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**USING “COMMON MARKETING” STRATEGY ON TOURISM AS AN
ALTERNATIVE APPROACH
AT WEB BASED COUNTRY MARKETING**

ABSTRACT

Web is an information technology which uses frequently for marketing. In some situations common marketing can use such a way to be a successful at web based marketing activities. The aim of this study is to explain the common marketing concept as an alternative approach of web-based country marketing. To reach this aim, first, information about both web based marketing and common marketing concept is given. Second, how common marketing can be an alternative method for successful web based country marketing is described. A questionnaire type survey conducted to including total 396 experts' opinion about web based country marketing. Questionnaire forms were sent to experts by the method of mail sending through internet. Obtained data were evaluated using frequency, percentage, arithmetic average and Anova test. As a result of analysis, a number of conclusions were drawn. Because of its historical background, Turkey has a huge potential in this subject to make cooperation with neighborhood countries especially like Greece, and Bulgaria. In this study, Turkey will be discussed in terms of web based country marketing on tourism dimension as a common marketing perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Country marketing activities on tourism advanced day by day. Many countries try to build a good image and also try to increase the sales of services and goods with successful marketing activities. One of the methods to reach the targets that mentioned above is web based marketing. In some situations common marketing can use such a way to be a successful at web based marketing activities. The internet is playing an increasingly important role in destination marketing. Rapid market growth and intensifying global competition have become important issues in today's tourism. This case study research focuses on exploring the using common marketing strategy on tourism as an alternative approach at web based country marketing.

1. THE WEB

The development of the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) in the 1990s as a means for the global sharing of information and resources has made the traditional marketing practices obsolete (Buhalis, 1998). The World Wide Web started to be used for marketing in 1995 as corporations like Kraft Foods and Proctor & Gamble turned to the internet in an effort to have their products available to millions of potential customers (Han&Mills, 2006:406). In recent years, the development of the internet has increased dramatically and many countries in the world have made efforts to improve their internet services (Wang, 2002:155).

Through the internet, information can be provided instantly to potential customers anywhere in the world, and the customer plays a more active role in the search for information. The ability of the web to facilitate two-way communication is a useful marketing tool. However, marketing on the internet is not limited only to information distribution. It also has direct selling potential. Although direct selling is developing more slowly than the information distribution of the web, the potential for electronic commerce is tremendous. There is no accurate estimate of internet sites and users, but there is a clear trend for all of the major firms in the tourism industry to go online (O'Connor, 1999).

Certainly, the internet has the potential of being a viable tool to accessing these more attractive market segments (Feng, Morrison and Ismail, 2004:44).The internet eliminates handling some sales through telephone hotlines, as well as reducing the costs associated with delivering paper- based brochures and other printed material. (Feng, Morrison & Ismail, 2004:45). Without internet access, it is impossible to create web pages and have effective dialogue with partners or customers (Wiig, 2003:65).

With the continuing growth of the internet and, in particular, the worldwide web (WWW), there now exists a new marketing potential for tourist regions (Cano & Prentice, 1998). Because of this situation, the internet is becoming a prominent component of tourism marketing activities. Partners of tourism industry as accommodation facilities, tour operators, travel agencies, airlines, conference organizers adj. are using the internet and World Wide Web. Travel and tourism services appear to be especially well suited for internet marketing because of their intangibility as well as high price, risk, and involvement levels.

On the demand side, an increasing number of people are using the internet for information search because the World Wide Web provides more in-depth materials and richer content compared with conventional promotional agents. Allows easily attain the knowledge is the other important advantage of internet (Govers & Go, 2003).

Astute marketers realise that continuous growth of tourism is never assured in today's volatile economic, social, political and technological environments. A destination must maintain its competitiveness, but must also have enough flexibility to take full advantage of new opportunities that the external environments present. One such opportunity with abundant potential for destination marketers is information technology (IT), and especially the internet (Feng, Morrison, & Ismail, 2004:44)

Destination promotion is increasingly becoming important in competitive worldwide. Using innovative and well co-ordinated promotion technologies is therefore very important for tourism countries. Taking advantage of new technologies like internet enables destinations to enhance their competitiveness by increasing their visibility, reducing costs and enhancing local co-operation (Buhalis, 2000: 97). Internet is changing the daily lives of individuals, companies and organizations and the way they seek information. Among all of the internet's resources, the WWW functions is the best in advertising and marketing (Wang, 2002:155). The application of the internet plays a very important role within the development of information technology (IT). In general, the internet can be used in two distinct (but not mutually exclusive) ways: first, as a source of data by which the user accesses resources purely to get information; and second, as a means of marketing and facilitating business transactions (Wang, 2002:156).

The tourism sector is intertwined with the development of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT already plays a significant role in tourism. Tourism is one of the most important sectors that apply ICT and one would expect that changes in ICT, particularly the arrival of the internet, to influence the structure of the industry (Wiig, 2003:60). Using new technologies are the only way to manage and market competitive destinations in the future for the benefits of their stakeholders (Hanna & Millar, 1997:469).

