

From Brand Personality to Destination Personality: The Case of Greece and Turkey

Kyriakou, D.,

BSc, MBA, MSc in Tourism Management (*University of Surrey*), tel +306978295499, email : dimk21@gmail.com

Aspridis, G.

Assistant Professor at the Department of Project Management, TEI of Larissa, Greece, tel : +302410684544, email : aspridis@teilar.gr.

Abstract: *In today's global, informational economy of rapid change, opportunities and threats arise equally for tourism organisations as well as tourism destinations. Unexploited Emerging Consumer Markets (ECM's) on the one hand, and fragmented, dominated markets in the western world on the other call for a more than ever need for competent and effective management and strategy.*

'As tourism destinations become more substitutable due to increasing competition in global tourism markets, destination personality is seen as a viable metaphor for building destination brands and crafting a unique identity for tourism places' (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido 2001; Crask and Henry 1990; Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002, Triplett 1994 adapted from Ekinci, Hosany, 2006, p 127)

Following this latter, the purpose of our study is firstly to identify and compare the destination personality of Greece and Turkey as perceived by respondents who have visited the country as well as by those who have not and secondly to analyse the relationship between destination personality and respondents' intention to recommend.

The contribution of the study hopefully will provide nutrition to improve the marketing strategy of the destinations and to provide data for further research regarding the perception of destination personality both on the pre-purchase and post-consumption phase.

Keywords: *Destination Branding, Brand Personality, Destination Personality, Tourism, Place Marketing, Consumer Behavior*

1. INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

In today's global, informational economy of rapid change and crisis, opportunities and threats arise equally for tourism organisations as well as tourism destinations. Unexploited emerging consumer markets (ECM's) on the one hand, and fragmented, dominated markets in the western world on the other call for a more than ever need for competent and effective management and strategy.

'As tourism destinations become more substitutable due to increasing competition in global tourism markets, destination personality is seen as a viable metaphor for building destination brands and crafting a unique identity for tourism places' (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido 2001; Crask and Henry 1990; Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002, Triplett 1994 adapted from Ekinci, Hosany, 2006, p 127)

The Middle - East problem, the Syria issue and the North Africa conflicts diverted a great flow of tourists towards the Mediterranean area but it seems that Turkey holidays are proving an increasingly popular option these ultimate years, while Greece has seen a fall in demand, according to tourism specialists. If some reasons could be mentioned for this latter, first of all would be bad press, economic problems, strikes and street clashes that have occurred in Greece over the past year stand only as a few of the reasons that have contributed to its fall in popularity unfortunately at a time when many people are booking their summer holidays. But is this the reality or there is a hidden history behind each destination? Is this now the perfect opportunity for Greece in order to capitalise its tourism product to invest in destination personality, branding and place marketing techniques in the fond of economic crisis and the increasing neighbor competition?

Following this latter, the purpose of our study is firstly to identify and compare the destination personality of Turkey and Greece as perceived by respondents who have visited the country as well as by those who have not and secondly to analyse the relationship between destination personality and respondents' intention to recommend. The contribution of the study hopefully will provide nutrition to improve the marketing strategy of the destinations and to provide data for further research regarding the perception of destination personality both on the pre purchase and post consumption phase.

