A RESEARCH ON THE EFFECT OF THE COUNTRY IMAGE ON MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOME DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

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Abstract

With the world economy developing based on experience, businesses are trying to create unique experiences to differentiate themselves. The transformation of these experiences into a memorable tourism experience (MTE) not only affects customer satisfaction, but also positively affects the country image which is the impression of consumers about the country. Therefore, this study intents to find the effect of country image on MTE and to reveal which dimensions of country image affect the MTE. Moreover, the effect of demographic factors on the perception of the country image will be investigated. The study was carried out with 707 international tourists visited Antalya, a well-known destination in Turkey, during the months of May-October in 2018. As a result of hierarchical regression analysis the effect of country image on MTE was partially supported and it was revealed that MTE had a positive effect on hedonism, novelty, local culture, and meaningfulness dimensions. Regarding the second objective, a significant difference was found between the marital status, age groups and educational status of international tourists and their country image perceptions. Due to the impact of country image on MTE, policy makers need to make continuous improvement in the context of political, technological, and environmental factors.

Keywords: Country Image. Experience. Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE).

UMA PESQUISA SOBRE O EFEITO DA IMAGEM DO PAÍS NA EXPERIÊNCIA TURÍSTICA MEMORÁVEL NO CONTEXTO DE ALGUMAS VARIÁVEIS DEMOGRÁFICAS

Resumo

Com a economia mundial se desenvolvendo com base na experiência, as empresas estão tentando criar experiências únicas para se diferenciar. A transformação dessas experiências em uma experiência turística memorável (MTE) não afeta apenas a satisfação do cliente, mas também afeta positivamente a imagem do país que é a impressão dos consumidores sobre o país. Portanto, este estudo pretende encontrar o efeito da imagem do país no MTE e revelar quais dimensões da imagem do país afetam o MTE. Além disso, será investigado o efeito de fatores demográficos na percepção da imagem do país. O estudo foi realizado com 707 turistas internacionais que visitaram Antalya, um conhecido destino da Turquia, durante os meses de maio a outubro de 2018. Como resultado da análise de regressão hierárquica, o efeito da imagem do país no MTE foi parcialmente suportado e revelou-se que o MTE teve um efeito positivo nas dimensões hedonismo, novidade, cultura local e significado. Em relação ao segundo objetivo, foi encontrada uma diferença significativa entre o estado civil, as faixas etárias e a escolaridade dos turistas internacionais e a percepção da imagem do país. Devido ao impacto da imagem do país no MTE, os formuladores de políticas precisam fazer melhorias contínuas no contexto de fatores políticos, tecnológicos e ambientais.

Palavras-chave: Imagem do país. Experiência. Memorável turismo de experiência (MTE).

UNA INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE EL EFECTO DE LA IMAGEN DEL PAÍS EN LA EXPERIENCIA TURÍSTICA MEMORABLE EN EL CONTEXTO DE ALGUNAS VARIABLES DEMOGRÁFICAS

Resumen

Con la economía mundial desarrollándose basada en la experiencia, las empresas intentan crear experiencias únicas para diferenciarse. La transformación de estas experiencias en una experiencia turística memorable (MTE) no solo afecta la satisfacción del cliente, sino que también afecta positivamente la imagen país, que es la impresión de los consumidores sobre el país. Por lo tanto, este estudio intenta encontrar el efecto de la imagen del país en el MTE y revelar qué dimensiones de la imagen del país afectan el MTE. Además, se investigará el efecto de los factores demográficos en la percepción de la imagen país. El estudio se realizó con 707 turistas internacionales que visitaron Antalya, un destino muy conocido en Turquía, durante los meses de mayo-octubre de 2018. Como resultado del análisis de regresión jerárquica, se confirmó parcialmente el efecto de la imagen del país en MTE y se reveló que MTE tuvo un efecto positivo en las dimensiones de hedonismo, novedad, cultura local y significado. En cuanto al segundo objetivo, se encontró una diferencia significativa entre el estado civil, los grupos de edad y el nivel educativo de los turistas internacionales y la percepción de su imagen país. Debido al impacto de la imagen del país en MTE, los formuladores de políticas deben realizar mejoras continuas en el contexto de factores políticos, tecnológicos y ambientales.

Palabras clave: Imagen del país. Experiencia. Turismo de Experiencias Memorables (TEM).

1 INTRODUCTION

By the increasing globalization of the economy, there is a fierce competition among countries in affecting investments and tourists, increasing the value of the exports of the countries, and ensuring the availability of products in international markets. In this competitive environment, one of the most important elements of differentiation between countries is to have a positive image. Tourists use the perceived image before their visit to a destination as a

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parameter to create expectancy and compare these prospects with the tourism experience, they have gained after their visit. A positive image will increase the tourist's intention to recommend the destination through a positive evaluation (De Nisco et al., 2015).

Therefore, country image is a crucial element in international competition as it affects tourist attraction and stimulates the development of the country by promoting exports. Tourism is recognized as one of the world's largest economic sectors (United Nations World Tourism Organization-UNWTO). According to 2017 data,, the fact that tourism is the third largest export category in the world after chemicals and fuels supports this view.

Tourism is one of Turkey's fastest growing sectors, with total tourism revenue representing 3.8% of GDP in 2018. Tourism constituted 7.7% of the total employment and provided direct employment to 2.2 million people (OECD). Since the rapid growth of international tourism and its important contribution to the economy is known, countries seek to create a positive country image to get ahead of their competitors in the global market.

Tourism is an industry that stands out with experience, and customers are willing to pay extra for extraordinary experiences. The recall of emotional and positive experiences influences the tourists' choice decisions. Therefore, providing memorable experiences is critical to the competitiveness of tourism providers (Barnes et al., 2016). Prior studies on MTE have shown that MTE positively affects revisit intention, customer satisfaction and destination loyalty (Stavriena & Kamenidou, 2022; Anía Melón et al., 2021; Çoban & Yetiş, 2019).