A suitable communication strategy should support destination authorities to convey their message and promote environmentally friendly practices locally (Buhalis, 2000:114). The internet may lead to a reduction in distribution costs. Internet makes it possible for a service provider to reach the customer directly through marketing. Internet increases competition between intermediaries (Wiig, 2003:61). The internet is the most effective when used as an advertising and marketing tool.

The decision to "purchase" the destination, that is to visit it, is based on information made available to the tourist. Tourists are tapping into the wealth of destination material on the World Wide Web and using this as a primary source of destination information. The Web

is the new destination marketing battleground and the ideal global multimedia medium channel for promotion of destinations. (<http://is2.lse.ac.uk/asp/aspecis/20000105.pdf>).

The Web continues to be an overwhelmingly significant channel for country information. Convenience, depth of content and breadth are key factors in its success. With numerous and perpetually expanding ways to explore the category of countries, the Web continues to be the leading channel for global travel. By covering every imaginable need of prospective travelers, the Web moves ahead as the prime and only single source for information, advice, socialization and transactions. The Web is now making travel more tangible, personal and accessible through the use of blogs, photo sharing, pod casts and virtual travel. Many visitors are looking to further immerse themselves into the culture they are visiting, with some bypassing traditional hospitality offerings and brands.

Web-based marketing entails using the internet to provide information, to communicate and to conduct transactions. The internet is a ubiquitous information platform, allowing internal and external customers to reduce costs for both firms and customers (Sharmaa and Sheth, 2004:696). The Internet changes the focus of marketing from a “supplier perspective” to a “customer perspective,” that is, reverse marketing. Instead of marketers manufacturing and then seeking orders, manufacturing will only start when the customer orders (Sharmaa and Sheth, 2004:697). Customers are using the Internet to reduce some of their locational dependence. With the Internet, customers are entering an era of “direct information,” as they seek web pages and communicate directly with marketers based on their needs (Sharmaa and Sheth, 2004:700).

The Internet has allowed customers to seek more rapid access to information. Customers have found that traditional communication practices such as mass advertising are very slow and are not ideal for their goals in the ‘knowledge economy’. The Internet has allowed consumers to access pricing data easily (Sharmaa and Sheth, 2004:700).

2. COMMON WEB BASED MARKETING

This can include co-operation among two or more provincial, state, or regional governments in the same market in which they both compete individually but also co-operate against other competitors (Reid, Smith & McCloskey, 2008:581) Recognition of the value of collaboration and partnerships has been driven, in part, by declining tourism marketing budgets in many governments. Traditionally, governments were involved in marketing from a perspective that emphasized process and political priorities, with budgets reflecting the

relative political power of governmental tourism marketing organizations. However, growing fiscal constraints have forced many governments to cutback on marketing budgets (Reid, Smith & McCloskey, 2008:582)

The authors identify five questions that should be answered by an organization before it enters into an alliance: (1) Do we want to partner? (2) Do we have the ability to partner? (3) With whom do we partner? (4) How do we partner? (5) How do we sustain and renew a relationship over time? These questions need clear answers before an organization should proceed with an alliance (Reid, Smith & McCloskey:582).

Web-based destination marketing has become a reality for most DMOs and simultaneously constitutes a great opportunity and a great challenge for these organizations (Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier 2000). As Web-based marketing strategies have become more widely adopted and pressure on DMOs to account for investments in their Web sites has increased, interest in the evaluation of Web sites has grown (Park and Gretzel, 2007: 46).

Four major constructs that describe the nature and dynamics of collaborative destination marketing alliances (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2005). These constructs are: (1) the precondition construct which delineates the economic, social, and environmental conditions for alliance and network formation (2) the motivation construct which attempts to explain why organizations choose to enter into strategic alliances and networks to achieve their specific goals (3) the stage construct which captures the dynamics of collaborative marketing processes and (4) the outcome construct which attempts to describe the consequences of the collaborative marketing activities (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007: 864).

Co-operation between firms through a network or portal is an alternative strategy. The establishment of a common portal for graded tourist resorts may reduce consumers' search costs and lead to increased revenue for individual service providers. But the other side of the coin is that a new destination portal does not have existing customers and needs to build up a new clientele (Wiig, 2003:78).

Will the rapid growth of web-based marketing continue? The growths in web-based marketing efforts are expected to continue because the availability of a ubiquitous information platform will aid marketing efficiencies and effectiveness. The web-based marketers are dependent on their ability to create a community in which internet users will participate, and web-based communities are expected to develop and grow. However, there are constraining factors that may impact the growth; Continued cost and tax advantages and privacy, trust and security (Sharmaa & Sheth, 2004:700).

Establishing a common marketing destination portal is a way to exploit network externalities and build trust, and thus, a mechanism to promote the tourist industry (Wiig, 2003:85)

3. WEB SITE DESIGN

It is very important to consider user interface while designing web sites. The user interface category in the evaluation instrument includes five items: (1) ease of physical access, (2) ease of accessing specific information within the web site (3) standardized format (4) ability to access information in multiple ways and (5) an interface that provides both help and orientation (Wang, 2002:157).

