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# The Relationship Between Cultural Distance and Destination Choice: An Evaluation of Turkey's Incoming Tourism Using Kogut Singh Formulation

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**Abstract:** There are a number of factors that influence Turkey as a destination choice. Culture is one of them. Culture influences an individual's personality and preferences as it is passed from one society to another through recurring thoughts and emotions. Choices of touristic destinations are made based on personal preferences. Literature shows that individuals prefer regions with similarities to their culture. This study reassesses the authenticity of this. A total of 101 countries have been subjected to Hofstede cultural dimension assessment and listed from culturally closest to Turkey to farthest by using Kogut Singh formulation. The distribution of Turkey's incoming tourists according to nationality has been provided by the data output by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The 91 countries preferring Turkey as a destination have been evaluated in regards to their cultural distance to Turkey. The deduction that, contrary to literature, countries preferring and inclining towards Turkey as destination choice are not amongst those culturally closest to Turkey has been arrived at. Evaluations and suggestions are included in the conclusion of this hereby study.

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is not a concept that can be explained with a single definition. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn put forward 164 different definitions that explained the concept of culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p.1). Today, even though culture is conceptually defined differently by different authors, it can be stated that all said definitions emphasize similar points. Everybody in the world has different cultural identities. Each culture has differences and hence, the notion of intercultural communication exists (Collier and Thomas, 1988, p.100). Boyd and Richardson (1985, p. 2) define culture as knowledge passed from generation to generation through learning and imitation, behavior and values that influence conduct. Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales (2006, p. 23), along with White and Tadesse (2010), put forth that culture is the combination

of ethical, religious and traditional beliefs and values, passed by social groups from one generation to the next. While Peoples and Bailey (1998, p.23) define culture as the social transfer of knowledge and behavior shared by a group, Linton (1936) stresses that culture houses ideas, emotional responses and examples of instinctive behavior within any society, and Harris (1975) emphasizes culture as the recurring ideas, emotions and behavior that influence the characters of individuals in a society.

As can be observed from these definitions, the cultural codes that societies have today, are the sum of values passed on from past to future, both currently being referenced and likely to remain referenced in some form in the future. On the other hand, while cultural difference is defined as the difference value of changes in shared value and norms from country to country (Hofstede, 2001), cultural proximity is, as conveyed by Felbermayer and Taubal (2010, p. 279), a concept related to sharing a mutual identity, a state of belonging to the same group, and the degree of similarity between two cultures. It may be stated easily that such similarity is among the essential factors that effect social and touristic preferences just as much as it effects economic and political life.

### **FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TOURISTS' DESTINATION CHOICES**

Before determining the destination choice process, it is beneficial to visit the concept of destination. Destinations are actual geographic locales such as countries, cities or islands. In contrast to studies where destinations are defined as products, it must be stated that a destination presents a different and far more complicated structure than a product. This is thanks to the fact that destinations include a number of units including and ranging far beyond historical, cultural and geographical attractiveness, lodging, dining and entertainment places (Hsu *et al.*, 2009, p. 290).

Choice of Destination process, which is the process in which tourists collect information on differing and versatile regions and cities, evaluate the alternatives, make comparisons, finalize decision on location and agree to its purchase, has always intrigued researchers (Solomon, 1996; Kotler, 1997; Keating and Kriz, 2008; Ahn *et al.*, 2013).

Even though tourists are influenced by various factors as they figure out their destination, at the end they make the final decision on their own. However, tourists need information in order to make this decision (Tourism Theories, 2012). According to the survey conducted by Travelsat, tourists receive the information they need to make destination choices mostly from friends and acquaintances. Internet comments and travel agencies' recommendations come next (Toposophy, 2011). This means that there are factors that influence tourists during stages of collecting information and evaluation. These factors are separated into internal (motivation, habits, needs, etc.) and external factors (prices, campaigns, climate, historical sites etc.) (Liu, 2014; Dallaert *et al.*, 1998).

