* The presence of a well-educated youthful demographic within a country contributes to the generation of novel ideas, the development of substantial initiatives for the future of the local and the global community, and the collaborative engagement in these endeavors. Consequently, this enhances the country's worth and bolsters its standing in the international arena.

8. *Dialogue with international civil society:* At both the national and international levels, there has been the establishment of NGOs to address the needs of impoverished populations, mitigate the impacts of natural disasters, and combat such occurrences. The extent to which a nation

engages in collaboration with international NGOs indicates its willingness to actively participate in addressing challenges and fostering a beneficial societal influence.

According to Anholt, the elements described above create a tangible and quantifiable influence on almost all facets of the country's international relations. Thus, it becomes essential in economic, political, cultural, or social development (Anholt, 2007: 8-9).

Country reputation is "*rooted in international/world public opinion, signifies the presence or absence of international legitimacy accrued to a certain nation.*" Additionally, it is referred to as soft power (Wang, 2006: 92). Public diplomacy, which is an effective way to increase a country's soft power, has a significant impact on international relations and the achievement of the country in question. From an international relations perspective, the main goal is to gain a positive reputation among all target audiences (Gültekin, 2005: 128). For instance, countries that exhibit strength in political, economic, or social aspects consistently occupy positions of influence in shaping global affairs (Yıldırım and Akbulut, 2017: 62). The reason for this perception is that they are regarded as a country that is deemed more dependable and esteemed by other countries. This circumstance inherently facilitates the point in question: the country is cultivating improved diplomatic contacts with other countries and capitalizing on more prospects for collaboration. Considering Türkiye's soft power in the Turkic world and China's comparatively more robust hard power, strengthening cooperation within the "Belt and Road Initiative" is necessary and feasible (Zan, 2016: 69-70). Country reputation studies of Türkiye, specifically focusing on its active involvement in global affairs and participation in regional collaborations, have experienced substantial growth and continue to be an ongoing area of study.

2. China and Türkiye Relations

Establishing formal diplomatic relations between Türkiye and China faced significant challenges in the aftermath of 1949. The Cold War's prevailing geopolitical climate significantly influenced the bilateral relations between these two nations. Regarding recognizing Communist China, Türkiye aligned itself with the United States rather than the United Kingdom. Like most Western nations and Latin American countries, Türkiye maintained its recognition of Nationalist China as the legitimate representative of the Chinese populace until the conclusion of 1960. (Arıboğın, 2001: 94) Türkiye became the eighth NATO member country to recognize the PRC, after France, England, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark (Karaca, 2008: 193).

Diplomatic relations between Türkiye and China were established in 1971. Bilateral relations had gained momentum since the 1980s when both countries started to open up to the outside world and rose economically and politically.³ Although official relations were established, the relations fell far behind the desired level. The relations between these two countries, which were at two poles during the Cold War, remained limited after 1971. The normalization of relations between Türkiye and China commenced with the signing of a trade protocol in 1981, followed by a cooperation agreement including the domains of economy, industry, and technology in December of the same year. Furthermore, President Kenan Evren's visit to China in December 1982 further solidified the bilateral ties between the two nations. President Evren's inaugural foreign tour was to China, marking a significant milestone as the first Turkish President to go on such a diplomatic mission. In October 1983, after President Kenan Evren's momentous diplomatic mission to China, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Chuochiang visited Türkiye. During the post-visit press conference, the speaker referred to the perceived threat posed by the Soviet Union to China and

³ <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-cin-halk-cumhuriyeti-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>