However, it is not possible to transform all tourism experiences into MTE. For tourist experiences to be memorable, they should be experiences that the tourist builds from his experiences and remembers after the trip. MTE is essential as it influences the decision of the future destination choice of the tourist. While making a decision, tourists do planning according to their previous experiences and memories (Ali et al., 2014; Duman and Mattila, 2005).

Although there have been various studies on MTE in recent years, it has been found that the studies are still inadequate. Though there are studies showing that the country image affects the product evaluation, perceived value, satisfaction and purchase intention (Wang et al., 2012; Pappu et al., 2007; Ayyildiz & Cengiz, 2007 Laroche et al., 2005;; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999), the effect of the country image on the tourism experience has not been studied much. From the perspective of Turkey, studies related to the MTE is very rare.

Therefore, it is expected that this research will fill this gap. The aim of the study is to find the effect of country image on MTE and to reveal the importance of MTE. The sample of the study consists of international tourists visited Antalya which is a well-known tourism destination in Turkey. Antalya constitutes the sample of this study, as it is the city, which hosts the most international tourists in the summer season (May - October) according to the statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2017.

The study consists of the following sections. Chapter 2 deals with the literature framework of the study. In section 3, data and research methodology are presented. The empirical results of the study and discussion are presented in the 4th section. The 5th chapter contains the conclusion part.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

The country image is a broad concept that includes all the people, history, culture, policy, geographical structure, economy and technological development of that country and it affects people's evaluation of that country and its products positively or negatively.

In previous studies, it was accepted that the country image was one-dimensional (Erickson et al., 1984) and product-centred (Han, 1989). However, in subsequent studies, it has been adopted that country image is not only product-centred and has a multidimensional structure (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Laroche et al., 2005). According to Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009), country image consists of three dimensions. A cognitive component defines consumers' beliefs about a particular country. While the affective component expresses the consumer's emotions or feelings towards the country, the conative component is consumers' behavioural intentions regarding the country.

Country characteristics (such as economy, politics, culture, environment) and human characteristics (such as competence, creativity, standard of living, education) are used to measure the cognitive component. Since the affective component expresses feelings towards a country, positive and negative emotions were used to measure this component. Martinez & Alvarez (2010) used semantic-differential scales such as like-dislike, trust-distrust, respect-disrespect, admire-do not admire.

Particularly where the individual does not have information about the product, the country image serves as a cognitive sign, while at the same time providing effective and symbolic benefits such as social status (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). In the country image studies conducted on tangible goods, it has been found the image affects consumer preferences, product-related evaluations, and purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2016; Laroche et al., 2005). Although there are many country image studies regarding goods, country image studies related to tourism are scarce.

In a country image study related to tourism, Elliot and Papadopoulos (2016) found that affective country image has the greatest influence on destination evaluations. General country images can mediate the effect of tourism satisfaction on post-visit behavioural intentions (De Nisco et al., 2015). Lee, Ham and Kim (2015) found that media-related products, such as celebrities and television dramas, positively influenced the image of the country, and the effect of country image has been extended to the food service industry.

As individuals make their vacation plans, they evaluate countries according to cognitive factors such as technological development, natural attractions or accommodation standards, as well as their emotional reactions to the people of that country. Prior to visiting a destination, tourists use the country image as a parameter and compare their expectations with the tourism experience they have gained after their visit. If they have a positive image, they will evaluate positively and intend to recommend the destination to another person.

Therefore, the country image is accepted as an effective factor in the tourist's destination selection process and behavioural intention (Zhang et al., 2018; Palau-Samuell et al., 2016; De Nisco et al., 2015). Previous research has also examined the effects of different demographic variables on the country image. According to the results of Guina and Giraldi (2012)'s study on whether the image of Brazil differs according to age, gender and knowledge, those who are young, male and have a high level of knowledge made better evaluations about the image of Brazil.

In a study conducted by Chi (2011), travelers from different gender and educational segments had different levels of image perception. Rafael and Almeida (2017) examined the effect of tourists' socio-demographic characteristics on the image formation process. They determined that the age variable from the socio-demographic types had a greater effect on the cognitive and emotional component of the image. In the lights of this information, this study investigates the effect of personal factors related to gender, age, marital status, education level, employment status and income on the country image. Therefore, the following hypothesis are formulated:

H1: The country image perceptions of international tourists differentiate according to the demographic variables

H1a: There is a difference in terms of gender variable in perception of country image

H1b: There is a difference in terms of marital status variable in perception of country image

H1c: There is a difference in terms of age variable in perception of country image

H1d: There is a difference in terms of education variable in perception of country image

Tourism is the experience of visiting, seeing, learning, having fun and living differently from the ordinary life of tourists Anything, behavioural or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, explicit or implied, experienced by a tourist in a destination can be an experience (Oh et al. 2007). In order for the experiences to be memorable, tourism experiences should be remembered after an event occurs (Kim et al., 2012). As important as gaining memorable experiences is for today's knowledgeable and sophisticated consumers, the way to gain sustainable competitive advantage for businesses is to provide tourists with unique, extraordinary, and memorable experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Kara & Kunt, 2020; Ramírez-Alcaraz et al., 2020).

Kim et al. (2012) developed factors to characterize MTE because they thought that the current tourism literature was insufficient to explain the concept of memorable experience. Following the scale development procedure of Churchill (1979) and Hinkins (1995), they developed the MTE scale consisting of seven dimensions and 24 items. The seven dimensions consisting of hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty are important components of the tourism experience and affect the memories of the individual (Kim et al., 2012). While consuming tourism products (experiences), people primarily seek entertainment (hedonism / pleasure), unlike other activities and products (Kim, 2014).