2. THE DESTINATION PRODUCT

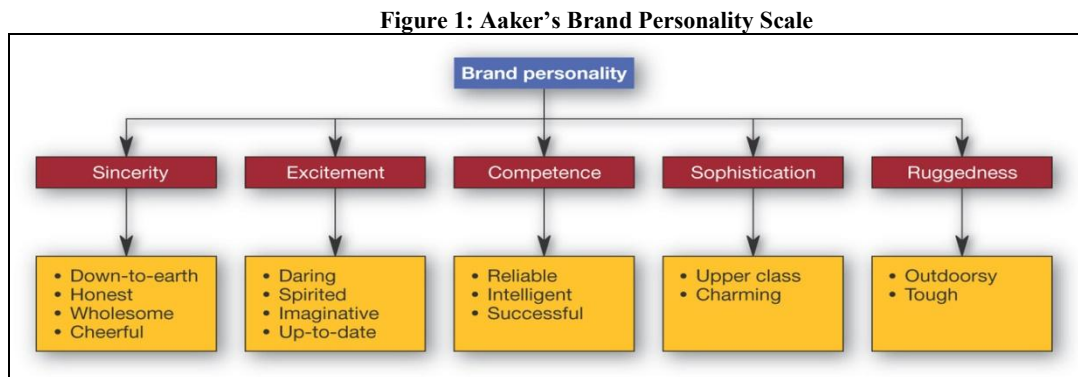
Generally the destination product is considered to be an amalgam of individual products and experiences which contribute to the formation of the overall experience of the area visited (Murphy et al (2000) adapted from Ekinci and Hosany 2006) comprising both tangible and intangible components while being rich in symbolic values and personality traits (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006)

3. AN INSIGHT INTO BRAND PERSONALITY

As we see in Aaker (1997, p. 347 adapted from Ekinci, Hosany, 2006, p. 127 and Diamantopoulos, Smith and Grime, 2004) brand personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a brand like age, gender, socioeconomic class, warmth, sentimentality etc (e.g. feminine Virginia Slims vs masculine Marlboro or sophisticated Guess vs rugged Wrangler) which can help to create a set of unique and favorable associations in consumer memory, and thus build and enhance brand equity (Keller, 1993, Johnson, Soutar, and Sweeney, 2000, Phau and Lau, 2000 adapted from Ekinci, Hosany, 2006).

Moving along, visitors assess the degree of similarity between the personality traits communicated by the product (Plummer 1985) and the personality they wish to project of themselves (Zinkhan, Haytko, and Ward 1996). Analysing this latter and getting in depth, brand personality's origins come from the theories of anthropomorphism by attributing uniquely human characteristics and qualities to nonhuman beings like destinations and symbolism meaning building up iconic representations that carry particular conventional meanings as well as 'Self' theories like Self-concept, Self-congruity and Self-expression (Ekinci et al, 2007; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). In addition, paraphrasing Ekinci and Hosany's work (2006), the whole concept of brand personality demonstrates a number of advantages meaning that utilising in practise brand personality it helps to differentiate brands by increasing trust, preference, loyalty through establishing emotional ties with consumers.

After analyzing the basic theoretical issues regarding brand personality it would be essential at this point to present with its measurement. This can be achieved by using Aaker's brand personality scale which has been used in past research as well as it is considered to be the most comprehensive instrument for measuring brand or product personality (Aaker, 1997 adapted from Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).



Source: Aaker, 1997 adapted from Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007, p 134

4. AN INSIGHT INTO DESTINATION PERSONALITY

Moving along from the above mentioned, destination personality is the set of human characteristics associated with a destination as perceived from a tourist rather than a local resident viewpoint (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006) Examples of destination personality can be :

- Europe: traditional and sophisticated
- Wales: honest, welcoming, romantic, down to earth
- Spain: friendly, family oriented (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002 adapted from Ekinci and Hosany, 2006)

Destination personality as we commented previously has to do with the attribution of visitor's personal traits and characteristics on a destination which can be related with the destination on a direct way like for example, as we see in Aaker (1997 adapted from Ekinci and Hosany's, 2006), citizens of the country, hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, tourist imagery but also in indirect way, as we see in Cai (2002 adapted from Ekinci and Hosany's, 2006), such as value pricing, celebrities of the country, media activities and marketing programmes. In addition, utilising destination personality can leverage the perceived image of a place as well as influence tourists' choice behaviour by emphasising the effect of destination image on intention to recommend which in its own part helps in differentiating the destination product within the high competitive tourism market (Ekinci et al, 2007; Ekinci and Hosany, 2006). After analyzing the basic theoretical issues regarding destination personality it would be essential at this point to present with its measurement.

