



## Tourism Promotion and Nation Branding

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Nation branding, the management of a nation's image and reputation, has recently emerged as a distinct and attractive research domain with important theoretical and practical implications. Research on the topic and related areas such as destination branding and place branding have typically focused on three key issues: the country-of-origin effects for export products, branding tourist destinations, and acquiring foreign investments. However, as Anholt points out "there is far more to a powerful nation brand image than simply boosting branded exports around the world" (Anholt 2002, 44) and establishing and maintaining a strong and reputable brand image are essential for long-term competitiveness of countries in every domain of business and politics.

In this study we look at the interaction between two important tools of nation brand building – tourism promotion and public diplomacy – and examine their contribution to a positive nation brand image. Our research context is Turkey. Turkish case provides an interesting puzzle to the existing understandings of nation branding. Tourism operates as one of the key drivers of Turkish economy. The country receives a steadily increasing number of tourists every year and around seventy percent of these visitors come from the European Union countries. The government actively promotes Turkey as a tourism destination and utilizes a substantial budget for various promotional activities. However, despite the increasing number of tourists, Turkey's ranking in both the Nation Brand and Tourism indices computed by Anholt-GfK Roper continues to be poor. Moreover, despite the large number of tourists coming from the EU countries and generally high return rates, the share of the EU population opposing Turkey's membership to EU remains high, reaching to 62% in 2006 (Eurobarometer poll). Overall, it appears that tourism promotion and performance do not satisfactorily translate into positive nation brand image and positive public opinion.

In the light of the above puzzle, we investigate Turkey's tourism advertising strategy and application using the data collected through expert interviews and content analysis of parts years' campaigns. We discuss the messages and images conveyed through advertisements and the expert opinions on Turkey's tourism promotion strategy. We identify various positioning and branding problems faced by the country and conclude by offering possible solutions.

### CV

Özlem Sandıkçı is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Bilkent University, Turkey. She has MBA degree from Birmingham University, UK and Ph.D. degree from the Pennsylvania State University, USA. Her research addresses sociocultural dimensions of consumption and focuses on the relationship between globalization, marketing, and culture. Her current research interests include the Islamic consumptionscape, identity-space-consumption interaction, and histories and stories of branding in emerging markets. Her work is published in journals such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Fashion Theory*, *Advances in Consumer Research*, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* as well as in several edited books. In 2003, she received The Franco Nicosia ACR Competitive Paper Award.