Türkiye. Consequently, he placed significant emphasis on enhancing bilateral relations and maintaining a state of vigilance against the dominance of the Soviet Union (Adıbelli, 2016: 218). During this period, bilateral relations between the two countries were relatively unaffected. However, with the onset of the Cold War era, the divergent ideologies of the two nations started to strain their relationship. Despite the dissolution of the ideological divide that characterized the Cold War era, the bilateral relations between Türkiye and China still need to achieve the anticipated degree of cooperation and engagement. The expected progression of the bilateral relations between the two nations following the dissolution of ideological constraints during the Cold War did not materialize as predicted. Instead, there was a notable escalation in competition and a sense of mutual threats between the two countries. By the 2000s, relations between China and Türkiye began to improve. Establishing the strategic cooperative relationship between China and Türkiye in 2010 marked the beginning of a new era in bilateral ties. This era has witnessed increased levels of political mutual trust, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges, surpassing the achievements made in the preceding four decades (Chen, 2022: 17).

Significantly, starting in 2010, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye has enacted a total of 12 legislative measures about China to enhance collaboration between the two nations in many domains such as energy, trade, infrastructure, health, logistics, technology, culture, railway development, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the establishment of the Middle Corridor (Atlı, 2016: 6).

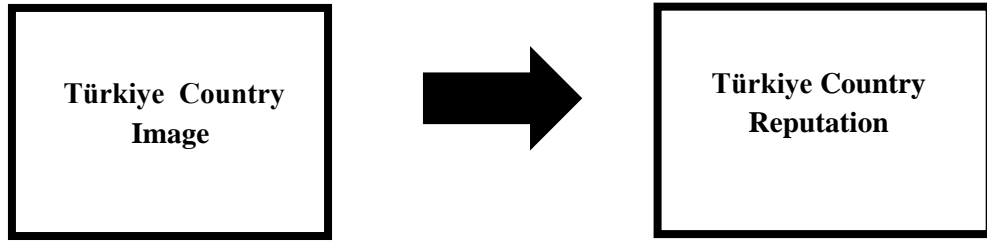
Türkiye and China have crucial economic cooperation as well as political relations. Based on statistical data, Türkiye's exports to China amounted to a cumulative value of USD 8.506 billion over the three years from 2018 to 2020. In contrast, Türkiye's imports from China during the same timeframe reached USD 62,888 billion. China does not have a prominent position among Türkiye's primary export markets. However, it stands as the nation with the highest volume of imports after Russia (Yılmaz, 2022: 5).

Despite these advancements, communication between the Chinese and Turkish populations needs to be developed more. A minority of individuals know Chinese and Turkish. Foreign news sources frequently translate information about China and Türkiye in a manner that significantly deviates from the source material. This situation can also lead to two countries misunderstanding each other. On the other hand, the image efforts of the two countries are essential for each other. To further strengthen relations, Turkish people need to understand China better, and Chinese people need to understand Turkish people better. Our research aims to measure the image and reputation of the Chinese people in Türkiye and the impact of the image on reputation. With the study, China's perspective and perception towards Türkiye will also be evaluated.

3. Hypotheses and Research Model

H₀: From the Perspective of Citizens of the People's Republic of China, Türkiye's country image does not have a significant effect on the country's reputation.

H₁: From the Perspective of Citizens of the People's Republic of China, Türkiye's country image has a significant impact on the country's reputation.



**CITIZENS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
PERSPECTIVE**

Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 1. Research Model

The model of the research was created as shown in the figure.1 following the literature review.

4. Methodology

4.1. Method and Limitations of Research

As a result of a joint study conducted between Shanghai University's Global Studies Department and Afyon Kocatepe University's Business Administration Department, it was decided to conduct this research. The research phase was conducted in Shanghai, China. The study was completed between December 21-31, 2023. with the participation of 434 people using the face-to-face survey method and convenience sampling method. For this purpose, the study was completed in Shanghai between December 21-31, 2023. with 434 citizens of China using a face-to-face survey method and convenience sampling method. However, due to incorrect and missing data, analyses were conducted with the data of 420 participants. Reliability test, factor, frequency, and regression analyses were performed with the data obtained. As a result of the analysis, from the perspective of Chinese citizens, it has been determined that the image of Türkiye impacts the country's reputation.

