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THE IMAGE OF JAPANESE PEOPLE IN THE EYES OF TURKISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract:

People have several images towards foreign people from different nationalities. These images may be shaped by several factors. Turkish students have an image of Japanese people in their minds. This study aims to understand the image of Japanese people in the eyes of Turkish university students. A survey was carried out on 400 students from Selcuk University to understand their impressions about Japanese people. Results of the study indicate that university students have a favorable image towards Japanese people. Results of this study also show that the most favorable aspects of Japanese people according to the participants are their diligence, smiling characteristic, advanced level of technology.

Keywords:

Japanese people, image, university students

1-Introduction*

In different places of the world, the people who are the members of the different cultures have various cognitive perceptions about foreign countries and develop different images. Some of the main reasons of this are ordered: increasing the usage of foreign products, becoming widespread and increasing the effect of international media, getting easy and becoming frequent of international travelling, because of migrations increasing of replacement and settlements and the exceeding limits effect of internet (Gelibolu, 2015: 27).

There are images of a nation which have been formed in the both eyes of the foreign countries' citizens and own country's citizens. These images can be differentiated. These images which have positive and negative features can be changed in time.

The Japanese people images in the eyes of Turkish citizens have been formed by the effect of several factors. The communication between Japanese people and Turkish people, films and books about Japanese people, the presentation of Japanese people in Turkish media, the quality of Japanese brands, touristic and business trips, diplomatic relations between both of the countries have influenced the formation of these images.

There are few studies related the image of Japanese people in Turkey. In this study, the image of Japanese people in the eyes of Turkish students have been investigated.

2-Theoretical Framework

The term "image" is defined as "the organized representation of an object in an individual's cognitive system". The essence of an image is the perceived character of the object to which it refers the individual's conception of what the object is like (Kelman, 1965: 24). The 'object' can be a product, brand or nation. Image researchers have considered the way in which cognitive and affective components contribute to image formation (Martinez and Alvarez, 2010: 750).

Nation image is a nebulous concept that has different meanings and interpretations. The formation of nation image is a complicated process in which different perspectives interact with each other, while self perception, i.e. how a nation sees or believes itself, takes a dominant role (Fan, 2008: 5).

According to Li and Chitty (2009: 1-8) national image can be divided into the categories of perceived and projected images. Perceived images of nations can be described as the pictures of other nations in the minds of people from the perspective of social psychology. Projected images may shaped by media representations of a given nation.

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Many countries undertake the management of their national image. For example, in the past the Chinese government has undertaken a number of proactive steps to improve the national image of China (Zhang and Meadows, 2012: 78). According to Fayomi and his friends (2015: 181) image making is an essential feature of a nation's foreign policy.

Japan has been universally regarded as the pre-eminently successful economy in the World. After 1970s, Western World has been keen on learning how the secrets of the Japanese economical miracle (Suvanto, 2001: 1).

Many academic studies that have been conducted about the images of Japanese people and Japan all around the world. These studies have been conducted by different disciplines' perspectives. It can be told that the Japanese people image and the Japan image are interacted with each others. The Japanese people have an important role on the forming of Japan image. Besides, it can be also told that the characteristics of the country are effective on the forming of Japanese people image.

According to the results of a study (Ishii et al., 2015: 114), Japan was perceived more favorably than China and South Korea. The results of Japan having a more positive image than Korea and China are also evidenced by the number of respondents wanting to visit Japan (25.4%) more than Korea (9.2%) or China (18.6%).

There are a lot of motivations behind the decision of the most tourist to visit a country. The findings of a study showed that Indonesian people's intention to visit Japan is influenced after they consume (sushi and/or sashimi) Japanese food (Cahyanti et al., 2014: 80). It can be considered that Japanese food culture may also play an important role in forming Japanese image.

The images of Japanese people may be shaped by the effect of their traditions, personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, successes, physical appearances.

3-Methodology

In this study field survey method was used. A face-to face questionnaire was conducted on 400 undergraduate students from Selcuk University in April, 2015. Selcuk University, which began its educational endeavors in 1975, is one of the leading universities of Turkey with a population of about 80 thousand people (<http://www.studyinturkey.gov.tr>).