Web sites are primarily designed for introducing and advertising a company's products and / or services. Therefore, business web sites should contain varied and timely information to attract as many users and potential customers as possible. The four items in the category "variety of information" include: (1) simplicity (2) current and reliable information (3) comprehensive coverage and (4) hyperlinks to relevant web sites (Wang, 2002:158).

A new portal needs a booking mechanism for the individual service providers connected with it, links to information sites (so as to provide information), links to air companies (to facilitate the creation of packages), and some sort of arrangements for financial transactions, including electronic signatures and mechanisms for settling disputes. A portal needs to convey the message that its services are to be trusted. It also needs to connect to a number of search engines, otherwise consumers will not be connected. (Wiig, 2003:78).

Internet marketing is a technology-based marketing tool. The technical quality directly influences the performance by not only retaining the characteristics of traditional tools, but also taking full advantage of this medium's unique characteristics (Feng, Morrison and Ismail, 2004:48).

Three main categories are very important for the web; page design; managerial issues; and information content. Page design; restricting the number of colors and restricting the image resolution will also minimize download time. If the page contains too many graphics or photographic quality images, users will not wait until the page appears, but will simply go to another, faster site (Hanna and Millar, 1997:469). The final point relating to page design concerns the page content all contact details, including telephone and fax numbers, should be given in full international format (Hanna and Millar, 1997:470).

The implications for management fall broadly into two categories: a need to keep the information up to date and a need to manage the responses to users who request information. Keeping information current not only involves updating dynamic information, such as the events pages, but also involves changing the page layout to incorporate new features. The other main management concern relates to responding to queries from users of the system. A Visitors' Book was initially established to permit users to provide feedback on the information content which was on offer. The information provided is a vital component of any marketing initiative. After the initial welcome page, photographs of the region were the most popular, followed by contact details for local tourist information centers (Hanna and Millar, 1997:470).

4. BUILDING TOURISM WEBSITE

To facilitate a destination marketing portal, there are at least four reasons for government intervention (Wiig, 2003:77);

- * Direct network externalities,

- * These externalities lead to co-ordination failures. An agent does not take into account that his connection to a network increases the value of the network,

- * Public goods and information failures. The branding of a tourist destination, infrastructure and 'wildlife' are to some extent public goods and need government support. The government should control or guarantee the information provided through, for example, proper standard-setting, dispute resolution mechanisms and secure financial transaction systems.

- * Complementarities and spillovers between pairs of tourist goods or across services (roads and air transport increase the value of accommodation).

Web sites should be evaluated on four factors: technical quality, marketing strategy, web page design and the marketing information (content) provided (Feng, Morrison and Ismail, 2004:46). Web site success factors emerged from the analysis and included a total of nine factors: (1) information quality (2) ease of use (3) responsiveness (4) security/privacy (5) visual appearance (6) trust (7) interactivity (8) personalization and (9) fulfillment (Park and Gretzel, 2007:46).

Some computer programs produce voice and animation to help make the information more tangible and informative, and links to plug-ins should be provided. Secondly, website search features and e-mail connections improve functional value and interactivity by adding personalisation to the information-gathering process. In addition, some other characteristics, like an easily memorable and recognisable website address (URL), availability of non-graphic

versions and limited vertical and horizontal scrolling, all improve the user-friendliness of websites. A series of relevant objective and subjective questions were used to measure this aspect (Feng, Morrison and Ismail, 2004:48).

The Web-based destination marketing system (DMS) has been widely used as a distribution channel and marketing tool by destination marketing organisations (DMOs) at different levels in the promotion and management of tourism destinations (Wang, 2008:55).

Successful Web-marketing strategies require the integration and co-ordination of three complementary aspects of the Internet marketing efforts: website features, website-promotion strategies and customer relationship management (CRM) programmes (Wang and Fesenmaier 2006:239). Successful development and management of a DMS require the following critical factors: (i) website function design (ii) website promotion (iii) website performance measurement (iv) Web marketing impact assessment and (v) organisation technology environment (Wang, 2008:56).

Morrison (2003) argues that when building a tourism website, be it commercial or public, incorporating branding throughout the website is critical so that the consumers never forget what site they are visiting. The image conveying what a brand represents on the website preconditions the consumers' expectation for the quality they desire. This study adopts Morrison's website evaluation guideline (2003) as follows (Gyehee, Liping & O'Leary, 2006:819).

The graphic/verbal images are consistent with the slogan.

The image elements do not contradict each other.

The text messages reflect the unique selling propositions (USP) delivered by the slogan.

The target markets are clearly stated.

The text is clear and readable and the pages are clean and uncluttered.

The graphics and pictures are effective and aesthetically appealing.

Pictures are available to reinforce the text content.

Rich images are used to improve the aesthetics of the site.

Color is used to enhance the site's visual appeal.

The site is appealing overall.

There is evidence that the internet has substantial potential to allow country tourism organizations to build both long- and short-term branding strategies (Gyehee, Liping & O'Leary, 2006:826-827).

