

**REFLECTIONS OF COUNTRY IMAGE ON TOURISM:  
A COMPARISON BETWEEN TURKEY AND POLAND**

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**ABSTRACT**

The fall of communist regime in the former USSR resulting in collapsing of Iron Curtain in 1989 as the most significant political changes of this new era have resulted in liberalization and efforts to establish market economy in former Eastern Bloc countries of Europe. Poland as one of the EU members today takes its place among transition economies in the world. On the other hand, Turkey as one of the long-term candidates of EU and a part of liberal world has an emerging economy. Both of the countries have suffered from difficulties of transformational forces of new world order and image problems due to the changes of new era. Tourism as one of the most important sectors of global economy has serious impacts on countries' development efforts –whether they are developed or developing ones- with its different dimensions. Tourism's role in economic development cannot be denied because for all open economies, tourism is accepted globally as a leading sector in increasing revenues. In order to benefit from positive impacts of tourism, besides other factors supporting tourism development, countries have to gain competitive advantage over their rivals in the fierce competitiveness of tourism sector. Therefore, for countries which want to be one of the leaders in tourism sector, creating a strong country image can be considered as a mean to gain competitive advantage. In this study, comparisons of two countries in the field of tourism are made based on SWOT analysis and impacts of country images of the both countries are evaluated to make suggestions to improve competitiveness of them.

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Country Image, Transition Economies, Competitive Advantage*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The rapid changes faced by Poland in recent years beginning from the collapse of Iron Curtain in 1989 have caused shifts in economic structure of the country from heavy industries to service economies and from planned economy to market economy and from collectivization to liberalization.

On the other hand Turkey, as a developing country, has been experiencing a transformation period from mixed economy to liberalization which is sometimes ceased by many severe economic crises.

In this respect, it can be mentioned that both Poland and Turkey have realized the importance of tourism for their economic developments while they are trying to struggle against the pressures of change. When their environments and internal factors are evaluated, it can be seen that both countries have some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the field of tourism. Based on this assumption, in this study, after examining the current economic and political situations of Poland and Turkey, a comparison between these countries is completed by using SWOT analysis.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of the impacts of country image on tourism sector- which is generally accepted as a main contributor of the overall economic success of countries- in emerging and transition economies. As for both Poland and Turkey tourism provides one of the major parts of countries' revenue resources. This comparative study of two countries will give a general overview for other emerging and transition economies which heavily depend on tourism sector. Moreover, this study will provide some suggestions to Poland and Turkey in order to improve country image which plays a vital role in tourism development. In addition, this study may create a base for further researches on tourism sectors of both countries.

**POLAND'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE**

After the fall of communism, Poland has begun trying to liberalize its economy and today Poland can be accepted as one of the most outstanding examples of transition economies. In its economic and political structures, Poland has experienced remarkable changes during its transition from a communist to a market economy in the last decades (Keane & Prasad, 2006).

The transition period for countries is not an easy process. Liberalization and transition from communism to capitalism have loaded many tasks to governments and brought some difficulties both for governments and public together. Even some years after the beginning

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of transition process the countries' public and private sector organizations in different sectors of economy faced some problems such as extreme bureaucracy, backward technology, aged and obsolete equipment, outmoded quality control, ineffective maintenance and service departments, major skill shortages especially at the top management level in marketing, finance and change management (Johnson & Iunius, 1999).

In 1990 the government which was the first noncommunist government since World War II adopted a "shock therapy" program of economic reform, named the Balcerowicz Plan in order to handle Poland's financial and structural crisis and rapidly convert the communist economic model into a free-market system, thereby reintegrating Poland into the global economy (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007). Between 1990 and 1993 like in most of the Eastern European countries, there existed high inflation rates, unemployment, and even hyperinflation in Poland (Knight & Webb, 1997). Although it proved a success, the social cost was high. The difficulties of redirecting trade previously linked to the Soviet bloc were great (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007).