Figure 2: Ekinci and Hosany's model on Destination Personality



Source: Ekinci and Hosany, 2006, p 135

5. METHODOLOGY

Turning our page now on methodology it would be essential to comment that we conducted a descriptive non probability (convenience sampling) survey through personally administered structured questionnaires among 100 persons of different nationalities covering both men (30,8%) and women (69,1%) with a range of age starting from up to 18 y.o. and reaching over 64 y.o. with an undergraduate or postgraduate educational level. The period of survey was between 15/01/2012 – 15/02/2012 and we utilised as an Attitude Analysis Method the 5 point Likert Scale anchored by 1 = Not Descriptive at all and 5 = Extremely Descriptive rating 12 items with the use of Aaker's five-dimension brand personality scale while our Data Analysis Method was conducted through the use of SPSS. The nature of this study surfaces a number of obstacles related to collected data accurateness as well as for achieving its research goals. One first could be that of researchers must pay particular attention at distinguishing between brand image and brand personality, since, failure to do so, will hinder research progress and result in poor conceptual developments. In addition to this latter the embryonic approach of the relevant subject in Greece both in academic and governmental level presented with a second limitation. A third and final reason, which is beyond the research aims of this study, the overall lack of tourism specialists interest in the field of destination branding and destination personality presenting with poor theoretical background in Greece.

6. ANALYSIS

Getting in depth of our analysis firstly we undertake the side of Turkey and then the side of Greece in order to explore and implement the theory mentioned above and observe the correlations between visitors and non-visitors personal traits with the image created for Greece as a destination.

6.1 The case of Turkey

Commencing from that latter, we could comment that from our sample of 50 visitors and non-visitors that answered the relevant questionnaire regarding Turkey the 63,2% were women and 36,8% were men covering a wide range of ages starting from up 18 yo until 44 yo. From the visitors point of view, the 73,7% of them were influenced or informed regarding Turkey from friends and family while only 10,5% used the internet to get information while the 73.7% followed an independent travel whereas only the 26,3% bought a packaged tour. The main reason for visiting Turkey was leisure (63,2%), travelling with parents (57,9%) and friends (42,1%). If we add in to this that the 57,9% has chosen the city centre for holidays while only the 15,8% chose a small town for their recreation and only the 10,5% chose a mountain resort and the majority of visitors (71%) between up to 20 yo until 25 yo went to Turkey, we can comment that young's people preference means that Turkey has the characteristics of excitement (52,6% of visitors) since all youngsters pursuit a visit there as well as reliability (52,6% of visitors) for having a great time and daring as a destination (52,6%) while only the 42,1% think that Turkey is original. Almost the same opinions rest with people who have not visited Turkey but have an image of what Turkey means to them. For example, as we can observe in the following table which demonstrates the personal traits that were used in the questionnaires regarding Turkey and what visitors and non visitors think about Turkey judging by their personal characteristics, for non-visitors Turkey is still exciting (52,6%) and original (57,9%) although it partly lacks in reliability (36,8%) and partly as a daring (47,4%) destination.

Table 1: Percentages of personal traits for visitors and non-visitors regarding Turkey

TURKEY (Traits)	VISITORS (%)	NON-VISITORS (%)
Reliable	52,6	36,8
Sincere	42,1	47,4
Intelligent	52,6	52,6
Successful	63,2	52,6
Wholesome	42,1	47,4
Exciting	52,6	52,6
Daring	52,6	47,4
Original	42,1	57,9
Spirited	52,6	57,9
Friendly	52,6	42,1
Family oriented	42,1	36,8
Charming	57,9	52,6

Finally, drawing a conclusion to this first part of our analysis regarding Turkey and before we undertake Greece, it would be essential to underline that although the overall feeling of visitors (68,4%) and non-visitors (52,6%) regarding Turkey is positive to very positive as well as the overall image which was really good (visitors: 78,9% and non-visitors: 42,1%) and from people who have visited the country the 68,4% were very satisfied, though, only the 36,8% would be likely to return although the 68,4% of visitors and the 36,8% of non-visitors would likely recommend Turkey as a destination. In addition, and we end with that, we can observe from the following tables the correlation between personal traits of visitors and non-visitors and the destination on the basis of intention to return and to recommend Turkey as a destination attributing characteristics like friendly, spirited and family oriented as well as charming and exciting but not so daring and reliable.