4.2. Research Population and Sample

Since the research was conducted with citizens of China, the research population covers the entire China. However, the research was conducted in Shanghai due to time and cost constraints and the impossibility of reaching all citizens of China, one of the most populous countries in the world. The known population of Shanghai province is around 24.76 million.⁴ Shanghai, among the ten most populated cities in the world, is a good population to study to get an idea about the citizens of China. However, since it was possible to reach only some of Shanghai's residents, the convenience sampling method reached those representing the city. In this sampling technique, the researchers select the most readily available subjects until the study's required sample size (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016: 134). In addition, in convenience sampling, data is collected from the population in the easiest, fastest, and most economical way possible (Haşiloğlu, Baran, and Aydın 2015: 20). Gegez (2005) says that determining the sample size should be eight times the number of questions in the survey form. Since there are 43 questions in our research, there must be at least 344 participants. 434 citizens of China participated in the study, and the sample size was sufficient.

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1133227/china-population-of-shanghai-municipality-administrative-area/>

4.3. Data Collection

While preparing the survey questions used in the study, the literature was examined in depth and designed to consist of three parts. The first part of the scale was developed by Martin and Eroğlu (1993) and consists of 20 items. In the second part, a 14-question scale was created by Passow, Fehlmann, and Grahlow (2005). In the third part, there are five questions to determine demographic characteristics: whether the participants have been abroad, why they are there, what comes to mind when they think of Türkiye, and whether they know Turkish brands. Four questions were prepared to find out. The survey form used in the research consisted of 43 questions in total. The survey questions in the study were created using a 5-point Likert-type scale (except demographic and being abroad questions).

5. Findings

5.1. Reliability Analysis

In survey research, an alpha value of 0.70 and above indicates that it is at a sufficient level in terms of reliability (Arıkan, 2013: 103). When the reliability of the scales was examined separately, it was found that the first scale was 85.8%, and the second scale was 83.1%. These values are sufficient to continue the analysis of the research.

5.2. Frequency Analysis

Frequency analysis was carried out to determine the demographic information (Table 1) of the citizens of China who participated in the research and whether they went to Türkiye or not. 8.09% of the people participating in the study (34 participants) have visited Türkiye at least once. When we look at why the participants went to Türkiye, 4 people were for work, 2 were for education, 24 were for holiday, and 4 for other reasons. However, 91.91% (386 participants) have never been to Türkiye.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Variables	Answers	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	202	48.1
	Male	218	51.9
Age	18-30	91	21.7
	31-40	139	33.1
	41-50	110	26.2
	51-64	66	15.7
	65 and over	14	3.3
	Educational Status	Literate	10
Primary school		60	14.3
Middle school		80	19.0
High school		70	16.7
University		190	45.2
Postgraduate		10	2.4
Public Personnel		43	10.2
Private sector		107	25.5
	Student	32	7.6

Profession	Business Owner/Manager	152	36.2
	Retired	30	7.1
Income (RMB)	Unemployed	27	6.5
	Other	29	6.9
	1-2590	13	3.1
	2591-5000	68	16.2
	5001-7500	57	13.6
	7501-10000	143	34.0
	10001 and above	139	33.1
TOTAL		420	100

Source: Created by the authors.

In December 2023, when the survey form was created, 2590 RMB (375 USD), the minimum wage in Shanghai (www.shanghai.gov.cn), was determined as the lower limit, and the ranges were divided into equal amounts as much as possible. It is a must to set age variables to conduct the study. In China, the age of majority is 14, but the study set the lower age limit to 18 based on the ethics committee's approval in Türkiye, where the study will be published. It also defined the upper age limit as 65 to include the elderly population in the study.