Hedonism is an integral part of leisure experiences and is an important factor in determining the future behaviour of tourists as well as satisfaction (Duman & Mattila, 2005).

Refreshment is the most defining essential component of tourism activities. Morgan and Xu (2009) found that travel experiences include relaxing in the sun on the beach can be MTE. According to the research conducted by Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) with 35 Australian travellers, local dishes and culinary experiences in the destination contribute to the formation of memorable experiences. Staying close to the local life, attending local cultural ceremonies and tasting local food helps create positive memories in the minds of travellers.

According to de Freitas Coelho & de Sevilha Gosling (2018), for a tourism experience to be memorable, at least the relationships between tourist-local agencies, tourist-tourists and tourist-companions are important. In tourism activities, people seek meaningful experiences, such as seeking a sense of physical, emotional or spiritual satisfaction through tourism, rather than pursuing a mere escapism or a hollow search for authenticity (Kim & Ritchie, 2014).

One of the sociopsychological motivations that drive individuals to travel is to satisfy the need for knowledge. People travel with the urge to gain new knowledge and understanding of the places they are visited (Kim, 2014). Visitors participate in two stages of the tourism experience: planning and on-site activities. In the planning stage, such as transportation and accommodation arrangements, individuals visualize themselves as if they participated in the event. Various emotions (anxiety, joy, etc.) and expectations of the experience can develop from these visualizations. At the on-site stage of their tourism experience, tourists actively participate in tourism programs (Kim & Ritchie, 2014).

For instance as a result of the in-depth interviews with individuals who attended a festival in Belo Horizonte, it was found that participation and involvement led to more positive experience and revisit intention (Queiroz et al., 2019). Novelty includes travel experiences of doing something out of the ordinary. The first visit to Asia, the first trip on a cruise ship, experiencing different cultures, lifestyles and foods can be given as examples of novelty (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013).

There are few studies on the effect of country image on MTE in the literature. Zhang et al., (2018) found direct positive effects of country image on MTE. According to the results of another study related to the effect of tourists' perception of Uganda's tourism products on MTE, tourist perceptions positively affect MTE (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). Lee determined a positive relationship between culinary attractiveness, cultural heritage and nostalgia, and they found that those with high motivation towards cultural heritage also had a high perception of MTE (Lee, 2015).

According their results country image positively affects preferences for Korean restaurants among the four cities (Hong Kong, Bangkok, Sydney, and Dubai). In a study conducted with tourists visiting the city of Jinggangshan, China, country competence consisting of wealth, economic development, modernization and technology positively affects MTE (Zhou et al., 2022). According to the results of another study conducted with 200 Indonesian tourists visiting Singapore, it was determined that the country image positively affected the revisit intention and MTE (Natasia &Tunjungsari, 2021).

In addition to the positive effects of the country image on the tourism experience, when there is hostility towards a country, the country's image is damaged through the

affective component. This situation negatively affects the intention to visit the country (Alvarez & Campo, 2014). In the light of this information, the following research model was established (Figure 1)The following hypotheses proposed since it is thought that the technology, people, politics, economy, and the environment of the destination country affect the tourism experience.

H2: Country image influence memorable tourism experience

Figure 1: Research model.
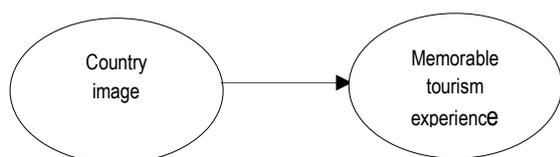
Source: own elaboration.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

Based on the previous studies (Zhang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2012; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010; Nadeau et al., 2008), a 6-dimension and 25-item scale will be used to measure the country image in our study. These six dimensions consists of country characteristics, country competence, people characteristics, people competence, environmental management, and the relationship between countries.

Kim's 7-dimension (Hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty) and 24-item scale were used to measure MTE. Kim et al. (2012) found that individuals who perceive a tourism experience as memorable will remember these seven experiential components mostly. However, in our study, the 'refreshment' dimension was excluded because it was not suitable for the structure.

Therefore, the MTE scale was used as 6 dimensions and 20 items. As a data collection method, the questionnaire technique including closed-ended questions was used. In the first part of the questionnaire, there are 11 questions measuring demographic characteristics of participants, 25 questions measuring the country image in the second part, and 20 questions measuring the MTE.

Five-point Likert Scale was used in all items, and participants were asked to evaluate scales between "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree". In order to test the comprehensibility and clarity of the questions, the pilot study has been conducted with 52 people. After pilot study, the two items of country characteristic, "Turkey is politically stable", "Turkey is a democratic country", have been replaced since it has been noticed that these items attracted foreign tourists negatively. Therefore, the items of people characteristic dimension took the first place in the layout of the survey.

The universe of the research consists of international tourists who visited Antalya in the summer season of 2018. The reason why Antalya is selected in the research is that it is considered as one of the two most visited destinations (Istanbul, Antalya) in our country in terms of tourism.

Antalya, located on the Mediterranean coast in the south of Turkey, is a destination known as 3S (sea, sand, sun) and appeals to many different interests with its natural, cultural and historical beauties. Apart from these areas of interest, it has many types of accommodation businesses such as 5-star hotels, holiday villages, boutique hotels and hostels. In addition, Antalya has approximately 40% of the total bed capacity and attracts approximately 60% of tourism investments in Turkey (Erkuş-Öztürk, 2009).

Therefore, it is considered appropriate to choose Antalya as a sample. The convenience sampling method was used as a sampling method, which is a technique that involves the inclusion of only accessible individuals from the sample (Gegez, 2014).