From the Poland's point of view, this transition process has not been easy. Some remarkable changes occurred due to the transition process can be summarized as follows (Keane & Prasad 2002), (Keane & Prasad, 2006):

*a- Changes in labor market institutions such as:*

- reducing constraints of layoffs and redundancies
- sharp rises in unemployment rates
- massive inter-sectoral reallocation of labor
- greater labor market flexibility due to rapid raise of private sector
- rises in retirement rates of older workers due to generous pensions

*b- Increase in earnings inequality due to the:*

- increased variance of wages within both private and public sector
- restructuring in both private and public sector
- increases in educational wage premiums

*c- Privatization:*

- slower rates compared to other Eastern European countries
- sharp rises in contribution to GDP during 1989-1995 due to explosion of small-scale entrepreneurship

Poland with its population of 38.1 million became a member of The European Union in the year 2004 (EU, 2007). When recent annual growth rates of Poland are examined, a steady increase is seen until The EU Membership and then, sharp declines can be observed after the membership possibly due to the adaptation process (Wikipedia, 2007).

Poland's economic structure consists of services (65.5%), industry (31.7%), and agriculture (2.8%). Main industries of the country are:

machinery, iron and steel, coal mining, chemicals, shipbuilding, food processing, glass, beverages, textiles. Poland's main foreign trade partners are generally European Union Member States, Russia, and China (Krakow, 2007). Industry, which had been state controlled, began to be privatized in the early 1990s, although restructuring and privatization of the country's large coal, steel, and chemical industries has moved forward slowly, when it has progressed at all. Prices were freed, subsidies were reduced, and Poland's currency (the zloty) was made convertible as the country began the difficult transition to a free-market economy. Reforms initially resulted in high unemployment, hyperinflation, shortages of consumer goods, a large external debt, and a general drop in the standard of living. The situation later stabilized, however, and during the 1990s Poland's economy was the fastest growing in Eastern Europe (CEE, 2007).

In agriculture, Poland is generally self-sufficient and is relatively rich in natural resources such as coal, sulfur, copper, lead, and zinc. It accounts for 15% of the gross national product (CEE, 2007). In other words, Poland has a large number of private farms in its agricultural sector, with the potential to become a leading producer of food in the European Union (Wikipedia, 2007).

The structure of Polish economy has changed noticeably over the last two decades. While the service sector has gained importance, the significance of industry has decreased. These changes could be seen as the effects of both dynamic development of service sector – which is a global trend – and restructuring of unproductive national industrial companies in Poland in 1990s. This process has been accompanied by the development of modern industrial sectors, which has become feasible mainly due to inflow of foreign investment. After a temporary crisis in economy in 1999-2003, Polish industry has witnessed one of the most dynamic growths among the EU Member States (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2007).

Although Poland has made many successful reforms in order to integrate with global markets and became a member of EU, it can be said that there are many challenges ahead. The most recent challenge is the preparation of the national economy to meet the strict economic criteria to enter into the European Single Currency (Eurozone).

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM IN POLAND'S ECONOMY**

The process of globalization has not only made traveling more accessible and easier but has also facilitated the development of new destinations and increased destination choices for tourists. The rapid dissemination and sophistication of new global economy has alienated some countries or entire regions, especially those emerging and transition ones (Santana, 2001). While in the past, due to some structural and political reasons many of these countries have not been

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able to seize the opportunities presented by a globalized trade environment, today things have been changed rapidly for these countries. Many of them have taken their places in the global trade system and begun benefiting from opportunities offered by the globalization process.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Republic and fall of the Iron Curtain, economic growth has begun in former Iron Curtain countries. People living in these countries have begun enjoying more discretionary income. While transportation facilities have been improving, tourism sector has also begun developing. Former communist economies as new global markets have driven attention of foreign investors. Some former Iron Curtain countries' membership in the European Union with factors such as flexible labor laws, low corporate and personal tax rates, and low-cost labor are all considered to be drivers of growth in several industries, including tourism (Landry, 2005).

The emerging Eastern European countries establishing democratic governments and free market economies are gradually having an impact on the world's travel trends –on both demand and supply sides. While, travel freedom, as one of the main factors leading tourism development, has made travel possible for people of these countries, at the same time rich historical and cultural assets of these countries and curiosity of communist era have made these countries become significant tourism destinations. Recently, due to political changes of the new era, new tourism destinations have emerged in the world including Eastern European countries and the Central Republics of the former USSR (Gee & Fayos-Solà, 1999).