Questionnaire includes 23 questions. 3 open ended questions and 2 closed end questions were asked and also 16 judgements on Japanese people were presented to the participants to determine their attitudes and behaviors. There are 2 questions to determine the genders and faculties of the students in the questionnaire.

In the study random sampling method was used. Data were analyzed by using several statistical tests.

4-Findings

In this part of the study the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, their perceptions and impressions about Japanese people are presented.

4.1.The Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participants are the undergraduate students who attend to 18 faculties of Selcuk University. 50.2 % of the participants are female students and 49.8 of them are male students.

4.2.The Perceptions of the Participants about Japanese People

In this part the first things that come to the minds of the participants when they hear Japanese people are presented. Also the most favorable and unfavorable aspects of Japanese people according to these students are examined in this part.

4.2.1. The First Things that Come to the Minds of the Participants When They Hear About “Japanese People”

To determine the perceptions of participants they are asked to tell the first thing when they hear about “Japanese people”.

Table 1: The First Things that Come to the Minds of the Students When They Hear About “Japanese People”

First thing that comes to the minds	N	%
Slant eyed people	125	32
Technology	90	23
Diligence	36	9.2
Japanese food	20	5.1
Short people	14	3.6
Cartoons	13	3.3
The atomic bombing of Japanese cities	12	3.1
Martial arts	9	2.3
Travel-loving people	8	2.0
Lovely people	6	1.5
Respect	6	1.5
Traditional culture and costumes	6	1.5
Similarities of Japanese people to each other	5	1.3
Japanese fish	5	1.3
Capital Tokyo	4	1.0
Others	32	8.2
Total	391	100

Among the first things that come to the minds of respondents when they hear about Japanese people are ranked as “Slant eyed people” with 32 percent, “technology” with 23 percent and “diligence” with 9.2 percent.

4.2.2.The Most Favorable and Unfavorable Aspects of Japanese People According to the Respondents

Respondents have been asked to declare the most favorable and unfavorable aspects of Japanese people according to them.

Table 2: The Most Favorable Aspects of Japanese People According to the Participants

	N	%
Diligence	99	26.1
Being smiling	66	17.4
Being advanced in technology	63	16.6
Being disciplined	20	5.3
Being respectful	20	5.3
Being advanced in science	18	4.7
Being helpful	13	3.4
Being travelers	10	2.6
Display honorable behaviours	8	2.1
Their patriotism	6	1.6
Commitment to traditions	6	1.6
Tend to be curious	6	1.6
Their slanted eyes	6	1.6
Tend to read a lot of books	4	1.1
Being productive	4	1.1
Having self-confidence	4	1.1
Others	27	7.1
Total	380	100

When the participants were asked what is the most favorable aspect of Japanese people they answered as: 26.1 percent are diligence, 17.4 percent are smiling, 16.6 percent are being advanced in technology, 5.3 percent are being disciplined, 5.3 percent are being respectful, 4.7 percent are being advanced in science, 3.4 percent are being helpful, 2.6 percent are being travelers, 2.1 percent are display honorable behaviours, 1.6 percent are their patriotism, 1.6 percent are commitment to traditions, 1.6 percent are tend to be curious, 1.6 percent are their slanted eyes, 1.1 percent are tend to read a lot of books, 1.1 percent are being productive, 1.1 percent are having self-confidence, 7.1 percent are others.

Table 3: The Most Unfavorable Aspects of Japanese People According to the Participants

	N	%
Food culture	50	15.7
Being ultra nationalists	31	9.7
No negative aspect	20	6.3
Being short people	19	6.0
Working too much	18	5.6
Being more traditionalists	18	5.6
Tough temperament	17	5.3
Extremely punctual people	13	4.1
Selfishness	13	4.1
To give less importance to cleanliness	13	4.1
Their language difficult to understand	10	3.1
Being asocial	8	2.5
Giving more value to money	8	2.5
Their slanted eyes	7	2.2
Vindictiveness	7	2.2
Babbling	7	2.2
Insincerity	7	2.2
Others	49	15.4
Total	319	100

When the participants were asked what is the most unfavorable aspect of Japanese people they answered as: 15.7 percent are food culture, 9.7 percent are being ultra nationalist, 6.3 percent are no negative aspect, 6.0 percent are being short people, 5.6 percent are working too much, 5.3 percent are tough temperament, 4.1 percent are extremely punctual people, 4.1 percent are selfishness, 4.1 percent are to give less importance to cleanliness, 3.1 percent are their language difficulty, 2.5 percent are being asocial, 2.5 percent are giving more value to money, 2.2 percent are their slanted eyes, 2.2 percent are vindictiveness, 2.2 percent are babbling, 2.2 percent are insincerity, 15.4 percent are others.