Today some countries realizing the common marketing activities. One of successful example of joint marketing strategy has been developed by The Visegrad Group

(www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php). It reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have been part of a single civilization sharing cultural and intellectual values and common roots in diverse religious traditions, which they wish to preserve and further strengthen.

Another example of Valga-Valka is unique as it is the only twin town on the Estonian-Latvian border. Due to the lack of common tourism promotion initiatives this aspect is seriously under-communicated. Joint planning and strategies enable to maximize the potential of the twin town as a tourism destination. It is also vital to distinguish Valga and Valka from the other small towns in South Estonia and North Latvia, and also from the rest of the small towns in both of the countries (Kerem, 2006:2).

Last example is the ATF (ASEAN Tourism Forum) is a cooperative regional effort to promote the Southeast Asian region as one tourist destination and support the individual tourism pursuits of the ASEAN's 10-member nations; Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam http://www.atfdavao.com/images/tourism_map.pdf.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Data and Sampling Procedure

The population of this survey is an expert who has their own e-mail address. In this context, the groups of experts are hotel and travel agency managers, tourism academicians and tourism experts who work in The Ministry of Culture and Tourism. To be able to reach the target group a number of data base were used.

5. 2. The Survey Instrument

Questionnaire has been chosen as a survey instrument. First question of survey is consist nineteen suggestions about applicability of web based common country marketing.

Second, third and fourth questions group in questionnaire were prepared to describe the design of the contents of web based common country marketing. The sixth question was related to determination of prospected problems with regard to web based common country marketing.

Seventh question was related to the aim of the preparing of web site. Also, eighth question was aimed to determinate controllers of related web pages. Ninth question was related to determinate of suitability of some multinational destinations for Turkey. Other questions in questionnaire form were prepared to identified demographic features of respondents.

Questionnaire form was prepared by using Microsoft access program on Microsoft front pages. The questionnaire form released to respondents on <http://www.burokongre.gazi.edu.tr/anket> on 01 July 2008 – 01 September 2008. A explanatory letter was sent to respondents to guide to them to respond questions correctly. The 396 questionnaires were responded by 79 academic staff, 61 tourism experts and 256 tourism general managers on the tourism industry.

5.3. Survey Findings

The profile of the respondents are given in Table 1. The total number of respondents is 396. Of the respondents 83,1% were male and 16,9% female. Only a small proportion of respondents had not continued after their primary and high school education. A Significant number had attained relatively high levels of academic training; two years associated degree and university qualifications (54,5%).

In this context, 64.6% of the participants were private sector managers, 19.9% were academics and 15.4% were experts employed in the Headquarters and affiliated units of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Similarly, 93.9% of the participants reported that they had been in their jobs for more than three years; only 5.3 % said that they had been working for 1-3 years. Thus, the participation in the questionnaire of those with a high level of professional experience, and who had a long period of working in the same profession, can be regarded as a significant factor in increasing the validity of the questionnaire.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

<i>Profile Variables</i>	n	%
<i>Gender</i>	396	
Male	329	83,1
Female	67	16,9
<i>Occupation</i>	396	
Private sector managers	256	64,6

Lecturers	79	19,9
Professionals	61	15,4
<i>Education Level</i>	396	
Primary/high school	48	12,1
University degree	216	54,5
Master/PhD degree	132	33,3
<i>Duration of work</i>	396	
Less than one year	-	-
1-3 year	24	6,1
More than 3 years	372	93,9

Table 2: Statements of respondents about the web-based common country marketing

	Statements	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Provides easiness to reach the information	4,62	,708	396
2	Contributes to promote countries	4,57	,770	396
3	Contributes time advantage to reach the information	4,50	,837	396
4	Provides advantage to marketing of tourism establishments of countries	4,45	,770	396
5	Provides advantage to create a powerful country trademark	4,37	,884	396
6	Contributes to increase the tourism demand to countries	4,36	,812	396
7	Contributes to marketing of tourism values of countries.	4,34	,891	396
8	Provides advantage to create a trademark for tourism products of the countries.	4,30	,905	392
9	Provides advantage to create a powerful city trademark	4,29	,833	392
10	Provides cost advantage	4,28	1,019	392
11	Contributes to create positive country image	4,26	,952	388
12	Increases the countries' competitive advantage	4,20	1,021	388
13	Contributes to strengthen of positive image	4,18	,943	392
14	Provides advantage to create a powerful regional trademark	4,16	,941	384
15	Contributes to create positive city image	4,13	1,008	392
16	Provides advantage to create a powerful tourism company trademark	4,10	,991	392

17	Contributes to create positive regional image	4,04	1,011	392
18	Contributes to form package tour programs	3,98	1,099	392
19	Contributes to remove the negative country image	3,94	1,130	392

1: Definitely disagree , 2: Disagree, 3: Neither disagree nor agree, 4; Agree 5 Definitely agree

Nineteen propositions were developed to identify the potential contributions of the internet-based common country marketing, and the participation level of the respondents regarding the propositions was identified by means of a five-item Likert scale. These propositions were developed with an eye to identifying the main framework regarding the country's image, branding, and how to obtain a competitive advantage. Results are given in Table 2 in order of the arithmetical average. As understood from the table, the participation level of the respondents in predetermined propositions was found to be quite high. This indicates that the participants agree to a considerable extent that internet-based common country marketing is effective in branding, providing competitive advantage and in creating a positive image of the country.