After 1989, tourist flows to and from the "transition" countries of Central Europe increased significantly. A rapidly growing trade with distant countries, including Japan and USA, indicates that this region has increasingly been incorporated into the world economy and its tourism markets. The collapse of communism in Central Europe built a new situation in international tourist flows. Removal of the Iron Curtain created new possibilities for international tourist flows in Europe. The Central European transition states have become important tourist destinations for many European and intercontinental travelers (Balaz & Mitsutake, 1998). These changes also created opportunities for Poland tourism.

As a result of globalization, today tourists wish to travel to new areas of the world in search for novel experiences. Political and social changes together with other aspects of globalization have led new countries, which were not considered as tourist destinations or tourist generating countries in the past, to emerge and to have their places in the global tourism market (Swarbrooke, 2001).

According to the social and political changes in the modern world, Poland comes upon the stage which shook the entire communist system

and changed the shape of Central Europe in recent years. In spite of a turbulent history and the dramatic changes shaping Polish society today, Poland as a tourist destination, has maintained a distinct sense of culture and community (Polish National Tourist Office, 2003).

### **TURKEY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE**

Turkey, with its population of 75 million (2006 estimate, Turkish Embassy, 2007), has the largest landmass in Western Europe, and its economy is the 16th largest in the world. The US Department of Commerce (DOC) has identified Turkey as one of the ten most promising emerging economies, and a recent World Bank study also declared Turkey one of the ten countries most likely to enter the top tier of the world economy. Today's Turkey, modern and open to the world, follows a liberal policy in economy just as in its political structure (Enjoyturkey, 2007).

Ottoman Empire which could not have taken part in the Industry Revolutions had not had an integrated economic system. While its agriculture had only served for domestic markets, there had existed no mechanization in production. Service sector which had developed during the last years of the Empire seemed to be integrated with European economies. Newly formed Turkish Republic had to load the huge debt of Ottoman Empire and inherit a ruined economic system (Şahin, 2000; Erkan, 2000). Therefore, during the first years of Republic, it had been needed to build an economic policy that had made economic development and industrialization possible and mixed economy model had been adopted. Development of State Owned Enterprises which had been thought to be a solution to the vulnerable structure of country's economy had dated back to these years.

Cold War Period which had begun in the 1950s had been the most significant obstacle behind liberalization and social policies in order to prevent the threat of communism had not let a free global market run (Kazgan, 2000). During the 1923-1947 period Turkey, that had tried to develop using its own resources, had changed its economic policy, and this had resulted in unplanned and unbalanced economic development with increasing debts. Rises in balance of payment deficits and increasing inflation had created a depression and growth rates of all sectors had been decreased (Şahin, 2000). Efforts to industrialize and develop the country had been cut by Marshall Plan and changes in world order, Turkish economy had been directed towards a new way.

After the year of 1970 different trends were effective in Turkish economy. Firstly, investment programs by the leadership of the state based on protectionist policies were applied. This approach caused a crisis in the economy and then democratic system faced huge problems after 1977. During the period of 1981-1987, the country's economic policy was changed totally and the period of liberalization began (Yeldan,

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2001). After the year 1970, the progress of Turkish economy, with its fragile features, has been characterized by structural adjustment programs and foreign debts with its rises and declines and severe crises periods.

The trend towards liberalization goes back to the 1950s, but related action became more prominent in the early 1980s when many radical changes and structural reforms have been made in the field. The main components of this economic reform were reducing government intervention, implementing a flexible exchange rate policy, liberalizing import regulations; increasing exports, encouraging foreign capital investment; establishing free trade zones, deregulating financial markets, privatizing State Owned Enterprises, and decentralizing government activities. As a result of economic reforms based on free market principles and an international orientation, the Turkish economy has experienced an average growth rate of almost 5 % over the past 20 years (Enjoyturkey, 2007).

While experiencing growth in most of its economic indicators, Turkey's efforts to strengthen its economy have been cut by both economic and financial crises frequently. It can be said that, this situation is the result of liberalization without building needed infrastructure.

Turkish industrial sector depends heavily on defense, electronics, iron and steel, automotive, glass and sugar industries. The cement industry plays an important role in the country holding a high-ranking position in world production. The textiles and clothing sub-sector is another advanced branch, and Turkey, as a major cotton producer, increases its exports of textile products every year. Processing of agricultural products, production of agricultural machinery, and the fertilizer industry relate to another important sector: agriculture (Enjoyturkey, 2007).