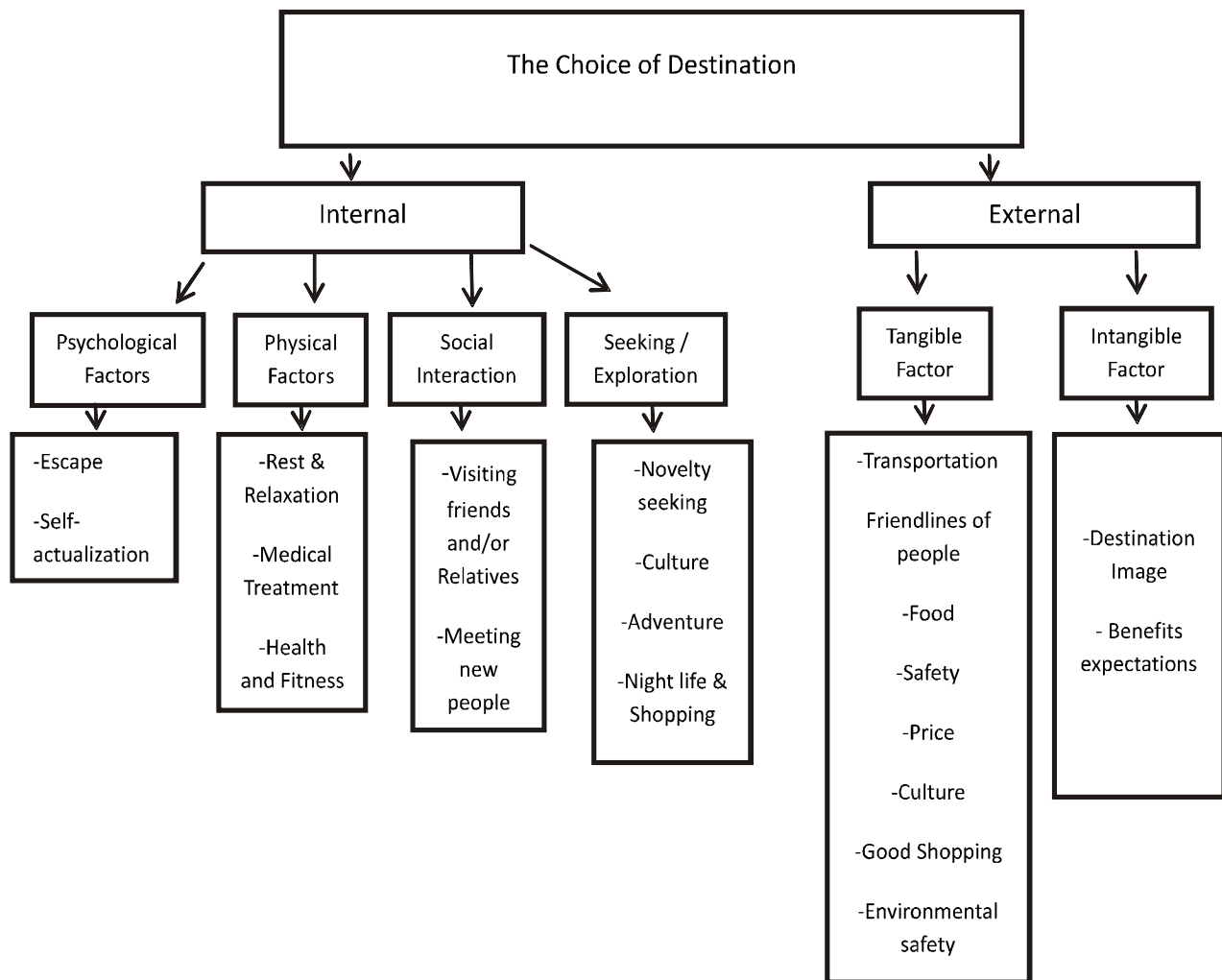
Internal and external factors influence tourists' choices in 4 groups (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007; Decrop and Snelders, 2005;). These groups are,

1. Preference groups (opinions of friends and family, culture, social class etc.)
2. Situational (type of travel, reason for travel, prior knowledge of destination etc.)
3. Marketing and media (advertisements, campaigns, newspapers, fliers etc.)
4. National and international political, economical, technological and social factors.

No factor holds the same significance for all tourists. Significance varies based on the individual, age, sex, marital status and education. Furthermore, an advertisement that has had effect on an individual at some point may no longer do so in the future (Hedlund, 2013, p. 7).

Milman and Pizam (1995) state that, in addition to these factors, the image of the destination, food and security issues are also among factors that influence tourists' choice of destination. Sarma (2004) focuses on the concept of reachability and emphasizes that tourists do not prefer places they cannot reach easily as destinations.

Hsu and partners (2009) summarize the internal and external factors effective in choice of destination with a table;



**Figure 1: Factors That Influence Choice of Destination**

According to Figure 1, there are two basic factors in choice of destination. These are internal and external factors. Internal factors are collected under the 4 main branches of psychological factors, physical factors, social interaction and exploration, whereas external factors are collected under the 2 frames of

tangible and intangible factors. Among all these factors, culture resides under both internal and external factors, influencing tourists' choices of destination.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND DESTINATION CHOICE**

Drawing on various researches in the field, culture has been identified as influential to tourists' destination choice in 4 different ways (Ng *et al.*, 2007, p. 1498). These are;

1. Tourist's national culture
2. The tourist's individual level (internalized) culture
3. A destination's culture
4. The distance between a tourist's home culture and a destination's culture

According to Mooji (2010) and Maheswaran and Shavitt (2000), national culture is influential on consumer behavior; as a matter of fact, one's nationality is the most influential factor on the formation of essential values (Hofstede, 2012). National culture provides significant insight on the preference and behavior of individuals participating in touristic activity. Summarizing the range of research on this topic, Risitano and colleagues (2012) suggest that cultural differences influence tourist behavior, communication between tourists and local people and personnel of destination, tourists' satisfaction, complaints and perception. Farahani and Dogra (2011) add to this by underlining subculture, and work on how touristic motivation can be shaped by subcultural habits as well. Cultural identity is an aspect that is resistant to change and has established itself in societies of the same culture through history (Gsirand Mescoli, 2015, p. 9). Based on this, it can be suggested that individuals of same or similar national cultures may exhibit similar tourist behavior. For example, Dybka (1988) has put forth in his research that Japanese tourists prefer all-inclusive tourism packages whereas German tourists like activities involving sea, sand, sun, golf and skiing.

As Ho (1995, p. 5) states, an individual's assimilated culture may be claimed as being more inclusive of psychological influences than hereditary or national values that are passed down. Each individual may have a different economical, sociological and cultural background, age and sex. Clearly, these do not constitute an individual's psychological values. However, individuals may desire to belong to certain groups with their personal values. Individuals may wish to belong to a group, be accepted and welcomed and avoid alienation. For example, in an experiment on assimilated culture, Chirkov and partners (2003) have asked individuals why they participated in cultural activities. The question has received the externally motivated response: "I would have felt guilty had I not participated." As can be observed from this response, in assimilated culture, individuals have a need to "belong" to the outside (group). In his study, Kozak (2012, p.84) treats this topic under the title "snobbism." Snobbism is when individuals place themselves in others' positions and desire to live as someone else. Indeed, in terms of participation in touristic activities, snobbism is amongst the psychological factors stimulating tourism demand. As a result of celebrities choosing Capri or Sicily in Italy, Santorini or Mykonos in Greece or Barbados and Mexico on the Americas in the summer season, others who follow them may demand these destinations. Other than this, Kozak (2012) has concluded from research that European and Russian tourists travel to Turkey on recommendation from friends and acquaintances. In this manner, the notion that the fashionable is adopted by individuals and that tourists choose "popular" places is underlined. (Downie and Koestner, 2004, p. 306).