Table 3: Statements of respondents about Web site Features related with the web-based common country marketing

	Web site Features	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Attraction information	4,729	0,685	384
2	Cultural information	4,663	0,685	392
3	Historical information	4,663	0,685	392
4	Maps/driving directions	4,663	0,770	392
5	Communication information	4,656	0,705	384
6	Accommodation information	4,582	0,948	392
7	Photograph and video gallery	4,582	0,769	392
8	Multilingual capabilities	4,571	0,834	392
9	Food & Beverage information	4,531	0,824	392
10	Themed products	4,531	0,773	392
11	Events calendar	4,438	0,789	384
12	Links to related pages	4,412	0,883	388
13	Date last updated	4,392	0,916	388
14	Weather forecast	4,388	0,877	392

15	Travel guides / brochures	4,347	1,032	392
16	Important communication information	4,327	0,902	392
17	Frequently asked questions	4,327	0,946	392
18	Shopping information	4,265	0,933	392
19	Exchange rates	4,260	0,821	384
20	Online information request form	4,258	1,069	388
21	Tour information	4,186	1,107	388
22	Price information	4,163	1,096	392
23	Brochure request form	4,155	0,989	388
24	Downloading service	4,072	0,999	388
25	Things to do in countries	4,043	1,062	376
26	Links to countries institutions pages	4,031	1,041	388
27	Dictionary	3,990	1,071	388
28	Updated news	3,918	1,096	392
29	Statistical information	3,865	1,097	384
30	Banner Advertisement	3,474	1,311	388

1: Definitely unimportant , 2:Unimportant, 3:Neither important nor unimportant, 4:Important, 5: Very important

Respondents' views regarding features that need to be available on the website, to be used for internet-based common country marketing, were identified by using the expressions in Table 3 above. To this end, a five-item Likert scale was used and the results were put in order of the arithmetical average. While an overall consensus was reached regarding the inclusion of the 30 identified propositions on their website, they attached more importance to the features of the information-oriented web page. In this context, they suggested that facilities such as advertisements, statistical information and news are less important than the other criteria, though still of above average importance. Thus, it can be said that the availability of information regarding touristic attractions is a must.

Table 4: Statements of respondents about Web site Promotion Techniques

	Web site promotion techniques	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Include web address in e-mail signature	4,773	0,667	388
2	Participate in newsgroup	4,660	0,786	388
3	Keywords for search engines	4,526	0,802	388

4	Billboards	4,485	0,852	388
5	Register with search engines	4,479	0,925	388
6	TV commercials	4,423	,861	388
7	Radio commercials	4,299	0,888	388
8	Newspaper advertisement	4,175	0,954	388
9	Direct marketing through e-mail list	4,072	1,009	384
10	Banner advertisement exchange	4,042	1,137	388
11	Include web address in organization's print materials	3,856	0,986	384

1: Definitely not important, 2: Not important, 3: Does not matter, 4: Important, 5: Very important

The promotion of the website, by applying the right instruments for the right audience, is as important as the content design of the website. In this context, 11 promotional propositions were developed and the opinions of the questionnaire participants were identified by using the five-item Likert scale. Examining Table 4, it can be seen that internet-oriented promotional are regarded as more important than other traditional promotional instruments. Therefore, the use of the internet-oriented publicity tools at the first stage must be established as a strategy.

Table 5: Statements of respondents about using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Programs related with web site

	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Programs	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Secure transactions	4,786	0,559	392
2	Privacy policy	4,680	0,755	388
3	Web seal certificate	4,612	0,695	392
4	Opportunity to gather data about visitors and analyzing them	4,371	0,902	388
5	Highlight special offers	4,330	0,895	388
6	E-mail newsletters	4,276	0,844	392
7	Incentive programs	4,245	0,835	392
8	Interactive tools	4,175	0,886	388

9	Customer loyalty programs	4,134	0,950	382
10	Informing the changes to members	4,052	0,990	388
11	Personalization/customization	4,041	1,060	392
12	Cross-selling/up selling opportunities	3,781	1,093	384

1: Definitely not important, 2: Not important, 3:Does not matter, 4:Important, 5: Very important

Establishing customer loyalty and ensuring effective security are important for customer relations management to the extent that the use of the internet, the content of the website and the promotion of the product to the audience are important for common country promotion. Respondents' views regarding these matters were identified by using a five-item Likert scale which is composed of 12 expressions. The analysis results showed that the security of the internet site was found to be of the highest importance. This fact must be regarded as normal when considering the importance of the internet for its users, and the precautions required towards ensuring their security.