A questionnaire was applied to tourists staying in Antalya on a voluntary basis in tour buses, tourist centres such as hotels and restaurants, through tourist guides. The 2000 questionnaires were distributed and 812 of them were completed. As a result, invalid questionnaires were removed and statistical analysis was performed with a total of 707 questionnaires.

3.2 Statistical Method

The data obtained from the surveys conducted with 707 participants were carried out in several stages using SPSS 20 and LISREL 8.7 statistics programs. Firstly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to test the suitability of the scales for factor analysis. Factors related to each variable were determined by applying explanatory factor analysis.

Factor analysis was performed for the construct validity of the scales, and then Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for reliability analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was also performed with the LISREL package program for the data analysis. In order to determine whether the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study caused a significant difference on country image, independent samples t-test was applied in paired groups, and one-way ANOVA was applied in multiple groups. Hierarchical Regression Analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

The most frequently reliability coefficient type in the literature is Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Kline, 2011), and the acceptable Cronbach alpha value is over 0.7 (Ural & Kılıç, 2006). The Cronbach alpha coefficient value of the country image and MTE was 0.939 and 0.930, respectively and the results show high reliability.

In the study, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the factor structure of the 6-dimensional 27-item country image scale developed by Zhang et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Martinez and Alvarez, 2010; Nadeau et al., 2008. According to the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, the 6-factor structure (country characteristics, country competence, people characteristics, people competence, environmental management, and relations between countries), which is theoretically proposed in the country image scale, showed an acceptable level of harmony with the data obtained within the scope of the research.

Therefore, the 6-factor structure of the country image scale was verified. According to the confirmatory factor analysis fit index values, the measurement model fit values were realized within the acceptable range: X2 / df= 3.68, GFI= 0.90, IFI= 0.93, CFI= 0.93, RMSEA= 0.062. Hence, the 6-factor structure of the country image scale was verified. According to the confirmatory factor analysis fit index values of MTE, the values are within the acceptable range as follows: X2 / df= 3.15; GFI= 0.94; IFI= 0.95; CFI= 0.95; RMSEA= 0.055. Therefore, the 6-factor structure of the MTE scale was confirmed.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 shows the numerical and percentage values of the findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants. According to Table1, it is seen that the majority of respondents are women, at 21-40 age range, married, secondary and high school graduates. When the nationalities of the participants are examined, a profile of Dutch, Russian and German tourists stand out, respectively.

According to the data of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the nationalities of the tourists who visited our country in 2018 consists of Russian, German and British, respectively. It is thought that the reason why Dutch tourists are in the top three in this study is that the surveys were applied to tour groups concentrated in certain regions during the summer season.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing About Demographic Factors

The results of the independent sample t-test and ANOVA regarding whether the country image perceptions differentiate according to the gender are presented in Table 2.

As examined in Table 2, it is seen that the averages obtained from male participants are higher than women in all dimensions exclusive of country characteristic. However, according to the t-test results, there was not a significant difference between the gender of international tourists and their country image perception. Therefore, H1a is rejected for gender variable.

As a result of the study applied to German tourists in order to determine the role of professional tourist guides in improving the image of Turkey, no significant difference was found related to gender (Guzel, 2007). In another study conducted to Arab tourists in which to measure the impact of Turkey's image in tourism demand, there was no significant difference in terms of gender (Aliyev 2014).

The image of tourists visiting Uganda has not been differed according to gender variable (Tukamushaba et al., 2016). This result stated above is consistent with Türker's study, which measures the effect of the country image on the tourist's risk perception in holiday destination selection, there was no statistically difference in terms of gender variable (Türker, 2013)

Table1: Demographic characteristics of participants.

Gender	n	%
Male	318	44.97
Female	389	55.03
Age	n	%
20 years and below	86	12.17
21 – 40	361	51.06
41 – 60	203	28.71
61 and above	57	8.06
Marital Status	n	%
Single	318	44.98
Married	389	55.02
Education	n	%
Secondary & High School	322	45.55
Undergraduate	274	38.75
Postgraduate	111	15.70
Income €	n	%
500 -1000	263	37.25
1001 – 2500	172	24.36
2501 – 4000	200	28.33
4001 and more	72	10.06
Nationality	n	%
German	119	16.83
Russian	150	21.22
Ukrainian	46	6.51
English	46	6.51
Dutch	214	30.27
Belgian	41	5.79
Other	91	12.87
Total	707	100

Source: proper elaboration.

Table 2. T-Test results regarding the dimensions of country image by gender.

Dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sd	t	P
People characteristics	Male	318	4.3459	.57645	705	.274	.784*
	Female	389	4.3342	.55638			
People competence	Male	318	4.0566	.63166	705	.939	.348*
	Female	389	4.0135	.58656			
Country characteristics	Male	318	3.7044	.83937	631.035	-.677	.499*
	Female	389	3.7449	.72686			
Country competence	Male	318	3.7335	.75218	705	1.063	.288*
	Female	389	3.6735	.74142			
Environmental management	Male	318	3.6635	.81842	705	.005	.996*
	Female	389	3.6632	.75641			
The relationship between countries	Male	318	3.8436	.72425	705	.101	.920*
	Female	389	3.8380	.71939			
*P>0,05							

Source: proper elaboration.

An independent sample t-test was conducted for the differences between the marital status and country image perceptions of international tourists and the results are given in Table 3. The results of the t-test show that there is no significant difference according to the marital status variable in the country image perceptions of tourists in terms of country characteristics, country competence, environmental management and the relationship between countries (Table 3). However, there is a significant difference in people characteristics and people competence dimensions.

Table 3: T-Test results regarding the dimensions of country image by marital status.