Even though tourism is treated as a sum of destination, service, product and activities, it involves various multi-dimensional factors (Hu and Ritchie, 1993) as touristic regions are in serious competition to attract more tourists and increase attractiveness (OECD, 2009, p. 27). As touristic regions may possess natural and historical attractions, there may also be additional attractions such as hotels and activities. Altogether, these form the culture of the region. In its Culture and Local Development report, OECD (2005) names four criteria that form a destination's cultural development. These are;

1. The permanence of cultural activities (For example, New York's Broadway supplies sustainability with theatre and musicals)
2. Local people's participation degree in addition to tourists, (Following on the example of Broadway, following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Mayor of New York had requested that New York residents attend Broadway shows to help keep the economy alive) (Americanrhetoric, 2011)
3. The territory's capacity to produce all the goods and services demanded on this occasion,
4. The interdependence of the cultural activities, taking advantage in this way of "crowding-in" effects.

All of the above criteria contribute to aspects of the destination's cultural attractiveness and demand. Beside cultural activities, historical and geographical attractiveness, another factor contributing to the destination's culture is the region's distance to the tourist's culture. When tourists are asked to choose between similar regions, they tend to prefer the region that's closer and more harmonious to their culture. Besides, as a social factor, the region's local people's cultural closeness or their willingness to embrace a tourist's culture is likely to result in the tourist's emotional closeness to the region's culture and thus, destination preference (Vinh, 2013, p. 203).

There are differing views on the positive and negative effects of cultural distance, a concept that includes the cultural differences between the tourist's home region and host region. As the view that recently-developing tourist types wish to see societies with very different cultures gains weight, tourist groups who do not take the concept of cultural distance into account are seen to prefer mass tourism (Kozak, 2012). The cause of this, according to Pizam and partners (1997) is that tourists may want to feel secure in regions where they do not know or are distant to the language, food, signs and culture. After all, cultural distance may cause misunderstandings and insufficient comprehension. This, in return, may result in stress, nervousness and dissatisfaction for the tourist (Reisinger and Turner, 1998). Tourists may be in an effort to fence off this insecurity by traveling in groups.

There are studies that focus on the influence of cultural distance on destination choice. In most of these studies (Jackson, 2000, Ng *et al.*, 2007, Yang and Wong, 2012), tourists have been observed to prefer regions culturally closest to their own. Unsurprisingly, when the cultural distance is little, tourists are likely to communicate with the local people and feel more at ease. For example, while shopping, a tourist will have better advantage at asking for a lower price or bargaining in a country with a similar culture. Regarding this topic, Martinez- Zarzoso (2003, p.177) has stated that similarity lowers costs.

In time, researchers have contributed to the literature in order to calculate cultural distance. Schwartz (1994) specifies three cultural dimensions: commitment versus autonomy, hierarchy versus equality and mastery versus harmony. However, in the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) model, there are seven dimensions: universalism versus particularism, specificity versus holism, individualism versus

collectivism, interior versus exterior orientation, sequential time versus synchronous, acquired versus inherited status and equality versus hierarchy. Gesteland(1999) creates a model which covers four dimensions: deal-focus versus relationship-focus, formal versus informal cultures, rigid-time versus fluid-time cultures and expressive versus reserved cultures.

On the other hand, Hofstede started analyzing cultural distance with a large database between 1967 and 1973 covering more than 70 countries and found that cultural distance can be statistically gathered into four dimensions. These were power distance (PDI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), masculinity versus femininity (MAS) and uncertainty avoidance (UAI) (Hofstede, 1980). Later, a fifth dimension was added in 1991 based on an international study within Chinese culture. This dimension was long-term/short-term orientation (LTO) (Hofstede, 1991). Most recently, a sixth dimension indulgence versus restraint (IVR) was added to the framework based on Michael Minkov's analysis of the World Values Survey data for 93 countries (G. Hofstede, G. J. Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). Kogut and Singh (1988) supported Hofstede model by developing indicators to calculate cultural distance between countries.

### **HOFSTEDE CULTURE DIMENSIONS AND MEASUREMENTS**

The latest model of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, proposed in order to determine cultural distance between countries and provide comparison opportunities, comprises 6 dimensions. Each dimension is scored 1-100 (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov 2010). The dimensions have been labeled (Itim International);

1. Power Distance (large versus small), related to solutions for the basic problem of human inequality. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.
2. Uncertainty Avoidance (strong versus weak), related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future, risk and uncertainty. Countries exhibiting strong UAI maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unknown behaviour and ideas. Weak UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.
3. Individualism versus Collectivism, related to the integration of individuals into primary groups, degree of individuals to take care of themselves or feeling more comfortable by being a part of a group. A society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "we."
4. Masculinity versus Femininity, related to the division of emotional roles between women and men, masculinity is related to individuals' concern of achievement, assertiveness, competition, ambition. On the other side, femininity into society is related to the focus of life's quality, interpersonal cooperation, compassion and affection.
5. Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past. Societies who score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

6. Indulgence versus Restraint, related to the extent of gratification of human desires for enjoying life. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

Basing their research on Hofstede indicators that were used by various researchers studying the tourism industry, Hsu and Kang (2003) have used Individualism/Collectivism and Power Distance dimensions to compare Asian and Western tourists' perception of service quality, destination image, satisfaction level and intention to return to the region. These authors have revealed that people of Asian culture score high on Power Distance and Collectivism, and have linked this to their high intentions to visit the same destination with tour groups. The same year (2001), a similar study led by Crofts and Litvin has indicated that people from countries with an inclination towards Masculine culture exhibit higher expectations during their travels.