On the other hand, Turkey is a main producer of agricultural products. Traditionally, the agricultural sector has been Turkey's largest job generator and a major contributor to the GNP. However, as Turkey has experienced globalization, the relative importance of agriculture has declined, while the position of industry and the service sector has increased.

As another important economic aspect of Turkey is the EU membership process. The future of Turkey in the European Union has been subject of strong debate both in Europe and in Turkey for a long time. Although Turkey first applied to join the EU about 50 years ago, it is the only candidate country, which has not yet started accession negotiations. Besides, any future enlargement that includes Turkey is a controversial topic for the EU, since Turkey would be the only Muslim member in the EU, which has accepted 10 new members in May 2004. On the other hand, it is too late to exclude Turkey from the future of the EU since it has put the issue of the EU accession at the top of its national

agenda and is the only candidate country that has completed the Customs Union with the EU (Güney, 2005).

During its efforts to create a strong economic structure, Turkey has realized the importance and positive impacts of tourism in the country's economic development.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM IN TURKEY'S ECONOMY**

All throughout its history as the homeland of different societies, Turkey, with its rich and appropriate geographic structure, is one of the most popular tourism destinations. Tourism is one of the largest sectors of the Turkish economy. Natural and historical assets that Turkey uniquely owns serve many opportunities for tourism. By the help of its geographical and climatic characteristics, Turkey provides different tourism products to tourists.

Consequently, investments of modern tourism establishments are being made to put this potential into good use. Hotels, motels and holiday villages of high standards, offer services in all tourism destinations with their high quality facilities. As a result of all these processes, Turkey has achieved the goal of providing the high level services suitable to the needs and wants of foreign tourists. It is expected that Turkey's tourism will continue to grow dramatically and its share in Turkish economy will increase steadily.

### **A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES BASED ON SWOT ANALYSIS**

The SWOT analysis is a useful and effective tool to demonstrate the big picture of the current evaluation and to make comments and predictions for the future. Therefore, in this part of the study, a comparison between tourism sectors of Poland and Turkey is made by using the SWOT analysis. The results retrieved from the analysis are discussed in order to determine the current situation of two countries and to make some suggestions. The SWOT analysis is given in Table 1.

Turkey and Poland are countries which are trying to become important actors of global economy by the help of tourism. As indicated in Table 1, both countries have available conditions needed for the tourism sector to develop. However, tourism development in a country not only depends on availability of natural resources, but also has close relationship with the country's overall economic situation. It is generally accepted by many tourism researchers that countries which gain more than others from tourism sector, are generally those which also have strong economies.



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**Table 1: The SWOT Analysis of Poland and Turkey**

<b>SWOT / STRENGTHS</b>	
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>POLAND</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Geographical location of the country (bridging Asia and Europe)</li> <li>▪ Richness of natural assets</li> <li>▪ Richness of cultural and historical assets</li> <li>▪ Suitable climate and weather conditions</li> <li>▪ Available conditions for tourism product diversifications</li> <li>▪ Sufficient tourism infrastructure and establishments</li> <li>▪ Secularity</li> <li>▪ Richness in gastronomy</li> <li>▪ Availability of hotels with international standards</li> <li>▪ Availability of free land for different tourism activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Geographical location as a centre of Europe</li> <li>▪ Richness in natural assets</li> <li>▪ Richness of cultural and historical assets</li> <li>▪ Available conditions for tourism product diversifications</li> <li>▪ Sufficient tourism infrastructure and establishments</li> <li>▪ Strong cultural and historical connections with the neighbor countries</li> <li>▪ Low inflation rate</li> <li>▪ High growth rates</li> <li>▪ EU membership</li> <li>▪ Successful liberalization</li> <li>▪ Political stability</li> <li>▪ Being a part of Catholic world</li> <li>▪ Being the homeland of Pope John Paul II</li> <li>▪ Serving opportunities for dark tourism</li> <li>▪ Availability of transport by rail</li> <li>▪ Interests of former Soviet Union countries to Poland</li> </ul>
<b>SWOT / WEAKNESSES</b>	
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>POLAND</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relatively high inflation rate</li> <li>▪ Long-term candidateship of EU</li> <li>▪ Relatively low growth rates</li> <li>▪ Problems in liberalization</li> <li>▪ Political instability</li> <li>▪ Lack of funds</li> <li>▪ Neglecting sustainable use of nonrenewable resources</li> <li>▪ Negative public image</li> <li>▪ Seasonal tourism employment</li> <li>▪ High dependency on 3S tourism</li> <li>▪ "Cheap country" image in the world tourism market</li> <li>▪ The rise of Islamic Party</li> <li>▪ Competing neighbor countries in the field of tourism</li> <li>▪ Difficulties in transportation by road</li> <li>▪ Unplanned tourism development</li> <li>▪ Cultural degeneration</li> <li>▪ Seasonality of demand in tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weather conditions</li> <li>▪ Vulnerability of transition economies</li> <li>▪ Competition with other Eastern European countries in the field of tourism</li> <li>▪ Lack of product differentiation</li> <li>▪ Lack of free land</li> <li>▪ Unplanned tourism development</li> <li>▪ Cultural degeneration</li> <li>▪ Competition for cultural tourism in Europe</li> <li>▪ Seasonal tourism activities</li> <li>▪ Lack of sufficient level of foreign language</li> <li>▪ Visa requirements for those coming from non EU member countries</li> <li>▪ Poverty in rural areas</li> </ul>