Table 6: Statements of respondents about factors which are related to build up strategy of web-based common country marketing

	Factors	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Transportation infrastructure	4,337	0,981	380
2	Accommodation infrastructure	4,281	0,988	384
3	Geographical closeness	3,792	1,119	384
4	History	3,698	1,244	384
5	Cultural similarity	3,385	1,279	384
6	Tourism product similarity	3,323	1,305	384
7	Religion	2,792	1,276	384

1: Definitely not important, 2: Not important, 3:Does not matter, 4:Important, 5: Very important

The importance level of the factors effective in the countries' identifying strategies regarding internet-based common marketing activities is identified by using the five-item Likert scale. Factors such as the transportation and accommodation infrastructure and proximity come to the fore in terms of the strategy. The factor of religion is assessed with the least effectiveness in identifying the strategy.

Table 7: Statements of respondents about potential problems which are related to build up strategy of web-based common country marketing for Turkey

	Factors	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Image	4,663	0,687	356
2	Security	4,638	0,771	376
3	Terror	4,479	0,980	384
4	Economics	3,811	1,183	380
5	Tourism product	3,768	1,374	380
6	Culture	3,537	1,346	380
7	History	3,484	1,452	380
8	Politics	3,479	1,352	376
9	Geographical location	3,263	1,440	380
10	European Union	3,253	1,307	380
11	Language	3,228	1,262	368
12	Religion	3,042	1,347	380

1: Definitely not important, 2: Not important, 3:Does not matter, 4:Important, 5: Very important

Twelve propositions were developed in order to identify the likely challenges to be met by Turkey in establishing an internet-based common country marketing strategy, and the respondents were asked for their relevant views. Factors that can be said to be of particular importance to Turkey such as “image, security, terror and economy” were noted as factors that might negatively affect Turkey’s web-based common marketing initiatives. On the other hand, other factors like geographical location, being a member of the European Union, language and religion are found to be the least effective factors in relation to the common activities to be carried out in this context. The ordering of these factors among themselves might suggest that Turkey is distinct from other European countries in this aspect.

ANOVA analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant relation (0.05) between the importance level attributed by participants regarding probable challenges to be met by Turkey and their professions, and the results are presented in Table.... Based on the assessment of the results in Table 8, it can be said that there is no significant difference between the respondents’ professions and ‘Terror’ and ‘Image’, which

are referred to as the probable challenges to be met by Turkey in web-based common country marketing. In other words, members of all professions have a common view that these two factors constitute a challenge for Turkey. A significant relationship was found between the other probable challenges to be met and respondent professions. To explain the difference, the Tukey test was administered and as a consequence it can be said that out of the abovementioned three professions, experts employed in the public sector have a more optimistic approach when assessing the factors in comparison to the others. It was also noted that sector managers responded in a more pessimistic way than the others towards the twelve factors that might be challenging. It can be explained by the fact that the sector is fragile in the face of negative events and is quickly affected, and it has gone through the devastating consequences of such events and situation many times.

Table 8: Relationship between occupation of respondents and potential problems which are related to build up strategy of web-based common country marketing for Turkey

Factors	Occupation	n	\bar{X}	σ	F	P	significant
Geographical location	1	71	3,11	1,214	16,443	,000	yes
	2	256	3,50	1,471			
	3	53	2,32	1,140			
Culture	1	71	3,28	1,256	27,166	,000	yes
	2	256	3,83	1,272			
	3	53	2,47	1,219			
Religion	1	71	3,06	1,145	4,344	,014	yes
	2	256	3,14	1,438			
	3	53	2,55	1,011			
History	1	71	3,23	1,532	31,279	,000	yes
	2	256	3,81	1,312			
	3	53	2,25	1,254			
Tourism product	1	71	3,23	1,289	11,983	,000	yes
	2	256	4,00	1,325			
	3	53	3,38	1,444			
European Union	1	71	3,37	1,111	8,346	,000	yes
	2	256	3,36	1,365			

	3	53	2,58	1,064			
Language	1	71	3,17	,910	3,269	,039	yes
	2	244	3,33	1,354			
	3	53	2,85	1,167			
Politics	1	71	3,82	1,125	3,568	,029	yes
	2	252	3,44	1,380			
	3	53	3,19	1,429			
Economics	1	71	3,93	1,087	8,875	,000	yes
	2	256	3,91	1,158			
	3	53	3,19	1,257			
Terror	1	73	4,51	,835	,598	,551	no
	2	256	4,50	,954			
	3	55	4,35	1,250			
Security	1	65	4,57	,790	3,453	,033	yes
	2	256	4,70	,679			
	3	55	4,42	1,066			
Image	1	61	4,67	,473	2,591	,076	no
	2	252	4,70	,609			
	3	43	4,44	1,181			

1: Lecturers 2: Private sector managers 3: Professionals

Whereas 31.2% of the questionnaire respondents said that content of the website regarding internet-based common country marketing needs to be tourism-oriented only, 64.8% of them expressed the view that other subjects such as education and the economy must be covered as well. The proportion of those expressing a neutral view is 3.3 %. According to this result, it can be suggested that common country-based web page content must be prepared with a wide content covering not only tourism, but also other subjects such as the economy and education.