In research conducted by Manrai and Manrai (2011), the influence of each Hofstede culture dimension on tourists' behavior and perception has been studied. In this study, tourist behavior has been treated in three separate phases comprised of pre-travel, travel and post-travel. They have highlighted the influence of Individualism/Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance on social interaction, commercial transaction, duration, itinerary and travel frequency (Risitano *et al.*, 2012).

Hofstede's cultural distance dimensions can be measured with Kogut and Singh (1988) formulation. Within the formulation, the cultural distance between the home country and the host country is measured by calculating the arithmetic median of squared deviations of each country from the host country. The cultural distance between the countries is measured based on Hofstede's social cultural dimensions. Kogut and Singh's (1988) formulation is as follows:

$$CD_j = \sum_{i=1}^4 [(I_{ij} - I_{im})^2 / V_i] / 4$$

The formulation entails:  $CD_j$ : the cultural distance of  $j$  country to host country (Turkey in this study),  $I_{ij}$ : index value for  $j$  country's  $I$  cultural dimension,  $V_i$ : index variant for  $I$  cultural dimension,  $u$ : host country (Turkey in this study),  $i$ : cultural dimensions. Countries with low cultural distance values to host country are deemed culturally close, whereas countries with high cultural distance values are deemed culturally far.

## **GOAL AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

In this study, nationalities and national cultures of tourists visiting Turkey between 2010-2014, based on Ministry of Culture and Tourism's data, have been assessed in terms of their home countries' cultural distance to Turkey. Even though literature research indicates that in terms of national culture, tourists choose countries to which they feel culturally closer, its reality in practice is hereby explored. Besides, as has been stressed in the literature section, a tourist's national culture and cultural distance are different concepts. As a matter of fact, in the case of low tourist levels from countries culturally close to Turkey, this study can provide research industry workers and related public institutes with a vision on planning incentive marketing activities for these countries. Hence, insufficient or mistakenly applied marketing activities can be identified by industry representatives and leaps, promoting culturally close countries to visit Turkey, can

be made. With these arrangements, it can be possible for close cultures to get to know each other, mingle and sustain regular visits in the long run. In this case, the study's hypothesis can be stated as follows:

$H_0$ : *Tourists visiting Turkey arrive from countries that are culturally closest to Turkey.*

### METHOD OF STUDY

Initially, the study exhibits the list of nationalities of tourists who have visited Turkey 2010-2014. Afterwards the Kogut and Singh measurement of Hofstede culture dimensions have been taken to determine countries culturally closest to Turkey. Following this formulation, comparisons have been made and discussed regarding home countries with the highest number of tourists, the lowest number of tourists and culturally closest and farthest countries. The study exhibits quantitative characteristics in regards to collection and enumeration of secondary data.

### FINDINGS OF STUDY

According to Ministry of Culture and Tourism data, the nationalities of tourists visiting Turkey 2010-2014 are as given in the table below:

**Table 1**  
**Nationalities of Tourists Visiting Turkey (2010-2014)**

Rank	Nationality	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	Germany	4 385 263	4 826 315	5 028 745	5 041 323	5 250 036
2	Russian Fed.	3 107 043	3 468 214	3 599 925	4 269 306	4 479 049
3	U. Kingdom	2 673 605	2 582 054	2 456 519	2 509 357	2 600 360
4	Georgia	1 112 193	1 152 661	1 404 882	1 769 447	1 755 289
5	Bulgaria	1 433 970	1 491 561	1 492 073	1 582 912	1 693 591
6	Iran	1 885 097	1 879 304	1 186 343	1 196 801	1 590 664
7	Netherlands	1 073 064	1 222 823	1 273 593	1 312 466	1 303 730
8	France	928 376	1 140 459	1 032 565	1 046 010	1 037 152
9	Iraq	280 328	369 033	533 149	730 639	857 246
10	Greece	670 297	702 017	669 823	703 168	830 841
11	USA	642 768	757 143	771 837	785 971	784 917
12	Italy	671 060	752 238	714 041	731 784	697 360
13	Sweden	447 270	571 917	617 811	692 186	667 551
14	Belgium	543 003	585 860	608 071	651 596	660 857
15	Azerbaijan	486 381	578 685	593 238	630 754	657 684
16	Ukraine	568 227	602 404	634 663	756 187	657 051
17	Austria	500 321	528 966	505 560	518 273	512 339
18	Poland	428 275	486 319	428 440	423 129	510 569
19	Kazakhstan	247 784	315 907	380 046	425 773	437 971
20	Romania	355 144	390 248	385 055	395 214	426 585