**Table 1: The SWOT Analysis of Poland and Turkey (continued)**

<b>SWOT / OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>POLAND</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase in tourism demand</li> <li>▪ Dynamic and young society</li> <li>▪ Being an EU member</li> <li>▪ Possibility of becoming a member of different international partnerships (If EU membership is rejected)</li> <li>▪ Increase in tourism education opportunities</li> <li>▪ Solution of conflicts in Middle East</li> <li>▪ Development of cruise tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Global warming (having a warmer climate)</li> <li>▪ Attractiveness of former communist countries</li> <li>▪ Dynamic and young society</li> <li>▪ Increase in tourism demand for spas</li> <li>▪ Educated youth</li> <li>▪ Increasing demand for winter tourism activities</li> <li>▪ Attractiveness of rural tourism</li> <li>▪ Increasing number of daily visitors from neighbor countries</li> </ul>
<b>SWOT / THREATS</b>	
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>POLAND</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk of terrorism</li> <li>▪ Environmental problems</li> <li>▪ Global warming (Countries in the Mediterranean base will be affected more negatively than countries in the north)</li> <li>▪ Drought</li> <li>▪ Coastal pollution</li> <li>▪ Aesthetic pollution</li> <li>▪ Urbanization</li> <li>▪ Problems in Middle-East</li> <li>▪ Risks associated with natural disasters</li> <li>▪ Air pollution</li> <li>▪ Loss of biodiversity</li> <li>▪ Alteration of ecosystems by tourist activities</li> <li>▪ Increase in crimes targeting tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deficiency in privatization process</li> <li>▪ Vulnerability of transition economies to external threats</li> <li>▪ Risks associated with weakening of EU</li> <li>▪ Sustainability problems due to pressures on natural resources</li> <li>▪ Urbanization</li> <li>▪ Air pollution</li> <li>▪ Land degradation</li> <li>▪ Loss of biodiversity</li> <li>▪ Alteration of ecosystems by tourist activities</li> <li>▪ Risk of increase in crime rate</li> <li>▪ Decreasing number of daily visitors from non EU member countries</li> <li>▪ Inflation risks due to entering Eurozone</li> <li>▪ Massive movement of workers to Western Europe</li> </ul>

When this statement is kept in mind, it can be claimed that, both countries should initially strengthen their economies at first in order to take their place in the global and competitive tourism market, even if the basic reason behind developing tourism sector in a country is mainly economic. In other words, for any country, tourism sector should not be considered as the main solution of economic problems since high dependency on tourism sector may result in high vulnerability in economy. This is a dilemma of emerging and transition economies.

On the other hand, international tourism depends heavily on political stability, safety and security issues. For both Turkey and Poland, it should be mentioned that the political problems and instable economic conditions have effect on their entities in international tourism arena.

