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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECT AND SOFT POWER: A CONCEPTUAL COMPARISON

ÜLKE ORİJİNİ ETKİSİ VE YUMUŞAK GÜÇ: KAVRAMSAL BİR KARŞILAŞTIRMA

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Abstract

The *"Country of Origin Effect"* has been discussed in the marketing literature for almost 60 years, and *"Soft Power"* has been discussed in the international relations literature for 25 years. In this research, the similar and different aspects of these two concepts, which have their roots in two different disciplines, are conceptually examined. It is understood that the two concepts have a lot in common and may even affect each other theoretically. As a result, it can be said that marketing principles should be applied in *"Soft Power"* applications, and the country's *"Soft Power"* capacity in other countries should be considered in foreign trade activities.

Keywords: Country of Origin Effect, Soft Power, Comparison, Marketing, International Relations

Özet

Ülke orijini etkisi pazarlama literatüründe neredeyse 60, yumuşak güç ise uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe 25 yıldır tartışılan kavramlardır. Bu araştırmada, kökleri iki farklı disiplinde bulunan bu iki kavramın benzer ve farklı yönleri kavramsal olarak incelenmiştir. Her iki kavram arasında oldukça fazla ortak nokta olduğu, hatta teorik olarak birbirlerini etkileyebilecekleri anlaşılmaktadır. Netice itibariyle yumuşak güç uygulamalarında pazarlama ilkelerine başvurulmasının, dış ticaret faaliyetlerinde ise ülkenin diğer ülkelerdeki yumuşak güç kapasitesinin dikkate alınması gerektiği söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ülke Orijini Etkisi, Yumuşak Güç, Karşılaştırma, Pazarlama, Uluslararası İlişkiler

INTRODUCTION

"Soft Power" is a country's culture, history, economic power, etc., in general. It can be defined as the power to make other countries do what they want and persuade them through resources (Nye, 2004). In other words, unlike hard power, *"Soft Power"* consists of elements that appeal to people's feelings, thoughts, and perceptions.

Although it is stated that Schooler first defined the *"Country of Origin Effect"* in 1965 (Cited by: Kurtuluş & Bozbay, 2011; Mauraya & Gupta, 2015), its observable emergence can be traced back to the First World War. With Germany losing the war, it can be said that *"Made in Germany"* has become a phrase used by consumers in many parts of the world to distinguish the product to be punished (Morello, 1984). Therefore, it can be said that the *"Country of Origin Effect"* is affected by the decisions made by the countries regarding their foreign policies. This framework can cause voluntary economic reactions from consumers in other countries. From this point of view, it can be said that the *"Country of Origin Effect"* affects *"Soft Power"*.

This research aims to reveal the common and different points of the *"Country of Origin Effect"* and *"Soft Power"* concepts. A qualitative comparison approach has been applied throughout the analysis process. In light of the findings, it is discussed the benefits of considering these concepts from two disciplines in an interdisciplinary manner.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Country of Origin Effect

The *"Country of Origin Effect"* can be defined as the general thoughts and attitudes of the individual towards the goods and services produced by certain countries and the effect of these thoughts on the purchasing decision (Özer & Dovganiuc, 2013; Şentürk, 2017). Different cultures, histories, and even the political systems and economic situations of other countries can impact consumers' purchasing decisions (Teo et al., 2011). Although many studies examine different dimensions of the subject in the literature, it is said that Schooler did the first of them in 1965 (Cited by: Kurtuluş & Bozbay, 2011; Mauraya & Gupta, 2015). According to Schooler, the country's name following the phrase *"made in"* affects the consumer acceptance and success of the product in international markets (Cited by: Beyaz, 2012). It should be noted that the concepts of the *"Country of Origin Effect"* and country image are used synonymously in the literature. In some studies, the concept is defined only as *"made in effect"* (Yaraş, 2009; Şentürk, 2017).

Some countries are identified with a set of goods and services they have produced. In such cases, consumers can use their purchasing preferences to favor these countries (Özçelik & Torlak, 2011). Furthermore, studies show that the goods and services produced by developed countries are evaluated more positively than developing countries (Kurtulus & Bozbay, 2011). Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the *"Country of Origin Effect"* is also a result of the country's level of development. In addition, it is also said in the literature that the high

level of positive *"Country of Origin Effect"* perception that some countries have plays a deterrent role for other countries to enter some markets (Wang & Lamb, 1983).

Various researchers have suggested different numbers of dimensions for the *"Country of Origin Effect"*. One of the significant studies in the literature is made by Roth and Romeo (1992), who assert that the concept has three dimensions: innovativeness, design, prestige, and craftsmanship. This model is product-oriented, as the names of the dimensions suggest. On the other hand, Paremesweran and Pisharodi (1992), who tried to explain the issue with a country-oriented approach, argue that there is a three-dimensional structure including the country's general image and the image of the country's products and the specific product image. As a result, it is impossible to discuss the *"Country of Origin Effect"* independently of the image that the country creates in the minds of consumers in other countries. On the other hand, Usunier (2006) argues that the *"Country of Origin Effect"* is structurally composed of stereotypes and cognitive and emotional components (Godey, 2012). That shows that the consumer's subjective evaluations also effectively perceive the *"Country of Origin Effect"*.

There are also some criticisms about the studies in the literature on the *"Country of Origin Effect"*. It is claimed that especially the affective component of attitude is neglected. Therefore, historical, cultural, and ethnic relations between countries and humanitarian aid levels should also be considered influential for consumers' decision-making processes (Şentürk, 2017).