Table 2: Turkey (Means) – Intention to return (Visitors)

TURKEY (MEANS): Likely to return	VISITORS
Reliable	3,11
Sincere	3,26
Intelligent	3,05
Successful	3,74
Wholesome	3,58
Exciting	3,95
Daring	2,89
Original	3,47
Spirited	4,05
Friendly	4,26
Family oriented	3,89
Charming	3,79

Table 3: Turkey (Means) – Intention to recommend (Visitors & Non-Visitors)

TURKEY (MEANS): Likely to recommend	VISITORS & NON-VISITORS
Reliable	3,11
Sincere	3,18
Intelligent	3,11
Successful	3,66
Wholesome	3,45
Exciting	4,21
Daring	3,03
Original	3,79
Spirited	4,13
Friendly	4,24
Family oriented	3,55
Charming	4,16

6.2 The case of Greece

Following the case of Turkey, in this part we will try to compare our findings regarding Turkey with those related to Greece in order to produce a general comparison between Turkey and Greece regarding visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions about those destinations according to their personal traits. Getting in depth from that latter, we could comment that from our sample of 50 visitors and non-visitors that answered the relevant questionnaire regarding Greece the 76,7% were women and 23,3% were men covering a wide range of ages starting from up 20 yo until 44 yo. From the visitors point of view, the 46,2% of them were influenced or informed regarding Greece from friends and family while only 3,8% used the internet to get information. One important factor at this measurement was the influence from movies (11,5%). Continuing with our work, the 61,5% followed an independent travel whereas only the 30,8% bought a packaged tour in contrast with Turkey. The main reason for visiting Greece was leisure (69,2%) although educational trips represented 23,1% while on the other hand travelling with parents and friends was equally 38,5% but also single trips were 11,5% in contrast with Turkey. If we add to this that the 38,5% has chosen the city centre for holidays while only the 19,2% chose a small town for their recreation and 15,4% chose a coastal resort and the majority of visitors (67,3%) between up to 20 yo until 25 yo went to Greece, we can comment that young's people preference means that Greece has the characteristics of successful (76,9% of visitors) since all youngsters pursuit a visit there as well as reliability (53,8% of visitors) for having a great time and not as daring as for a destination (42,3%) as well as exciting (34,6%) while the 50% thinks that Greece is original in contrast with Turkey. On the other hand though, one point that proved to be out of the expected was that the opinions rest with people who have not visited Greece but have an image of what Greece means to them were overwhelming higher from the opinions of visitors in contrast with Turkey. For example, as we can observe in the following table which demonstrates the personal traits that were used in the questionnaires regarding Turkey and what visitors and non visitors think about Greece judging by their personal characteristics, for non-visitors Greece is exciting (50%) and original (50%) but also is reliable (75%) and daring (75%) as a destination.

Table 4: Percentages of personal traits for visitors and non-visitors regarding Greece

GREECE (Traits)	VISITORS (%)	NON-VISITORS (%)
Reliable	53,8	75
Sincere	46,2	75
Intelligent	38,5	50
Successful	76,9	100
Wholesome	50	100
Exciting	34,6	50
Daring	42,3	75
Original	50	50
Spirited	50	50
Friendly	34,6	75
Family oriented	34,6	50
Charming	38,5	50

Finally, drawing a conclusion to this second and last part of our analysis regarding Greece, it would be essential to underline that although the overall feeling of visitors (42,3%) and non-visitors (50%) regarding Greece is positive to very positive as well as the overall image which was really good (visitors: 50% and non-visitors: 100%), from people who have visited the country the 61,5% were very satisfied of which this 61,5% would be likely to return but also the 65,4% of visitors and the 100% of non-visitors would likely recommend Greece as a destination. In addition, and we end with that, we can observe from the following tables the correlation between personal traits of visitors and non-visitors and the destination on the basis of intention to return and to recommend Greece as a destination proving that Greece is considered to reflect and create the image of more personal characteristics of visitors and non-visitors in contrast with Turkey like being successful and charming as well as spirited and original.