When we look at the demographic information of the participants (Table), 51.9% were male, 59.3% were between the ages of 31-50, 45.2% had a university-level education, 36.2% were business owners or managers, and 34% had an income between 7,501-10,000 RMB. It can be seen. The fact that the majority of the participants are between the ages of 31-50, have a high school education or higher, and have an income of minimum wage or above shows that the data can be more reliable and can be used for a more extended period in terms of being able to comment on another country.

5.3. Factor Analysis of Scales

In social science research, exploratory factor analysis is recommended for survey questions translated from another language (Yaşlıoğlu, 2017: 75). Since the survey questions used in the research were translated from English to Chinese, exploratory factor analysis was conducted.

Factor analysis was performed on the country image scale, consisting of 20 statements, and the results are given in Table 2. The 17th question was loaded on two sub-dimensions in the first-factor analysis. Since there was a 10% or less similarity between these factor loadings, it was removed, and the analysis was repeated. As a result of the second-factor analysis, since the factor load of the 16th question was 0.5 or less, it was removed from the analysis, and the factor analysis was repeated. As a result of the third and last factor analysis, the Keyser-Meyer-Olkin value was found to be 0.764. The KMO value indicates the sample adequacy level and is sufficient to continue the analyses. Additionally, the eigenvalues of the scale are 8.238; 3,236, 1.783, and 1.016; the explained variance was found to be 79.295(45.765, 17.979, 9.905, and 5.645). Statements on the country image scale have a factor loading of 0.617 and above. As a result of the analysis, the scale was grouped into four sub-dimensions.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results of the Country Image Scale

Expression Number	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance	Cronbach Alpha
	First Dimension	8,238	45,765	0,858
12	0,820			
13	0,625			
14	0,623			
18	0,803			
19	0,818			
	Second Dimension	3,236	17,979	0,858
6	0,718			
7	0,828			
8	0,829			
9	0,760			
11	0,648			
	Third Dimension	1,783	9,905	0,858
5	0,912			
10	0,855			
15	0,934			
20	0,926			
	Fourth Dimension	1,016	5,645	0,858
1	0,788			
2	0,830			
3	0,617			
4	0,734			

Source: Created by the authors.

Factor analysis was performed on the country reputation scale, consisting of 14 statements, and the results are given in Table 3. As a result of the factor analysis, the Keyser-Meyer-Olkin value was found to be 0.818. The KMO value is sufficient to continue the analysis. Additionally, the eigenvalues of the scale were found to be 8.497 and 1.975, and the explained variance was 74.795 (60.691 and 14.104). Statements on the country image scale have a factor loading of 0.647 and above. As a result of the analysis, the scale was grouped into two sub-dimensions.

Table 3. Factor Analysis Results of the Country Reputation Scale

Expression Number	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance	Cronbach Alpha
	First Dimension	8,497	60,691	0,831
21	0,874			
22	0,850			
23	0,875			
24	0,884			
26	0,795			
27	0,795			
28	0,830			

29	0,812			
31	0,832			
32	0,647			
33	0,825			
Second Dimension		1,975	14,104	0,831
25	0,901			
30	0,846			
34	0,909			

Source: Created by the authors.

5.4. Hypothesis Analysis Results

To measure the effect of the “Türkiye Country Image” variable on the “Türkiye Country Reputation” variable to test the statement “From the Perspective of the Citizens of the People’s Republic of China, Türkiye’s country image has a significant effect on the country’s reputation,” which constitutes the primary hypothesis (H1) of the research. Regression analysis was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 4. The analysis continued since the data sets met the required conditions before and after the regression analysis. The average of the answers given by the citizens of China to the Türkiye country image questions was found to be 3.6565, and to the Türkiye country reputation questions was 3.7831. To interpret the average of these answers, citizens of China generally have positive opinions about Türkiye.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results of H1 Hypothesis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P	F	Mode (p)
	B	Std. Er.	β				
Still	,442	,120		3,683	,000	728,774	,000*
Türkiye Country Image	,850	,031	,797	26,996	,000*		
R²: ,635		R: ,797		*p<0,05		Adjusted R²: ,635	

Source: Created by the authors.