Who must undertake the preparation of the website oriented towards internet-based common country marketing? Who should take overall responsibility for the updating, monitoring and maintenance of the site? These questions are of critical importance. Results of the propositions presented to the respondents in relation to the subject are presented in Table 9. The table shows that more than half of the participants (58.2%) hold the view that the

websites must be prepared with the coordination of appropriate public, private and professional organizations, rather than by any single institution or organization. This might be due to the view that initiatives should not be taken only by one institution in this matter, such activities require an interdisciplinary approach.

Table 9: Statements of respondents about by which organizations should be prepared common country marketing web site

Common country marketing web site:	n	%
should be designed under the coordination of public institutions of countries responsible from tourism	44	12,1
should be designed under the coordination of unions	28	7,7
should be designed under the coordination of professional promotion companies	72	19,8
all of above	212	58,2
Other	8	2,2

Within the scope of the internet-based common country marketing, an attempt was made to develop destination descriptions that seemed possible for Turkey. The participants were asked about the eligibility of these destinations and the relevant results are shown in Table 10. Of identified destinations, while the one which seems to be the most eligible for Turkey is the Mediterranean; Mesopotamia and Peace destinations were found to be less applicable than the others. It is also noteworthy that the participants expressed the view that Turkey must be addressed within the scope of the common destination denominator "Metropolitan" cities.

Table 10: Availability of some descriptions of Web based common country marketing definitions for Turkey

	Some definitions of Web based common country marketing destinations	\bar{X}	σ	n
1	Mediterranean destination (Turkey, Cyprus, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Greece, Italy, Spain etc.)	4,330	0,962	376

2	Mega city destination (Istanbul, New York, Tokyo, Peking, Mexico City, Dubai, New Delhi, Paris, Moscow, Sao Paulo, Boniness Aires etc.)	4,253	1,057	380
3	Aegean destination (Turkey, Greece etc.)	4,232	1,022	380
4	Religion destination (Turkey, Israel, Vatican, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Hindustani etc.)	4,000	1,178	376
5	Black sea destination (Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia etc.)	3,968	1,033	372
6	Balkans destination (Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina etc.)	3,957	1,102	376
7	Silk road destination (China, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Hindustani, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Greece etc.)	3,796	1,189	372
8	Capitals destination (London, Paris, Ankara, New York, Delhi, Tokyo, etc.)	3,707	1,283	368
9	Spoken Turkish language countries destination (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan etc.)	3,606	1,241	376
10	Mesopotamia destination (Turkey, Iraq, Syria etc.)	3,467	1,324	368
11	Peace destination (Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Israel etc.)	3,446	1,157	368

1: Definitely not suitable, 2: Not suitable, 3:Does not matter, 4:Suitable, 5: Very suitable

The average of the responses given by the group of experts including public and private sector employees and academicians regarding propositions introduced in relation to the web-based probable common destinations for Turkey reveals that the smallest value is 3,46, above mean value, and they stressed the applicability of all identified destinations. However, it must be also assessed whether given responses differ significantly in statistical terms depending on the respondent's profession. To this end, whether participants are statistically significant (0.05) in terms of the importance level they attach to the destination

depending on their respective profession was identified by means of a one-way ANOVA test. No significant difference was found in terms of professions for destinations other than the Silk Road, the Aegean and Turkish-speaking countries. In other words, groups of professionals are equivalent to a high degree in relation to their assessment of the destinations. The holding of proximal views by different groups of professionals implies a positive perspective in terms of accomplishing destinations.

Table 11: Relationship between occupation of respondents and some definitions of Web based common country marketing destinations for Turkey

Destinations	Occupation	n	\bar{X}	σ	F	p	significant
Silk road destination	1	75	4,01	1,033	3,512	,031	yes
	2	244	3,80	1,159			
	3	53	3,45	1,449			
Mesopotamia destination	1	75	3,37	1,282	1,538	,216	no
	2	240	3,55	1,260			
	3	53	3,23	1,625			
Balkans destination	1	71	3,99	,819	1,477	,230	no
	2	252	4,00	1,086			
	3	53	3,72	1,446			
Mediterranean destination	1	75	4,25	,790	,667	,514	no
	2	248	4,37	,939			
	3	53	4,25	1,254			
Black sea destination	1	75	3,93	,949	,407	,666	no
	2	244	4,00	1,026			
	3	53	3,87	1,177			
Aegean destination	1	75	3,88	,854	5,841	,003	yes
	2	252	4,33	,994			
	3	53	4,25	1,254			
Peace destination	1	75	3,25	,917	1,402	,247	no
	2	244	3,51	1,171			

	3	49	3,43	1,384			
Mega city destination	1	75	4,20	1,013	,378	,686	no
	2	252	4,29	1,063			
	3	53	4,17	1,105			
Capitals destination	1	75	3,40	1,090	2,714	,068	no
	2	244	3,79	1,310			
	3	49	3,78	1,373			
Religion destination	1	71	3,87	1,055	,677	,509	no
	2	252	4,05	1,149			
	3	53	3,94	1,447			
Spoken Turkish language countries destination	1	75	3,69	1,039	4,230	,015	yes
	2	248	3,68	1,231			
	3	53	3,15	1,460			