Dimensions	Marital Status	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sd	T	P
People characteristics	Single	318	4.2448	.60138	631.765	-.4016	.000*
	Married	389	4.4169	.52181			
People competence	Single	318	3.9733	.64229	705	-2.368	.018*
	Married	389	4.0816	.57318			
Country characteristics	Single	318	3.7791	.73777	705	1.619	.106
	Married	389	3.6838	.80987			
Country competence	Single	318	3.7296	.74325	705	.936	.350
	Married	389	3.6767	.74899			
Environmental management	Single	318	3.6960	.77227	705	1.001	.317
	Married	389	3.6367	.79407			
The relationship between countries	Single	318	3.8624	.72073	705	.730	.466
	Married	389	3.8226	.72178			
*P<.05							

Source: proper elaboration.

Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the marital status of foreign tourists and their perception of the country image. So H1b is confirmed. The arithmetic average of married tourists regarding the people characteristics dimension, and the arithmetic average of the married tourists in the people competence dimension are statistically higher than the single ones. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for independent samples in comparison of the perceptions of the country image of international tourists in terms of age variable and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA results of the country image perceptions of international tourists by age variable.

Dimensions	Age	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	F	P	Significant Difference
People characteristics	A.Less than 20	86	4.2171	.62990	3.302	.020*	A-C
	B.21-40	361	4.3301	.57258			
	C.41-60	203	4.4269	.51624			
	D.Above 60	57	4.2719	.54703			
People competence	A.Less than 20	86	4.0581	.63671	2.519	.057	-
	B.21-40	361	4.0166	.61016			
	C.41-60	203	4.0998	.57125			
	D.Above 60	57	3.8596	.64264			
Country characteristics	A.Less than 20	86	3.9302	.72523	4.211	.006*	A-B
	B.21-40	361	3.6641	.78278			
	C.41-60	203	3.7980	.79710			
	D.Above 60	57	3.5614	.69962			
Country competence	A.Less than 20	86	3.8924	.73118	5.254	.001*	A-B
	B.21-40	361	3.6018	.75842			B-C
	C.41-60	203	3.7980	.74535			
	D.Above 60	57	3.6886	.59627			
Environmental management	A.Less than 20	86	3.9341	.81139	5.259	.001*	A-B
	B.21-40	361	3.5780	.74172			
	C.41-60	203	3.7126	.83913			
	D.Above 60	57	3.6199	.71392			
The relationship between countries	A.Less than 20	86	4.0669	.69285	5.479	.001*	A-B
	B.21-40	361	3.7999	.69192			A-D
	C.41-60	203	3.8818	.76240			
	D.Above 60	57	3.6096	.70871			
*P<.05							

Source: proper elaboration.

ANOVA test results showed that there was no significant difference in people characteristic dimension in terms of age groups. However, a statistically significant difference was found in the dimensions of people characteristics, country characteristics, country competence, environmental management, and relationship between countries.

So, H1c is confirmed for age variable. Scheffe test, one of the Post Hoc analyses, was applied to identify of which groups have the significant difference. According to the results of Scheffe test, it was seen that the significant difference was between international tourists with an age of less than 20 (A) and those between the age of 41-60 (C).

In people characteristics dimension, tourists aged 41-60 seem to have stronger image than the younger tourists. However, in other sub-dimensions, namely, country characteristics, country competence, environmental management and relationship between countries, tourists under the age of 20 perceive the country image to a gretaer extent than tourists aged 21-40.Participants between the ages of 41-60 have a higher perception of the country image than those between the ages of 21-40.

In the dimension of relationship between countries, participants in the age range of less than 20 perceive the dimension of relationship between countries of country image higher than the participants aged over 60. The study conducted by Aliyev (2014) found that the country image perception of the participants aged 15-25 and 56 and over were higher than the age group of 26-35 and 36-45 age groups. In the studies of Guina and Giraldi (2012) on the perception of Brazil, it was determined that young people (18-24 years old) have higher evaluations about Brazil.

Consistent with this result, in our study, it was determined that those who are less than 20 years old have a high perception of country image. The high perception of the country image of young people may be due to whether it is their first visit to the country or whether they have no previous experiences that they can compare. Therefore, the lack of previous experience may cause youngers to perceive the country's image positively.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for independent samples in comparison of the perceptions of the country image in terms of educational status of international tourists and the results are given in Table 5.

Table 5: ANOVA results of the country image perceptions of international tourists by education level.

Dimensions	Education level	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	F	P	Significant Difference
People characteristics	A. Secondary & High School	322	4.4130	.56049	8.114	.000*	A-C
	B. Undergraduate	274	4.3224	.57087			
	C.Postgraduate	111	4.1682	.52728			
People competence	A. Secondary & High School	322	4.0932	.60811	4.698	.009*	A-C
	B. Undergraduate	274	4.0192	.61784			
	C.Postgraduate	111	3.8919	.55557			
Country characteristics	A. Secondary & High School	322	3.7834	.79563	2.303	.101	-
	B. Undergraduate	274	3.6487	.79835			
	C.Postgraduate	111	3.7545	.66485			
Country competence	A. Secondary & High School	322	3.8276	.76719	9.320	.000*	A-B
	B. Undergraduate	274	3.5693	.72358			
	C.Postgraduate	111	3.6554	.68262			
Environmental management	A. Secondary & High School	322	3.7360	.83971	3.569	.029*	A-C
	B. Undergraduate	274	3.6387	.74483			
	C.Postgraduate	111	3.5135	.68870			
The relationship between countries	A. Secondary & High School	322	3.8820	.77216	.980	.376	-
	B. Undergraduate	274	3.8075	.71171			
	C.Postgraduate	111	3.8018	.57517			
*P<0,05							

Source: proper elaboration.