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Geographical location of a country is another important factor affecting the tourism development. Moreover, geographical location can be counted as an advantage or a disadvantage. For example; while Turkey's geographical location creates many advantages for the tourism sector of the country, it is at the same time causes problems because of the neighbor countries and chaotic environments of Balkans, Middle-East and the former Soviet-Union countries. In contrast to Turkey, Poland generally benefit from the advantageous impacts of its geographical location. Being in the centre of Europe, having strong cultural and historical connections and common past with neighbor countries are some of the advantages that Poland has because of its location.

On the other hand, both countries still have some problems in their infrastructure which is considered as a must in healthy tourism development. Lack of sufficient infrastructure in a country is due to its economic conditions. While tourism needs infrastructure to develop, at the same time it puts great pressures on current one and demands too much funds to improve necessary infrastructure. Allocation of scarce resources is another serious problem for emerging and transition economies. Therefore, both countries should think carefully while planning their future tourism developments and also, sustainability issues should be taken into consideration.

Globally, environmental problems and global warming, which is claimed to affect mainly weather conditions all around the world, are huge threats for tourism sectors of most countries. It is predicted that in the near future the Mediterranean Basin will face problems such as; drought, extreme temperatures, reduce in agricultural production, and etc. due to global warming. While Turkey, as a country in the Mediterranean Basin, nowadays faces some of the negative results of global warming, Poland can be considered as luckier than Turkey because of its geographical location. Although global warming concept must be taken seriously as a real threat and must not be considered as an opportunity, for the countries located in the north like Poland, it is obvious that changes brought by global warming will not make the land totally inconvenient to live on. This is why, while global warming concept is accepted as a threat for Turkey, it is claimed to be an opportunity for Poland in the SWOT analysis.

Another significant difference between Turkey and Poland is the EU Membership situation. Poland, as a member of the EU, benefits much from advantages of this union in many areas including tourism whereas Turkey, as a long-term candidate but not still a member, is in a different situation. Some researchers claim that Turkey will never become a member and its negotiation processes will take time. Others argue that the only solution for Turkey is not the EU membership and Turkey should seek different regional or international cooperation. Therefore, the results

of the EU membership negotiations for Turkey, whether positive or negative, could not be evaluated one-sided.

Last but not the least, image of a country means a lot for all the countries in the world in many areas such as trade, diplomacy, political relations, foreign affairs, military affairs, power, and also in tourism. Threats of terrorism, rising tension with neighbor countries from time to time, political instabilities, Cyprus, foreign lobbies acting against the country and some historical reasons damage the image of Turkey in international arena. Poland, as one of the EU members, does not have severe image problems despite its communist past. Cultural and historical connections, common past and religious ties with other European countries make image creation process easier for Poland. However, Turkey mostly suffers from negative image problems due to lack of lobbying activities, having negative reputation, and lack of support of international organizations. In fact, attractiveness of a country in global tourism market is mostly based on the image of the country, since country image plays a significant role in touristic consumer's buying decision. A negative image could be a serious obstacle for a country which has sufficient resources to develop tourism.

### **THE IMPACTS OF COUNTRY IMAGE ON TOURISM**

Image has been an important topic in tourism research during the last decades, and image is believed to be the key underlying factor in a destination site selection. The power of images is strong in today's consumer society where touristic images are as objects of consumption and the image is one of the key factors in the travel selection process. A country image may be defined as the perceptions, beliefs, impressions, ideas and understandings one holds of places and it is a simplified, condensed version of which the holder assumes to be a reality (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993). On the other hand, a country image can be viewed as the mental picture promoters are trying to instill within a target audience.

It has been recognized that popular culture and other forms of imagery have a significant impact on country image (Mercille, 2005). The importance of the tourist destination's image is universally recognized, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and consequent behavior and destination choice. It is considered that "images are more important than tangible resources", because "perceptions, rather than reality are what motivate consumers to act or not act" (Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002).

It is considered that human behavior is dependent upon image rather than objective reality. In the early studies, based on the image theory, it is suggested that the world is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality existing in the mind of the individual (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

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On the other hand tourism product, by its very nature, could not be delivered to the customers. Touristic consumers have to travel to the places where tourism product exists. Therefore, the destinations have to attract customers from other places, regions, countries, and even from other continents, to visit their destination to become successful. It is claimed that image is a crucial component in the process of selecting a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Images of countries express knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts which shape a person's or a group of people's judgments about a country. Just as personal reputation and corporate reputation, national reputation also matters. As an integral part of foreign-policy making and public diplomacy, managing national reputation is all about having a good name in the world of nations. National reputation refers to collective judgments of a foreign country's image and character that can be used to predict or explain its future behavior (Wang, 2006).