4.2.3. Attitudes, Judgements and Behaviours towards Japanese People

A question was asked to the students who participated the survey whether they have ever communicated with a Japanese or not.

Table 4: Communication with Japanese People

Have you ever communicated with a Japanese?	N	%
Yes	150	37.6
No	249	62.4
Total	399	100

The 37.6 percent of respondents stated that they have communicated with a Japanese before and 62.4 percent of them stated that they have never communicated with a Japanese before.

Table 5: The Desire to Communicate with Japanese People

Would you like to communicate with a Japanese?	N	%
Yes	316	79.6
No	30	7.5
Indecisive	51	12.8
Total	397	100

The 79.6 percent of the respondents would like to communicate with a Japanese, the 7.5 percent of them would not like to communicate with a Japanese and 12.9 percent of them are indecisive to communicate with a Japanese.

To determine the attitudes of respondents to Japanese people, 16 judgements have been presented to them and their participation level has been determined.

Table 6: The Mean Scores of the Judgements on Japanese People

Judgements about Japanese People	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Japanese people are advanced level of technology a lot	397	4.65	,71
Japanese people are advanced level of science a lot.	395	4.63	,66
Japanese people take so many photographs.	394	4.53	,80
Japanese people travel a lot.	397	4.43	2,14
Sumo wrestling, Judo, karate, aikido are national sports of Japanese people.	396	4.41	,88
Japanese people read book a lot.	397	4.41	2,69
Japanese people are short.	396	4.17	1,01
Japanese people are traditionalist.	397	4.09	1,00
Most of Japanese people eat sushi.	398	4.08	,98
Japanese people are not fat.	397	4.08	1,05
The products made by Japanese are quality.	396	3.97	1,18

Japanese people are honorable.	397	3.94	,98
I love Japanese people.	392	3.86	1,05
Japanese people are fond of computer games a lot.	394	3.70	1,12
Japanese people love Turkish people.	400	3.68	1,07
Japanese people watch cartoons a lot.	396	3.59	1,05

It is understood that the participants have agreed in a high level to all judgements when the mean scores were examined. However, the most agreed judgement with the mean score of 4.65 is “Japanese people are advanced level of technology”. After this judgement, the others are ordered as: “Japanese people are advanced level of science a lot” with the mean score of 4.63 and “Japanese people take so many photographs” with the mean score of 4.53.

The least agreed judgement of the participants is “Japanese people watch cartoons a lot” with the mean score of 3.59. The following judgements are “Japanese people love Turkish people” with the mean score of 3.68 and “Japanese people are fond of computer games a lot” with the mean score of 3.70.

5-Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the images of Japanese people in the eyes of Turkish university students have been shaped by their traditions, personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, successes, physical appearances. These factors may be considered as the factors which determine the image of a nation.

The first things that come to the minds of the participants when they hear about “Japanese people” are “slanted eyes”, “technology” and “diligence”. It can be said that the Japanese people have one of the most advanced technology and they are diligent society in the world.

The most favorable aspects of Japanese people according to the participants are their diligence, smiling characteristic, advanced level of technology. Being disciplined and respectful are also the other favorable aspects of Japanese people according to the participants.

The most unfavorable aspects of Japanese people according to the participants are their food culture, being ultra nationalists and being short people. The 6.3 percent of the participants stated that there is no negative aspects of Japanese people.

Approximately 40 percent of university students have communicated with a Japanese person. 80 percent of the students would like to communicate with a Japanese person. This situation shows that Turkish university students are willing to communicate with Japanese people.

The most agreed judgements of participants on Japanese people are their advanced level of technology and science and their habits of taking photograph. The least agreed judgements are listed as “Japanese people watch cartoons a lot”, “Japanese people love Turkish people” and “Japanese people are fond of computer games”

As a general result of this study, it is seen that the Turkish university students have positive attitudes and judgements about Japanese people. The Japanese people have been mostly perceived with their positive aspects and the Turkish university students lean towards communication with Japanese people.

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