ANOVA test results showed that there was no significant difference in the dimensions of country characteristics and relationship between countries in terms of education level. A significant difference was found in the dimensions of people characteristics, people competence, country competence and environmental management. H1d is confirmed for education variable. Scheffe test was applied to determine the source of significant difference in stated dimensions except environmental management, and Dunnett C test was applied for environmental management.

In the dimensions of people characteristics, people competence and environmental management, less educated tourists perceive the country image in a greater extent than the tourists with graduate graduates. In the dimension of country competence, again, low-educated tourists (A) perceive the country image to a greater extent than undergraduate participants (B).

It seems that less educated tourists perceived country image in a greater extent than more educated tourists. Contrary to this result, Aliyev found the country image perception of graduate tourists to be high (Aliyev, 2014, p. 86). In another study, there was no difference in terms of country image, while participants with undergraduate level perceived Turkish image negatively. It was seen that the participants with high school or less education level had a positive Turkish image (Türker, 2013).

In our study, the reason why postgraduate graduates perceive the country's image at a lower level is that it is predicted that with the increase in education level, participation in tourism will increase in parallel, but the satisfaction of educated tourists will be more difficult. Thus, Beerli and Martin (2004) found in a study they conducted in Spain that as the level of education increases, image evaluations decrease. Since it has been determined that there is a significant difference between the marital status, age groups, education level and country image perceptions of the international tourists involved in the study except for the gender variable:

The hypothesis "H1: The country image perceptions of international tourists differentiate according to the demographic variables (gender, marital status, education, age) was partially accepted. The reason why the country image perceptions differ according to the demographic characteristics of the participants may be due to the fact that the country image perception may change according to the individual's previous visit to the country, previous experience, the relationship with the people of the country.

4.3 Hypotheses testing related to the effect of country image on MTE

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis regarding the effect of the dimensions of the country image (people characteristics, people competence, country characteristics, country competence, environmental management, and relationship between countries) on the hedonism dimension of the MTE are given in Table 6.

Table 6: The effect of country image dimensions on hedonism.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.336	.197	.201	.205	.205	.196***
PCo		.212	.159	.145	.130	.106*
CCh			.088	.041	.008	-.016
CCo				.078	.043	.010
EM					.101	.036
RC						.170***
F	89.449	56.572	39.340	30.202	25.096	22.933
R^2	.113	.138	.144	.147	.152	.164
ΔR^2	.111	.136	.140	.142	.146	.157

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries
Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001
Source: proper elaboration.

As seen in Table 6, the established model causes a significant change in R2 (ΔR2 =. 157; p<. 01) and people characteristics, people competence, country characteristics, country competence, environmental management and relationship between countries together significantly affect hedonism (R2=.164; F(6-700)=22.933; p<.01). According to Model 1, people characteristic (PCh) significantly affects the hedonism of MTE (R2 =.113; p <.05).

Next adding people competence (PCo) in Model 2 leads to a significant change in R2 (R2=.138, p<.05). The PCo shows a significant positive relationship with hedonism (β = .212). When country characteristic (CCh) was regressed on hedonism (model 3), the coefficient of CCh was significant and positive (β= .088). The explanatory power was reached 14.4% (R2=.144, p<.05) in Model 3 which explains 14.4% variance in hedonism. In Model 4, coefficient of country competence (CCo) is .078, which means positive effect on hedonism.

Adding environmental management (EM) in Model 5 leads to a significant change in R2 (R2=.152, p<.05). The EM shows a significant positive relationship with hedonism (β= .101). When "relationship between countries (RC)" was included in Model 6, the explanatory power was reached at 16.4%, indicating that together PCh, PCo, CCh, CCo, EM and RC explained 16.4% of hedonism (R2=.164). When RC was included in Model 6, the coefficient of CCh became insignificant and negative (β =-.016). According to the results of the hierarchical regression analysis, the acceptance and rejection status of the hypothesis is as follows:

H2: The country image influences the hedonism dimension of MTE (Partially supported). The sub-dimensions of country image, people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries, positively affect the hedonism. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis of the effect of country image on novelty are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: The effects of country image on novelty.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.339	.137	.146	.149	.149	.138**
PCo		.310	.199	.186	.168	.139**
CCh			.185	.142	.103	.073
CCo				.072	.029	-.010
EM					.121	.042
RC						.206***
F	91.649	72.267	56.254	42.840	35.792	33.255
R^2	.115	.170	.194	.196	.203	.222
ΔR^2	.114	.168	.190	.192	.198	.215

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries
Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001
Source: proper elaboration.

22.2 % of the variance in the novelty is explained by the predictor variables. While PCh, PCo, Chc, EM and RC positively affect the novelty dimension of MTE (β =.138; β = .139; β = .073; β = .042; β = .206), CCo shows negative relationship with novelty (β = -.010). As seen in Table 7, the explanatory power of the model has further improved to 22.2 %. Since CCh, CCo, and EM, were insignificant, H3 is partially supported. The sub-dimensions of country image,

people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries, positively affect the novelty. This result is consistent with the finding of novelty as the important dimension determining MTE in a study conducted with 664 tourists in Brazil (Aroeira et al., 2016).

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis regarding the prediction of the local culture dimension of the MTE according to the country image are given in Table 8.

Table 8: The effects of country image on local culture.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.403	.209	.215	.219	.219	.210***
PCo		.296	.224	.210	.196	.171**
CCh			.121	.073	.042	.017
CCo				.079	.045	.011
EM					.096	.029
RC						.176***
F	136.563	95.108	67.089	51.152	41.927	37.565
R^2	.162	.213	.223	.226	.230	.244
ΔR^2	.161	.210	.219	.221	.225	.237

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries. Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. **Source:** proper elaboration.