*contd. table 1*



<i>Rank</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>
21	Denmark	314 446	369 867	391 312	402 818	408 287
22	Switzerland	271 139	328 825	354 461	379 344	394 458
23	Saudi Arabia	84 934	116 711	175 467	234 220	341 786
24	Norway	299 405	375 502	406 879	412 870	326 292
25	Spain	321 325	300 084	278 164	290 422	283 926
26	Libyan A. J.	60 917	53 562	213 890	264 266	267 501
27	Korea, Rep. of	123 315	149 943	159 084	187 040	248 910
28	Finland	143 204	186 562	195 083	219 044	228 138
29	T.R.N. Cyprus	191 993	203 272	211 828	216 881	227 612
30	Czech Rep.	174 426	223 369	223 986	217 254	226 189
31	Belarus	152 421	123 607	138 007	200 659	223 975
32	Australia	131 685	156 009	164 899	190 457	200 730
33	China	77 142	96 701	114 582	138 876	199 746
34	Canada	152 556	191 903	182 252	199 497	190 116
35	Serbia	113 465	137 934	157 568	169 988	189 396
36	Israel	109 559	79 140	83 740	164 917	188 608
37	Turkmenistan	114 390	137 476	135 168	148 709	180 395
38	Japan	195 404	188 312	203 592	174 150	170 550
39	Lebanon	134 554	137 110	144 491	143 629	161 274
40	Algeria	67 954	84 844	104 489	118 189	160 052
41	Rep. Of Macedonia	115 541	130 648	137 579	140 793	156 138
42	Uzbekistan	68 124	85 011	105 976	129 292	143 354
43	Slovakia	91 765	122 088	126 974	127 455	136 899
44	Kuwait	27 281	41 617	65 167	88 238	133 128
45	Rep. Moldova	96 196	101 124	108 032	111 915	132 338
46	Jordan	96 562	94 914	102 154	102 871	131 329
47	Hungary	90 944	103 918	94 409	97 074	119 977
48	India	63 406	73 731	90 934	95 014	119 503
49	Egypt	61 560	79 665	112 025	107 437	108 762
50	Lithuania	71 992	76 036	69 520	90 180	106 469
51	Ireland	111 065	118 620	110 863	112 665	105 001
52	Tunisia	57 855	63 176	86 595	91 683	100 612
53	Brazil	65 246	89 442	88 903	113 433	91 627
54	Morocco	57 447	68 645	77 884	82 579	89 562
55	Kosovo	46 228	56 411	70 156	78 825	86 272
56	Bosnia Herzegovina	47 361	56 522	61 851	72 086	83 258
57	Kyrgyzstan	35 665	41 197	42 866	64 905	81 941
58	Albania	49 954	53 141	59 565	65 113	76 273

*contd. table 1*

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>
59	Malaysia	32 458	36 222	41 169	55 139	69 968
60	Philippines	31 658	51 610	65 272	59 734	69 229
61	Armenia	69 323	72 393	70 956	73 365	67 198
62	Indonesia	24 349	40 282	56 113	57 385	59 486
63	Latvia	39 102	45 074	45 725	55 058	58 981
64	Estonia	35 136	34 921	35 459	48 537	55 649
65	U.A.E.	30 480	35 579	48 071	52 424	53 736
66	Portugal	53 373	52 319	46 606	45 928	52 851
67	Pakistan	22 540	26 735	28 394	34 170	48 420
68	Stateless	22 897	26 495	31 736	35 501	47 654
69	Croatia	33 563	41 959	47 144	44 058	45 297
70	Argentina	22 255	27 136	28 559	46 729	44 407
71	South Africa	27 177	34 394	40 771	44 798	43 049
72	Mexico	22 908	29 606	31 576	36 617	42 663
73	Slovenia	38 597	41 870	39 899	37 692	41 799
74	Tajikistan	17 737	16 822	22 823	27 174	34 678
75	New Zealand	24 636	26 709	28 278	30 667	32 933
76	Qatar	6 043	7 661	13 971	18 630	29 743
77	Singapore	18 994	20 957	22 206	22 403	29 449
78	Thailand	9 282	11 067	12 211	20 783	26 219
79	Yemen	6 344	8 066	11 826	17 354	26 033
80	Bahrain	9 375	9 712	13 342	16 230	24 305
81	Colombia	7 129	9 853	12 987	21 979	23 378
82	Montenegro	11 610	13 793	16 559	18 838	20 423
83	Chile	8 183	11 964	12 765	15 905	17 451
84	Greek Cypriot Admin.	15 421	16 749	18 924	14 265	15 943
85	Luxembourg	11 262	13 286	14 034	15 733	15 310
86	Bangladesh	2 190	6 168	6 652	8 856	12 706
87	Sudan	6 634	7 458	8 161	9 319	10 714
88	Iceland	6 476	6 156	5 797	4 909	8 691
89	Malta	3 361	5 974	6 397	6 769	7 430
90	Venezuela	6 769	8 557	9 600	11 271	6 975
91	Oceania	2 876	359	4 690	475	672

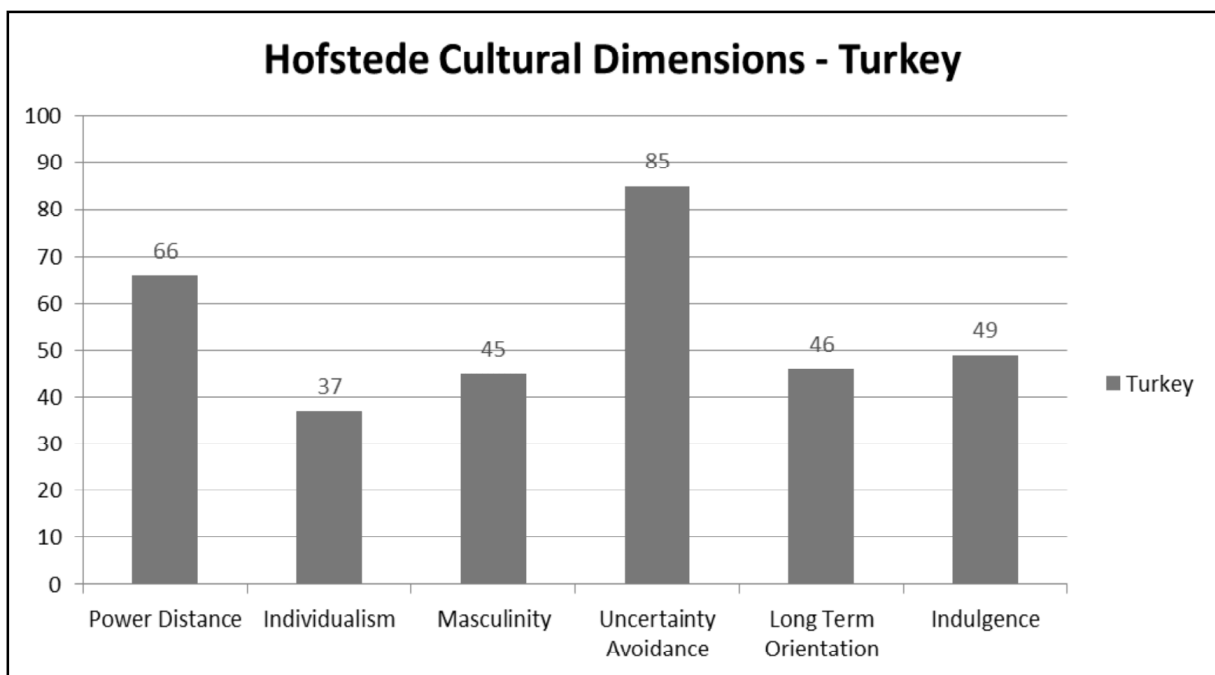
*Source:* Ministry of Culture and Tourism