When Table 4 is examined, the H1 hypothesis was accepted since the $p=0.000<0.05$ condition was met. In other words, from the citizen’s perspective of China, the “Türkiye Country Image” variable affects the “Türkiye Country Reputation” variable. In addition, the “Türkiye Country Image” variable has an explanatory rate of 63.5% on the “Türkiye Country Reputation” variable. When the Pearson Correlation value is examined, it is seen that it is more significant than 0.7 (.797), and it is determined that the relationship between the two variables is at an intense level. Since the B value of Türkiye’s country image is positive, it is possible to say that as Türkiye’s country image increases, Türkiye’s country reputation also increases. The regression equation of the study was determined as Türkiye Country Reputation= $0.442+0.85 \cdot$ Türkiye Country Image or $y=a+bx=0.442+0.85x$.

5.5. Other Findings

Questions were asked to the participants to determine whether they had gone abroad before, if so, for what purpose they went, what comes to their mind when Türkiye is mentioned, and whether they know any Turkish brands. The findings obtained are presented in table-5 and table-6.

Table 5. Situations of Participants Going Abroad

Have you ever been abroad?	Why were you abroad?	Frequency	%
No		114	27,14
Yes	Work	74	17,62
	Holiday	198	47,14
	Education	26	6,19
	Other	8	1,91
TOTAL		420	100

Source: Created by the authors.

Almost three-quarters of the citizens of China who participated in the survey have gone abroad at least once. Most of the participants who went abroad went abroad for travel purposes. 8.09% of the people participating in the research (34 participants) have visited Türkiye at least once. When we look at why the participants went to Türkiye, 4 people were for work, 2 were for education, 24 were for holiday, and four were for other reasons. However, 91.91% (386 participants) have never been to Türkiye.

Table 6. Participants' Answers to Questions About Türkiye

Questions	Answers	Frequency	%
What comes to your mind first when Türkiye is mentioned?	Religion	6	1,43
	The Azan	11	2,62
	Galatasaray	30	7,15
	Nice view	20	4,76
	İstanbul	58	13,81
	Kapadokya	21	5,00
	Apricot	3	0,71
	Location	6	1,43
	Konya	3	0,71
	Ottoman Empire	24	5,71
	Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN	32	7,62
	Ceramic	29	6,91
	Hot-air Balloon	51	12,14
	Historical places	23	5,48
	Textile	14	3,33
	Trade	10	2,38
	Turkish Beer	11	2,62
	Turkish Bath	32	7,62
	Turkish Coffee	12	2,86
	Not Responding	24	5,71
	26	6,19	

	Beko		
	Beymen	14	3,33
	Defacto	22	5,24
	Efes Beer	18	4,29
	Godiva	16	3,81
	Rebul	21	5,00
	Turkish Airlines	142	33,81
	Not Responding	161	38,33
Do you know any Turkish brands? If yes, what is its name?			
TOTAL		420	100

Source: Created by the authors.

It was determined that the participants gave 19 different answers to the question, “What comes to your mind first when Türkiye is mentioned?” “Do you know any Turkish brands?” They gave 7 different answers to the question, “If yes, what is its name?” The participants generally recognized Türkiye with its historical and tourist places, and what was most remembered were the themes of Istanbul, Cappadocia, and hot air balloons, which were used in Türkiye’s promotions for years. In addition, it has been determined that the recognition of the world-renowned football team Galatasaray and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has had an essential place in the politics of the Republic of Türkiye since 1994, is high. In addition to these, it is seen that Turkish baths, Turkish Coffee, and ceramics are among the answers given by the participants. It is understood from the participants’ answers that Turkish Airlines, which is identified with Türkiye and has been sponsoring huge organizations and sports teams for years, has high brand awareness.