1: Lecturers 2: Private sector managers 3: Professionals

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The rapid development in information technologies provides outstanding facilities for consumers in terms of access to knowledge. The fact that the internet has turned into an integral part of life today is obvious in almost all areas. Without doubt, one of the sectors where the internet is commonly used by consumers is in tourism. Now, thanks to the internet, people can obtain in advance more rapid and cheaper information about places to be visited. Providing consumers with the necessary information related to their journey is boosting the importance of internet-oriented destination marketing due to such facilities as directing their journey towards certain regions and places and presenting related destinations in one single web media. Tourists make their decisions to travel on the basis of not only one specific country or region, but also on any particular item with touristic value, specific region or countries. Hence, as the planning of the destination is dealt with in the geographical context, it can gain the status of being the common concern of more than one country due to factors of the geographical location. Since this subject is of interest to more than one country, a profoundly specific structure and functioning where touristic attractions of different countries are publicized in the internet media must be in question.

Within this context, a number of different touristic products and destinations can be described depending on various criteria. Many different destinations could be devised

including neighboring countries, capital cities, civilizations, or the Silk Road. Web-based common country marketing undoubtedly provides outstanding advantages for countries in creating touristic brand names and values and an increase in tourist movements. In the present study an attempt was made to clarify the applicability of web-based common destination marketing of such countries on the basis of expert views.

A questionnaire regarding the subject was applied to a group of 396, composed of sector managers, academicians and experts employed in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and following basic findings were noted:

The approach of internet-based common country marketing is regarded as an applicable approach by participants. It can be said that the realization of such a new approach will introduce notable advantages for countries to expand on information about their own touristic attractions to a larger population, and thus to increase the brand values of their touristic products via a common database. In this way, the countries involved will be able to redefine destinations and products. Previously addressed by travel agencies within the scope of tour programs, this subject will turn into a subject matter which will be addressed by countries within scope of macro tourism strategies, and bring about an approach of creating more global products in tourism. The inclusion of international tourism organizations in this approach is also important in terms of the applicability of this strategy. Parallel and cooperative activities carried out between the various enterprises can be seen as a model for country marketing.

The participants expressed the view that a website to be developed within the scope of internet-based common country marketing must be equipped with sufficient information for the visitors. In particular, items such as “touristic attractions”, “cultural, historical information”, and “map” and “communication” information were noted as the first five items to be considered. The content-related information that must be available in the web site such as “dictionary”, “actual news”, “statistical information”, “advertisements” were reported to be less important than the others.

It was emphasized that internet-based promotional instruments are found to be more effective than the others for the publicity and advertisement of the web page, to be prepared.

In web-based marketing, the security standards and customer relations approach of the websites must be taken into consideration alongside the content and design of the sites. In this context, the participants emphasized that security and customer-oriented confidentiality must be kept at the forefront in connection with transactions to be carried out via web pages.

In identifying a web-based multinational touristic product creation, the participants were asked for their opinion regarding the importance level of factors such as transportation, accommodation and geographical proximity. As a result, transportation and the accommodation infrastructure were indicated as the most important factors. The factor with the lowest importance is emphasized as being that of religious similarity. It may be concluded that convening of the countries with the same religion is not a prerequisite in the forming of a common destination. Moreover the, convening of differing religions would increase the attraction and thus contribute to the effectiveness of common country marketing.

Subjects such as image, security and terror were noted as the most important items for Turkey within the scope of the web-based common country marketing activities. These items imply weak points for Turkey within the framework of its foreign promotion to a certain extent. As a consequence of the aforementioned common marketing activities, the negative effects of factors such as “security”, “terror” and “image” must be taken into account and dealt with.

Of immense importance is the responsibility for forming and maintaining a web-based common marketing strategy. This must be the task of a cooperative unit composed of public, private and non-governmental organizations, rather than one single institution.

Of eleven destinations to be identified within the approach of common country marketing, in which Turkey has a place, suggested that Mediterranean, Metropolitan, Aegean and Belief destinations should have a higher priority than the others. As for the destinations Turkey can form with the countries to its south, they were reported to be less applicable. This conclusion can be explained when considering the decisive effects of the political and economic handicaps borne by those countries. The higher priority given to the Aegean and Mediterranean destinations in terms of applicability can be explained by the fact that the countries covered under these destinations have similar touristic attractions as well as economic and political stability and a higher development level within the sector.

To ensure an effective implementation of the web-based common country marketing, decision makers in the tourism sector in all of the countries involved need to be informed about the subject and encouraged to sustain a cooperative approach.

Since the subject is of interest to more than one country, not only the content of the website to be created, but also the storing, revising and updating of the information must be settled within a coordinated unit; this must be formed. Furthermore, basic standards to be adhered to by every country must be identified.

Additionally, cooperation on the matter of publicity for the common website to be created will accelerate the achievement of the target.

Concerning web-based common country marketing activities, initiatives must be taken in a way so as to include more than one country, and activities must be planned on the basis of relevant results.

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