Models 1 through 6 in Table 8 show that the explanatory power was gradually improved to 24.4 %, which means that 24.4% of local culture depends on the country image. The beta coefficient of predictor variables were greater than zero that indicate positive association with local culture. However, p values of CCH, CCo, and EM were not significant. Therefore, H4 is partially supported. Namely, the sub-dimensions of the country image, people characteristics,

people competence and relationship between countries positively affect the local culture dimension.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis of the effect of country image on meaningfulness are presented in Table 9. As seen in Table 9, people characteristics has the major affect whereas country characteristics has the least impact on meaningfulness of MTE. The value of Beta coefficients is higher than zero in all independent variables, which indicates positive association on meaningfulness.

Table 9: The effects of country image on meaningfulness

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.319	.132	.141	.148	.148	.142**
PCo		.286	.181	.154	.136	.121*
CCh			.174	.084	.045	.029
CCo				.149	.107	.085
EM					.121	.078
RC						.111*
F	79.795	61.432	47.712	38.624	32.348	27.862
R^2	.102	.149	.169	.180	.187	.193
ΔR^2	.100	.146	.166	.176	.182	.186

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries. Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. **Source:** proper elaboration.

The relative importance order of predictor variables on the meaningfulness dimension of MTE are PCh, PCo, RC, CCo, EM and CCh. Throughout the model 1 to model 6, the explanatory power was reached 19.3% which explains 19.3% of variance in meaningfulness (R2= .193). Since the p values of CCh, CCo and EM were not significant, H5 is partially supported. The sub-dimensions of country image, people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries, positively affect the meaningfulness.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis regarding the prediction of the involvement dimension of the

MTE according to the country image are given in Table 10. According to Model 1 in Table 10, the beta value of PCh shows positive relationship with involvement.

However, the 7.00% of variance in the involvement dimension is explained by PCh which indicates low explanatory power (R2= .070). Adding PCo in Model 2 leads to a significant change in R2 (R2= .114). When CCh was regressed on involvement (model 3), the R2 has improved to 13.2% (R2= .132). In Model 4, the CCo has a positive association with the involvement (β = .173).

Table 10: The effects of country image on involvement.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.265	.084	.092	.100	.100	.085
PCo		.278	.181	.149	.136	.095
CCh			.161	.056	.027	-.014
CCo				.173	.141	.086
EM					.091	-.019
RC						.288***
F	53.198	45.504	35.655	30.296	24.984	26.875
R^2	.070	.114	.132	.147	.151	.187
ΔR^2	.069	.112	.128	.142	.145	.180

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries
Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. **Source:** proper elaboration.

The explanatory power was reached 14.7% (R^2= .147) in Model 4, which explains 14.7% variance in involvement. The inclusion of EM in Model 5, the explanatory power was increased to 15.1%. While CCh and EM show negative relationship with involvement (β = -.014, β = -.019), RC has a strong effect on involvement (β = .288) in Model 6. The overall regression model predicted 18.7% of variance in involvement. Since the p value of RC was significant (p< .001), H6 is partially supported.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis of the effect of country image on knowledge are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: The effects of country image on knowledge.

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	β	β	β	β	β	β
PCh	.301	.104	.109	.115	.114	.107**
PCo		.301	.241	.221	.197	.177**
CCh			.100	.035	-.019	-.039
CCo				.107	.048	.022
EM					.169	.117*
RC						.137**
F	70.130	58.504	41.121	32.216	28.516	25.105
R^2	.090	.143	.149	.155	.169	.177
ΔR^2	.089	.140	.146	.150	.163	.170

Note: PCh= people characteristic, PCo= people competence, CCh=country characteristic, CCo= country competence, EM= environmental management, RC= relationship between countries. Significance at *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. **Source:** proper elaboration.

Models 1 through 6 in Table 11 show that the explanatory power was gradually improved to 17.7 %, which means that 17.7 % of knowledge depends on the country image. However, the 9.00% of variance in the knowledge dimension is explained by PCh which indicates low explanatory power (R^2= .090). While PCh, PCo, CCo, EM and RC positively affect the knowledge dimension of MTE (β = .107, β = .177, β = .022, β = .117, β = .137), CCh shows negative relationship with knowledge β= -.039).

PCo has the major effect on knowledge. The p values of CCH and CCo were not significant. Therefore, H7 is partially supported. Namely, the sub-dimensions of the country image, PPc, PPco, EM and RC positively affect the knowledge dimension. As a result of a research conducted with 102 tourists visiting Natal, it was determined that tourists experience MTE due to individual learning and knowledge (Bezerra, 2019).

It is conceivable that the relations between countries, which are the sub-dimension of the country's image, affect the MTE positively in all models. According to hierarchical regression analyses of all MTE dimensions with the exclusion of meaningfulness dimension, PCh, PCo, and RC have the most explanatory power in all models.

Although there are not many studies on the effect of country image on MTE in the literature, Zhang found direct positive effects of country image on MTE in his research in the context of international tourism (Zhang et al., 2018). In a study examining the effect of tourists' perceptions of Uganda's tourism products on MTE, it was determined that tourist perceptions positively affect MTE (Tukamushaba et al., 2016: 9). In a study conducted with tourists visiting the city of Jinggangshan, China, it was determined that the country's competence consisting of wealth, economic development, modernization, and technology positively affects MTE (Zhou et al., 2022).

5 CONCLUSION

With technological innovations and the emergence of a more knowledgeable, demanding consumer, businesses in the tourism industry tend to be providing personalized experiences rather than focusing on facilities and services. One of the most important keys to gaining competitive advantage and surviving is to provide consumers with extraordinary, unique, and memorable experiences in terms of tourism businesses.