According to Table 1, listing host countries with most tourists visiting Turkey to least, among the 91 countries listed, the top three nationalities of tourists visiting Turkey between 2010-2014 have remained constant with Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom respectively. Georgia, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Iran and France follow next on the list, whereas Greece occupies the 10<sup>th</sup> slot in 2014 for the first time since

2010. In 2014, Iraq is observed to have entered the top 10 on the list for the first time. Also among the data is that Oceania, Venezuela, Malta, Iceland, Sudan, Luxembourg and Chile remain fixed, whereas there is an increase in the number of tourists from Qatar. In 2014, Montenegro has joined the last 10 countries for the first time. Greek Cyprus is also in the last 10. Between 2010-2014, significant drop in the number of tourists from Japan, Ireland and Armenia is observed, whereas increase in the number of tourists from especially Iraq and Saudi Arabia, followed by South Korea, China and Libya has caused these countries to climb up the list as well.

Following identification of home countries of tourists visiting Turkey, it is necessary to evaluate Turkey's Hofstede cultural dimension scores.

**Table 2: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions – Turkey**



Source: Itim International

Turkey scores high on Power Distance dimension (score of 66) which means that the following characterises the Turkish style: Dependent, hierarchical, superiors often inaccessible and the ideal boss is a father figure. Power is centralized and managers rely on their bosses and on rules. Employees expect to be told what to do. Control is expected and attitude towards managers is formal. Communication is indirect and the information flow is selective. In Individualism & Collectivism; Turkey is a collectivistic society with a score of 37. This means that the “We” is important, people belong to in-groups (families, clans or organisations) who look after each other in exchange for loyalty. Communication is indirect, the harmony of the group has to be maintained and open conflicts are avoided. The relationship has a moral base and this always has priority over task fulfillment. Time must be invested initially to establish a relationship of trust. Feedback is always indirect, including the business environment. In Masculinity, Turkey scores 45 and is on the Feminine side of the scale. This means that the softer aspects of culture such as leveling with

others, consensus, sympathy for the underdog are valued and encouraged. Conflicts are avoided in private and work life and reaching consensus at the end is important. Leisure time is important for Turks, it is the time when the whole family, clan and friends come together to enjoy life. Turkey scores 85 on Uncertainty Avoidance dimension and thus there is a huge need for laws and rules. In order to minimize anxiety, people make use of a lot of rituals. In Long Term Orientation, Turkey's intermediate score of 46 is in the middle of the scale so no dominant cultural preference can be inferred. With an intermediate score of 49, a characteristic corresponding to Indulgence dimension cannot be determined for Turkey (Itim International).

**Table 3**  
**Cultural Distances to Turkey According to Kogut and Singh Measurement**

<i>Countries</i>	<i>P.D.</i>	<i>Indiv.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>U.A.</i>	<i>L.T.O.</i>	<i>Indul.</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey*</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey**</i>
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46	49	0.000	0.000
1 Brazil	69	38	49	76	44	59	0.074	0.074
2 Spain	57	51	42	86	48	44	0.114	0.114
3 Greece	60	35	57	100	45	50	0.169	0.169
4 Croatia	73	33	40	80	58	33	0.172	0.172
5 Uruguay	61	36	38	99	26	53	0.237	0.237
6 Peru	64	16	42	87	25	46	0.303	0.303
7 Suriname	85	47	37	92	-	-	0	0.336
8 Malta	56	59	47	96	47	66	0.344	0.344
9 Serbia	86	25	43	92	52	28	0.375	0.375
10 Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49	48	0.381	0.381
11 Portugal	63	27	31	99	28	33	0.388	0.388
12 Thailand	64	20	34	64	32	45	0.390	0.390
13 Chile	63	23	28	86	31	68	0.397	0.397
14 Kuwait	90	25	40	80	-	-	0	0.443
15 United Arab Emirates	90	25	50	80	-	-	0	0.443
16 Libya	80	38	52	68	23	34	0.444	0.444
17 Jordan	70	30	45	65	16	43	0.465	0.465
18 Argentina	49	46	56	86	20	62	0.466	0.466
19 Syria	80	35	52	60	30	-	0	0.493
20 France	68	71	43	86	63	48	0.498	0.498
21 Romania	90	30	42	90	52	20	0.529	0.529
22 Saudi Arabia	95	25	60	80	36	52	0.530	0.530
23 Poland	68	60	64	93	38	29	0.531	0.531
24 Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69	16	0.543	0.543
25 Zambia	60	35	40	50	30	42	0.572	0.572
26 Tanzania	70	25	40	50	34	38	0.600	0.600
27 Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	70	29	0.607	0.607