The studies on country image have dated back to 1960s. Multidimensional scaling and different approaches have been used in these studies. The country image concept has been considered important generally in studies of marketing. In these studies on country image, the research has emphasized the impact of country image on specific consumer behaviors such as product evaluation and purchase intentions. In fact, a country's image is formed on the basis of all perceptions linked to a country's entire assets. Country image can be defined shortly as a global perception based on a country's tangible and intangible resources as well as its strengths and weaknesses in global market (D'Astous & Boujbel, 2007).

A country's place and role in the international political arena, its memberships to international organizations and bodies such as EU, UN, NATO, OECD, WTO, etc., its coverage patterns in the mass media, and the usage of human traits to qualify the decisions and actions of countries are significant in creating image of a country.

The opinion of the given nation as expressed by foreign publics can be considered as one of the reliable indicators of a nation's reputation. National reputation as a part of a nation's "soft power" along with military and economic resources has been a fundamental force in international relations. Nowadays, foreign public opinion is very significant in building an image in the global markets and influencing political process and outcome (Wang, 2006).

In today's turbulent and global political and economic environment, proliferation of information and communication technologies, the emergence of new actors in global arena, and changing society and business environments have put effectiveness, credibility, and ethics of the tools used in public diplomacy under question.

Countries reflect their powers globally by building a strong image and reputation since desired image and reputation are used increasingly than military and economic power. National reputation and image, as intangible assets of a country, may have greater impacts on a country's ability to build coalitions and alliances to achieve political objectives to influence perceptions and purchase decisions regarding its different products, to attract foreign investment, to gain competitive advantage, or to develop its tourism.

Consequently, national reputation and country image have great impacts on attractiveness of a country which plays a very important role in determining a country's competitiveness in global tourism market. In fact, a country's success in global tourism market is stemmed not only from the assets of country which make tourism development possible but also (and maybe the most importantly) from the image of a country.

### **CONCLUSION**

Since its dissemination globally (after The World War II), tourism has been a major source of revenue for many countries, especially in transition and emerging economies. Its growth has been nothing short of phenomenal. While in the 1950s, 25 million people traveled to a foreign destination, in the 1960s, this grew to 70 million and it is predicted that by the 21st century, tourist arrivals would have reached billions annually. World Tourism Organization foresees that by the year 2010, 1 billion tourists would have traveled abroad and by 2020, this would have increased to 1.6 billion (Chavez, 1999).

For a country which desires to be a part of the global economy, the following actions should be taken:

- deregulate and liberalize its economy,
- shift from an agriculture-based economy to a service based-economy,
- liberalize its financial sector,
- open up its local economy to foreign investments and multinational corporations,
- eliminate subsidies and protection to local industries.

In today's information society, people know much more about countries than they did several years ago. All events of public interest happening in different parts of the world are being learnt by most of the people due to the development of communication tools and globalization. In addition to these developments, people nowadays have the chance of traveling around the world more easily than ever with increasing knowledge about different countries' customs, citizens, cultures, traditions, political and economic structures. Briefly, people all over the world are more likely than ever to have shaped relatively organized mental representations of countries as images. Learning about these

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mental representations is essential for governments which take the people's perceptions of countries into account while making international policy decisions, these perceptions may therefore impact the lives of millions of individuals.

For many countries, tourism represents a major economic industry. Because people's preferences for travel destinations depend in good part on country perceptions, it is important to know and manage these perceptions. For both Poland and Turkey, it can be mentioned that the need for creating positive country images and sustaining them is undeniable.

Image of a country is shaped by many different factors including its politics, economy, traditions, history, culture, local residents' life styles, and power. Keeping these factors in mind, it can be mentioned that image of a country does not only depend on its tangible indicators, the role of its intangible assets in building image should also be taken into account. Therefore, governments should be aware of politic, economic, social and cultural factors affecting country image and should follow opportunities and threats brought by changes both in their countries and in the world carefully in building and improving their country images.

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