Result and Discussion

Since nation societies were formed, their ultimate goal has been to be in an essential and powerful position against other nations and countries. The world order has also changed with wars and many events affecting nations, and each country has begun to have a specific position and recognition in the international order. However, a country’s image and reputation are two essential elements. A positive image and a high reputation in a country can put that country and society in a good position. This can be used as a political and economic power and has advantages that can have a cultural impact.

The Republic of Türkiye is on its way to becoming a potentially powerful country. It has a well-known and vital position in the international arena due to its location and historical process.

Türkiye, similar to other nations, places significant emphasis on cultivating and utilizing image and reputation due to its critical position and mission. Consequently, Türkiye is dedicated to enhancing these aspects.

In this research, 51.9% of the participants included in the study were male, 59.3% were between the ages of 31-50, 45.2% had university-level education, 36.2% were business owners or managers, and 34% had 7,501 years of experience. It was determined that 8.09% had an income between -10,000 RMB, 8.09% had been to Türkiye at least once, and almost three-quarters had gone abroad at least once.

Most participants were between the ages of 31 and 50, had a high school education or higher, had an income of minimum wage or above, and most had gone abroad. It shows that the data is more reliable and can be used more extended to make comments about another country.

In addition, participants gave 19 different answers to the questions “What comes to your mind first when Türkiye is mentioned?” and “Do you know any Turkish brands?” They gave 7 different answers to the question, “If yes, what is its name?” We can say that Türkiye is a well-known country with features that will remain in people’s minds even when they are thousands of kilometers away. The participants generally recognized Türkiye with its historical and tourist places, and what was most remembered were the themes of Istanbul, Cappadocia, and hot air balloons, which were used in Türkiye’s promotions for years. In addition, it has been determined that the recognition of the world-renowned football team Galatasaray and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has an essential place in the politics of the Republic of Türkiye since 1994, is high, and this creates a particular image of Türkiye in the eyes of the citizens of the People’s Republic of China.

The average of the answers given by the participants in the sample selected from the citizens of the People’s Republic of China to the Türkiye country image questions was 3.6565, and to the Türkiye country reputation questions was 3.7831. When we interpret the averages of the answers given by the participants, it is possible to say that the citizens of the People’s Republic of China think positively about Türkiye’s country image and reputation and that the image and reputation studies carried out by Türkiye have positive effects. When the results of the hypothesis analysis were examined, the H1 hypothesis was accepted because the $p=0.000<0.05$ condition was met; that is, from the perspective of the citizens of the People’s Republic of China, “Türkiye Country Image” affects “Türkiye Country Reputation,” has an explanatory rate of 63.5%. It was determined that there was a strong relationship between the two variables. As a similar result, the study of Zeren and Çelenk (2020), a country's image has a significant and positive impact on its reputation.

As mentioned above, this research was conducted using a limited sample and focused on Chinese citizen participants in Shanghai. Shanghai is a significant economic, financial, trading, and maritime hub in China, and it also has the largest population in the country. The findings of this study are anticipated to provide valuable insights for future research endeavors. A study examining generational or comparative factors might be undertaken in prospective investigations. Consequently, The People’s Republic of China, selected in the study, has a strong economy that has gained momentum in the 21st century and is the world’s most important exporter. The study shows that Türkiye’s image and reputation are positive among the citizens of the People’s Republic of China. The data determined by the analysis revealed the existence of known elements about Türkiye. Türkiye will give more importance to image and reputation studies, will progress by highlighting the country’s values and achieving success in the international arena, and will improve its existing positive image and reputation by supporting it. For this reason, it is essential to give importance to public diplomacy studies. Public and cultural diplomacy initiatives can enhance Türkiye’s recognition and improve its image among other nations. While Türkiye already has a rich history and cultural heritage that draws interest, it should also support its reputation-building efforts through economic activities, brand image, investments, and effective use of technology tools. By doing so, Türkiye can establish a strong and positive image, increasing its reputation worldwide.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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