*contd. table 3*

*The Relationship Between Cultural Distance and Destination Choice: An Evaluation of Turkey's Incoming...*

	<i>Countries</i>	<i>P.D.</i>	<i>Indiv.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>U.A.</i>	<i>L.T.O.</i>	<i>Indul.</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey*</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey**</i>
28	Iran	58	41	43	59	14	40	0.629	0.629
29	Senegal	70	25	45	55	25	-	0	0.630
30	Luxemburg	40	60	50	70	64	56	0.659	0.659
31	Morocco	70	46	53	68	14	25	0.675	0.675
32	Panama	95	11	44	86	50	-	0	0.682
33	Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47	20	0.718	0.718
34	Malawi	70	30	40	50	-	-	0	0.726
35	Namibia	65	30	40	45	35	-	0	0.785
36	Ukraine	92	25	27	95	55	18	0.834	0.834
37	Sierra Leone	70	20	40	50	-	-	0	0.851
38	Indonesia	78	14	46	48	62	38	0.861	0.861
39	El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20	89	0.869	0.869
40	Kenya	70	25	60	50	-	-	0	0.922
41	Burkina Faso	70	15	50	55	27	18	0.931	0.931
42	Ecuador	78	8	63	67	-	-	0	0.938
43	Ethiopia	70	20	65	55	-	-	0	0.947
44	Taiwan	58	17	45	69	93	49	0.956	0.956
45	Honduras	80	20	40	50	-	-	0	0.956
46	Nepal	65	30	40	40	35	-	0	0.971
47	Belgium	65	75	54	94	82	57	1.002	1.002
48	Russia	93	39	36	95	81	20	1.011	1.011
49	India	77	48	56	40	51	26	1.063	1.063
50	Pakistan	55	14	50	70	50	0	1.082	1.082
51	Colombia	67	13	64	80	13	83	1.092	1.092
52	Iraq	95	30	70	85	25	17	1.108	1.108
53	Fiji	78	14	46	48	-	-	0	1.113
54	Finland	33	63	26	59	38	57	1.122	1.122
55	South Africa	49	65	63	49	34	63	1.125	1.125
56	Ghana	80	15	40	65	4	72	1.126	1.126
57	Guatemala	95	6	37	99	-	-	0	1.147
58	Dominican Republic	65	30	65	45	13	54	1.150	1.150
59	Italy	50	76	70	75	61	30	1.155	1.155
60	Egypt	70	25	45	80	7	4	1.179	1.179
61	Lebanon	75	40	65	50	14	25	1.182	1.182
62	South Korea	60	18	39	85	100	29	1.204	1.204
63	Philippines	94	32	64	44	27	42	1.234	1.234
64	Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	-	-	0	1.235

*contd. table 3*

	<i>Countries</i>	<i>P.D.</i>	<i>Indiv.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>U.A.</i>	<i>L.T.O.</i>	<i>Indul.</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey*</i>	<i>C.D. to Turkey**</i>
65	Nigeria	80	30	60	55	13	84	1.260	1.260
66	Mexico	81	30	69	82	24	97	1.262	1.262
67	Vietnam	70	20	40	30	57	35	1.326	1.326
68	Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	13	80	1.351	1.351
69	Malaysia	100	26	50	36	41	57	1.411	1.411
70	Angola	83	18	20	60	15	83	1.437	1.437
71	Albania	90	20	80	70	61	15	1.437	1.437
72	Israel	13	54	47	81	38	-	0	1.464
73	Germany	35	67	66	65	83	40	1.506	1.506
74	Sri Lanka	80	35	10	45	45	-	0	1.514
75	Estonia	40	60	30	60	82	16	1.536	1.536
76	Canada	39	80	52	48	36	68	1.597	1.597
77	Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82	16	1.634	1.634
78	Mozambique	85	15	38	44	11	80	1.636	1.636
79	Switzerland	34	68	70	58	74	66	1.642	1.642
80	Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	61	17	1.662	1.662
81	Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16	100	1.815	1.815
82	Hungary	46	80	88	82	58	31	1.851	1.851
83	Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42	1.894	1.894
84	Iceland	30	60	10	50	28	67	1.938	1.938
85	Latvia	44	70	9	63	69	13	1.949	1.949
86	Norway	31	69	8	50	35	55	1.998	1.998
87	Cape Verde	75	20	15	40	12	83	2.039	2.039
88	Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67	68	2.045	2.045
89	Austria	11	55	79	70	60	63	2.058	2.058
90	New Zealand	22	79	58	49	33	75	2.188	2.188
91	United States	40	91	62	46	26	68	2.216	2.216
92	Australia	36	90	61	51	21	71	2.225	2.225
93	China	80	20	66	30	87	24	2.226	2.226
94	Ireland	28	70	68	35	24	65	2.347	2.347
95	Bhutan	94	52	32	28	-	-	0	2.483
96	Singapore	74	20	48	8	72	46	2.517	2.517
97	United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	51	69	2.579	2.579
98	Slovakia	100	52	100	51	77	28	2.868	2.868
99	Sweden	31	71	5	29	53	78	3.086	3.086
100	Denmark	18	74	16	23	35	70	3.366	3.366
101	Jamaica	45	39	68	13	-	-	0	3.494

\* Countries with all values available \*\*All countries

Table 3 shows the Kogut and Singh cultural distance measurement, followed by 101 countries' individual cultural distance to Turkey. Some countries do not have all indicator values in place. The table lists together both countries with all values available and countries evaluated with incomplete indicators. The countries have been listed from culturally closest to Turkey to farthest. According to the results, countries culturally closest to Turkey are Spain, Greece, Croatia, Uruguay, Peru, Suriname, Malta, Serbia and Slovenia; whereas the culturally farthest are Jamaica, Denmark, Sweden, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Singapore, Bhutan, Ireland, China and Australia.

## CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT

According to literature, tourists are inclined towards choosing culturally close regions as destinations. In this study, the situation has been explored in terms of tourists visiting Turkey. The list of nationalities of tourists preferring Turkey, based on data provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, has been assessed for 91 countries; their Hofstede cultural distance dimensions have been measured with the formulation by Kogut and Singh and then 101 countries' cultural distances to Turkey have been calculated. In these comparisons, among the home countries with highest number of nationals choosing Turkey; Germany, Netherlands, USA, Italy and the United Kingdom have been identified as fairly culturally distant to Turkey. In this case, hypothesis  $H_0$  has been rejected. Similarly, Iraq and Russia, other home countries with high number of nationals choosing Turkey, are also not culturally close to Turkey. Along with these countries, Turkey is also visited with a comparatively high number of nationals from Iran, Bulgaria, France and Greece. Nationals of these countries are observed to be relatively culturally close to Turkey; furthermore, Greece scores as 3<sup>rd</sup> culturally closest country to Turkey. Thus, Greece ranks in the first 10 in both lists involving cultural distance and highest number of visitors. The facts that the number of tourists from Greece is on a constant and steady rise and that Greece maintains its position are both significant. The most attention grabbing aspect regarding Greece, which has nearly the same cultural distance scores as Turkey, is that the country has scored a perfect 100 on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. In this case, which can be summed up as avoiding risk, uncertainty and sticking to the tried and tested, Turkey should provide comfort for Greek nationals with a system to which they are used and which will make them feel at home. It is important to host these tourists without much interference to their demands and make them feel at home in a manner to which they are accustomed, familiar and at home with. Even though it is inevitable that nationals of Greece, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> culturally closest country to Turkey, will feel at home in Turkey, it is still worth mentioning that keeping this approach towards Greek tourists is favorable for Turkey.

It is attention grabbing that Brazil, the culturally closest country to Turkey ranks only 53<sup>rd</sup> among 91 countries whose nationals visit Turkey. Similarly, Spain, the 2<sup>nd</sup> culturally closest country, ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in terms of its nationals visiting Turkey and ranks lower each year. Croatia, despite being culturally very close to Turkey, ranks only 69<sup>th</sup> in terms of number of tourists. That Slovenia, Portugal and Thailand, despite being culturally close, rank among the last in terms of visiting tourists is a big loss for Turkish tourism. Emergency action plans, campaigns, discounts, collaborations with local agencies and publicity events should be planned and executed for these countries, especially Brazil. After all, tourists from a country with nearly the same cultural perspective among 101 countries, will feel more secure and at ease upon coming across a culture to which they are familiar. This notion must be underlined in publicity events.

There is a noticeable increase in the number of tourists arriving from Libya and Saudi Arabia, two countries that are culturally distant to Turkey. The reason for this increase should be examined, touristic needs and demands identified and appropriate publicity events applied. Especially the fact that both countries have higher scores in Hofstede cultural dimensions' Power Distance dimensions creates a significant difference between the countries. Hence, to the members of these two societies that exhibit a far more authoritative and unequal structure in terms of Power Distance, it will be favorable to approach with respect, make them feel that they are special and important, and arrange tour programs to carpet and jewelry stores that represent magnificence and power.

The final assessment includes China. After all, despite being amongst the 10 culturally farthest countries to Turkey, China comes at 33<sup>rd</sup> among home countries whose nationals visit Turkey and continues to send a rising number of tourists every year. It is clear that Chinese tourists have started to regard Turkey as a tourist destination. In order to accelerate this ascent and increase the number of tourists, China's cultural points of difference from Turkey must be identified. According to Hofstede dimensions, the most significant difference between China and Turkey is measured under Uncertainty Avoidance. China's score in the aspect, where Turkey has scored 85 points, is a rather low one at 30. This portrays that Chinese are less rigid in terms of cultural rules and may be more flexible. Chinese nationals do not fear uncertainty and risk-taking as much as Turkish nationals. At the same time, the individualism dimension is measured rather low in Chinese nationals as well. They have a more collectivist thought structure and lifestyle. When we regard these two dimensions together, organizing tour packages and group programs towards Chinese tourists and providing them with opportunities to travel together will be most suitable. Moreover, including activities like parachuting, balloon travel, rafting and mountain climbing will also form a more colourful program that will provide higher satisfaction to risk-taking Chinese tourists.

Conclusively, the cultural proximity of countries may conflict with travel behavior. What matters the most, along with introducing Turkey and making it attractive to culturally close countries whose nationals do not visit, is making appropriate adjustments for societies that send tourists and yet are culturally distant. On this matter, travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, transportation companies and municipalities must work collaboratively and the necessity of different approaches and conduct that is based on the differences of culture must be explained to all personnel in the field. The path to being a worldwide brand and augmenting the brand value is through remembering that everyone has different needs, demands and cultures that birth these differences and to satisfy everybody.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES IN THE FIELD**

This study is, besides being suitable for a more extensive research with tourist satisfaction and expectation surveys, also available for concentrating on limited regions such as Middle Eastern countries, Mediterranean countries or European countries etc. Factors influencing tourists' destination choices can be researched via surveys and thus, the effect of culture among other options observed. Rival countries can be compared to one another. The cultural distance measurement table that I have created for this particular research can be employed in order to make comparisons and assessments in market searches and marketing strategies within not only the tourism industry but subsectors of trade, industry and service sector as well.



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