Table 5 : Greece (Means) – Intention to return (Visitors)

GREECE (MEANS): Likely to return	VISITORS
Reliable	3,15
Sincere	3,19
Intelligent	3,31
Successful	3,81
Wholesome	3,73
Exciting	3,77
Daring	2,96
Original	3,73
Spirited	3,69
Friendly	3,04
Family oriented	3,42
Charming	3,92

Table 6 : Greece (Means) – Intention to recommend (Visitors & Non-Visitors)

GREECE (MEANS): Likely to recommend	VISITORS & NON-VISITORS
Reliable	3,17
Sincere	3,20
Intelligent	3,40
Successful	3,83
Wholesome	3,63
Exciting	3,70
Daring	2,87
Original	3,73
Spirited	3,63
Friendly	3,07
Family oriented	3,30
Charming	3,87

7. CONCLUSION

‘As tourism destinations become more substitutable due to increasing competition in global tourism markets, destination personality is seen as a viable metaphor for building destination brands and crafting a unique identity for tourism places’ (Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Guido 2001; Crask and Henry 1990; Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002, Triplett 1994 adapted from Ekinici, Hosany, 2006). And as we have shown in our work, although there is a lot of research still to be done on this particular field of interest, there is a correlation between personal traits of visitors and non-visitors and a tourism destination.

Moving along, Greece has a long tradition in tourism and receives more than 14 million tourists a year which means more than one tourist per inhabitant. Greece is proud to offer to its tourists a captivating natural beauty in an ideal and mild climate with long history, numerous archaeological sites, monuments and museums presenting a rich cultural heritage in addition to the exceptional tradition in hospitality and a vibrant and modern lifestyle. Tourism infrastructure was greatly upgraded as a result of hosting the Olympic Games and Greece is now perfectly equipped to meet high accommodation standards. Hotel accommodation in Greece seized the opportunity that Games offered but also the Greek government’s motives and renovated literally almost every room in three and four star category hotels as well as the luxurious category in the wider region of Athens increasing also the number of beds available. Greece is gradually establishing itself as the ideal choice for hosting conventions, international exhibitions and other events as well as for major investments in the tourist industry, such as the development of big hotel complexes or the creation of specialized facilities (e.g. a golf course) attracting specific groups of tourists. In addition, tourism sector promotes employment opportunities (*approximately 700,000 jobs are offered every year adjusting to seasonality*) and plays a decisive role in the regional development.

On the other hand, though, Turkey holidays have become more appealing to consumers, partly as a result of Istanbul being named the European Capital of Culture for 2010 as well as putting forward a scheme towards attracting convention and religion tourism which is focused largely on a variety of historical sites, and on seaside resorts along its Aegean and Mediterranean Sea coasts. In the recent years, Turkey has also become a popular destination for culture, spa, and health care tourism. In 2011, Turkey attracted more than 31.5 million foreign tourists in 2011. Tourism infrastructure was greatly upgraded and Turkey, at least in its capital and coastal zone, is now perfectly equipped to meet high accommodation standards.

The Middle - East problem, the Syria issue and the North Africa conflicts diverted a great flow of tourists towards the Mediterranean area but it seems that Turkey holidays are proving an increasingly popular option these ultimate years, while Greece has seen a fall in demand, according to tourism specialists. Enquiries relating to travel to Turkey this summer for example, are 159 per cent higher than those for Greece. If some reasons could be mentioned for this latter, first of all would be bad press, economic problems, strikes and street clashes that have occurred in Greece over the past year stand only as a few of the reasons that have contributed to its fall in popularity unfortunately at a time when many people are booking their summer holidays. This should become an alarming clock for tourism specialists in Greece since it can lose a significant amount of its only exporting good and a unique opportunity to get back on track combating the economic crisis.

The contribution of the study hopefully will provide nutrition to improve the marketing strategy of the destinations and to provide data for further research regarding the perception of destination personality both on the pre purchase and post consumption phase.

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