The Role of Image in International Relations: A Field Survey about the Image of Turkish Republic of North Cyprus in Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract

Image, as a simple explanation, is an idea and the value judgments of a target audience on a specific country, nation, subject or a product. It is how the audience shape the publicity in their mind\(^1\). Beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions shape the individual’s thoughts and by the light of it, image is the cluster of meanings that are shaped in minds by which, are heard, told and remembered. This explanation shows that – image is formed by many factors, and behaviours of the individuals are effected by the objects\(^2\). An other main principle of image is; when they are established once, it is too difficult to change.

After a perception process, image of a person, company or a brand in the memory of an individuals is shaped. Personal judgements on many things like subjects, individuals, objects etc. become the main component of perception process. Besides that, the cultural environments, political structure, history, etc. are the other components\(^3\). And at that point, of course, we should not forget the role of media in shaping the public opinion and image making.

Image has great effect on “country image” too. Human nature, social and cultural richness, economic structure, democracy and human rights in the country, international relations of the country, technical developments, business – globalisation of business, history of the country, responsibilities to the environment and tourism, etc. are some of the factors that have great roles in developing the country image\(^4\). And on the other hand, the country image has great influence on attracting the foreign investment, increasing the number of the tourists that visit the country, taking supportive political decisions in international areas.

“Image” is also used as a tool of international public relations. In promoting a country as a whole image is inevitably subject to where the reality exists. According to Signitzer and Coombs, the geographical location, history, economy, cultural and touristic values of a country cannot be fiction and in the context of mutual advantage,\(^5\)

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the aim of the international PR is to develop sympathy and cooperation between nationalities⁵.

According to Kunczik, images of certain nations, however right or wrong they might be, develop through a very complex communication process involving varied information sources. The process starts with one's experiences in early life; in school; in children's books, fairytale and other leisure literature; the theatre and so on, and may include accounts by relatives, acquaintances, and friends. But radio and TV transmissions of international programs, newspapers and magazines, cultural exchange programs, sports, books, news services, and so on are probably the strongest image shapers⁶. And especially in today's world the role of media in shaping the public opinion and image making is great than all of it. As a part of a social system and democratic process of a country, media has great role and influence on public and development of the public opinion.

In the light of these view, this article will focus on the prevalence of image in international relations and the image of North Cyprus in Kyrgyzstan. A field survey will be done among the politicians of KG Republic and the Kyrgyz people, and through their point of view the image of North Cyprus in KG will be criticised. Besides that, Kyrgyz media and its influence on developing public opinion and the role of image making will also be analyzed in the article, and criticized by searching the newspapers which are published in Kyrgyzstan. This analyze will be done according to the crucial dates of TRNC and will be conducted in terms of content analysis.