It is widely accepted that the country image is an important structure that affects the decision-making, destination selection, post-travel evaluation and future behavioural intentions (Zhang et al., 2018: 326). In this study,

the effect of demographic characteristics on perceptions of country image and the effect of country image on MTE were investigated.

According to the results of the study, it was accepted that there were differences between the demographic characteristics of international tourists (except for the gender variable) and their perception of the country image. In addition, it has been observed that the country image had a partial effect on the formation of MTE. Since MTE has a positive effect on revisit intention, customer satisfaction and destination loyalty (Stavriena & Kamenidou, 2022; Anía Melón et al., 2021; Çoban &ve Yetiş, 2019), improving the country image perception will contribute to the formation of MTE. The stronger the tourists perceive the country image, the higher their MTE will be.

When the demographic characteristics of the research conducted over 707 questionnaires are evaluated, the majority of the participants consists of women (55.03%) and married people (55.02%). In terms of the nationalities of the participants, a profile consisting of Dutch, Russian and German tourists have been observed, respectively.

According to the data of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the nationalities of the tourists who visited our country in 2018 has been consisted of Russian, German, and British, respectively. In this study, it is considered that the reason why Dutch tourists are among the top three is that the surveys are applied to tour groups concentrated in certain regions during the summer season.

In terms of age group, 51.06% of the respondents were 21-40 years followed by 41-60 years. According to the respondent's education level, most of the respondents (45.55%) had primary and secondary education degree, 38.75% of respondents had university degrees. Regarding the income situation, 37.25% of the participants reported 500-1000 (Euro), followed by 28.33% as monthly income 2501-4000. In terms of occupation, workers were in the majority with 26.31%. The fact that the low-income group is the majority of the respondents can be considered to be in line with the image of a cheap country.

When the effect of demographic characteristics on the perceptions of country image is examined, it is seen that gender does not influence the perception of country image. According to the marital status variable, married participants' perception of the country image is higher in dimension of people characteristics and people competence. In terms of educational level variable, the perception of country image of secondary and high school graduates is higher than graduate and undergraduates graduates.

Contrary to this result, Aliyev found the perception of country image of postgraduate graduates to be high in his study (Aliyev, 2014: 86). However, according to the authors, the reason that postgraduate graduates perceive the country image at a lower level in this study is that it is predicted that tourist satisfaction will be more difficult due to the higher the education level, the higher the expectation.

According to the results of the hierarchical regression analysis regarding the effect of the country image (people characteristic, people competence, country characteristic, country competence, environmental management, relationship between countries country characteristics) on MTE, the result is meaningful as a whole. When the tables are

examined based on dimensions, it is seen that people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries have a positive effect on the dimensions of hedonism, novelty, local culture and meaningfulness of MTE.

People characteristics, people competence, environmental management and relationship between countries affect the knowledge dimension positively, while relationship between countries positively affect the involvement. It is possible to say that the relationship between countries affect MTE positively. In addition, in all dimensions of MTE except the meaningfulness dimension, people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries are the most explanatory of the model.

It can be considered that tourism is a labor-intensive sector and being a relational phenomenon (Merinero-Rodríguez & Pulido-Fernandez, 2016) plays a role in the prominence of people characteristics, people competence and relationship between countries. However, in none of the dimensions, the effect of country characteristics and country competence on MTE was not seen. In terms of international tourists, people characteristics and people competence, such as the Turkish people's being hospitable, helpful, friendly, business ethics, are more effective on the MTE than the country's having a developed economy or being democratic.

Demographic variables are used by marketers for promotion and market segmentation. According to these and similar research results, advertising strategies can be developed. Differences in the perceptions of the country image of tourists according to demographic characteristics, except for the gender variable, may require the adoption of differentiation strategies in the in the context of destination marketing to create a positive image.

By focusing on tourism types such as golf tourism and health tourism in tourism promotion activities, an increase in the visits of tourists with high education and income levels to the country can be achieved. Since environmental management does not have an impact on the MTE, it can be ensured that tourism stakeholders, such as tourism directorates, agencies and hotels, provide training to local people and sector employees at regular intervals to raise awareness of tourism and environment.

Restoration and maintenance work of historical values should be done periodically. Since the effect of country image on MTE is known, political, technological, environmental, and human factors in terms of country image should be continuously improved. It is thought that the increase in country image perceptions will positively affect the MTE of the tourist and these experiences will positively affect the post-travel evaluation and word-of-mouth communication.

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The research area consists of international tourists visiting Antalya between May and October 2018. This study is limited to the questions in the survey and the answers given by the participants to the survey. The findings and conclusions of the study are valid only for this study and this sample. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results.

The sample selected for this study was international tourists visited Antalya. Future studies could be developed

with different samples and/or people participating in different activities in different destinations. Finding other activities that are effective in creating MTE would help destination managers in event planning. In this study, the refreshment dimension of MTE was excluded from the scale because it was not appropriate for the structure. In future studies, the scale of MTE could be developed by adding different dimensions such as negative experiences.

Comparative analyses could be made to determine whether there are differences in the formation of MTE for tourists from different countries. By this means, a separate event calendar could be created for each nationality, helping to increase customer satisfaction. MTE can be investigated using different methods such as focus group interviews, in-depth analysis, and observation.

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CRediT author statement

Term	Definition	Author 1	Author 2
Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims	X	
Methodology	Development or design of methodology; creation of models	X	X
Software	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components	X	
Validation	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/ reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs	X	
Formal analysis	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data	X	
Investigation	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection	X	
Resources	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools	X	
Data Curation	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse	X	
Writing - Original Draft	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)	X	
Writing - Review & Editing	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or postpublication stages	X	
Visualization	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation		X
Supervision	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team		X
Project administration	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution	X	X
Funding acquisition	Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication	X	

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