A country's export items and the countries to which it exports the most can give a partial idea about the perception of the global country-of-origin's effect on the products produced by that country. The countries Turkey exports the most are European countries (54.2%), followed by Middle Eastern countries (17%). When the export data of Turkey as of 2022 are analyzed, it is noteworthy that the exported goods are mostly finished and semi-finished products suitable for industrial use. These products are followed by natural resources such as metals and minerals and various textile products (TUIK, 2022). Undoubtedly, differences in production competence, physical distance, and cultural differences in trade approach are also effective in these results. However, as it is understood from the data obtained, there is a positive perception of Turkey's close geography towards the industrial products produced.

Soft Power

"Soft Power" was first mentioned by Joseph S. Nye in 1990 in his book *"Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power."* In his study titled *"Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics"* Nye discussed the subject broadly in 2004. Nye (2004) defines *"Soft Power"* *"as the ability to get what one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment"*. In other words, *"Soft Power"* can be defined as the effect of one country making another country do something indirectly (Çevik, 2019). Although the name of the concept is

referred to as Nye, the subject was previously mentioned by other researchers. For example, in 1948, Morgenthau discussed the importance of the existence of resources such as national character, national morale, and quality of diplomacy. In 1981, the concept was discussed by Gilpin within the framework of psychological and immeasurable states of power, such as public morale and the virtue of political leadership (Yapıcı, 2015).

Conceptually, *"Soft Power"* is a strategy for influencing and manipulating the target country's public opinion and establishing a partnership for mutual benefit in the short and long term (Cwiek-Karpowicz, 2012). In other words, *"Soft Power"* can be considered a set of attraction and persuasion designed to cooperate with another country, consisting of a country's values, culture, and policies (Pamment, 2014). On the other hand, Nye (2011) states that *"Soft Power"* depends on the state's actions and its reliability level.

Factors such as "*culture and history, values, domestic and foreign policies followed by states, institutions, economic development, and development in science and art are among the crucial sources of Soft Power"* (Kalathil, 2011). Written and visual media, universities, non-governmental organizations, and multinational enterprises are the actors in creating *"Soft Power"* (Karagül, 2013). That is to say, *"Soft Power"* uses symbolic appeals and cultural ties (Henne, 2022). It can be said that the issue will come to the fore day by day, especially considering the ease of transmission and cost-effectiveness of the *"Soft Power"* produced from these sources through communication technologies.

For example, the *#BringBackOurGirls* protests for rescuing girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria 2014 went over with a bang globally. Another example is the *#SomeoneTellCNN* from Kenya. The protest against the identification of Kenya as a *"House of Terror"* by CNN before Obama's visit turned into an essential movement in the international arena (Adeiza & Howard, 2017). From this point of view, it can be said that citizens can also produce *"Soft Power"* resources and can turn into a global reaction through social media.

The Republic of Turkey also systematically tries to gain and improve *"Soft Power"* resources. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, all institutions and organizations interested in promotional activities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academic circles strive to produce the country's *"Soft Power"* in interaction (Çavuş, 2012; Karagül, 2013). It is stated that culture, civilization, history, tourism and sports, cinema-TV series industry, economy and trade, aids, associations and foundations, education, and students are the *"Soft Power"* elements of Turkey (Boztaş, 2019).

Currently, it is seen that Turkey has attached particular importance to humanitarian aid and development aid in foreign relations in recent years. The Republic of Turkey has a strong network of public and non-governmental organizations to manage foreign aid operations. By mobilizing these opportunities, Turkey is trying to position itself as a benevolent state in the international arena and to gain *"Soft Power"* (Çevik, 2019). The open-door policy implemented by Turkey during the Syrian Civil War and undertaking the mediator role between Russia and Ukraine for the grain crisis that emerged due to the Russia-Ukraine War can also be considered a result of this approach. In addition, Turkey is named as the country that provided the most humanitarian aid in 2021 compared to its gross national product

according to the Global Humanitarian Aid 2022 Report prepared by the *"Development Initiatives"* (Anatolian Agency, 2022). Table 1 shows the humanitarian aid attempts of Turkey from 2004 to 2019.

Table 1 Humanitarian Aid Made by Turkey to Foreign Countries between 2004 and 2019, Reference: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022.

Aided Place	Occasion	Year	Aided Place	Occasion	Year
Southeast Asia	Earthquake	2004	Nepal	Earthquake	2015
Pakistan	Earthquake	2005	Iraq	Humanitarian Crisis	2015
Lebanon	Humanitarian Crisis	2006	Yemen	Humanitarian Crisis	2015
Gaza	Crisis	2008	Libya	Humanitarian Crisis	2016
Haiti	Earthquake	2010	Macedonia	Natural Disaster	2016
Chile	Earthquake	2010	Colombia	Natural Disaster	2017
Pakistan	Natural Disaster	2010	Georgia	Natural Disaster	2017
Japan	Earthquake	2011	Vietnamese	Natural Disaster	2018
Philippines	Typhoon	2013	Laos	Natural Disaster	2018
Balkans	Natural disasters	2014	Indonesia	Natural Disaster	2018
Gaza	Armed Assaults	2014	Mozambique	Natural Disaster	2019

As the table shows, Turkey has an expanding humanitarian aid network from its neighbors to countries on different continents. Academic studies in the field say that Turkey is seen as a reliable leader in the soft power arena; mainly due to the humanitarian aid it provides (Islam, 2021: 177).

Whether or not *"Soft Power"* achieves its purpose depends on how the citizens of the target country perceive it (Fan, 2008). In this context, some institutions measure the *"Soft Power"* levels of countries globally with various methodologies. For example, the *"Soft Power"* 30 index uses a methodology that compares countries' *"Soft Power"* resources with each other. The evaluation includes parameters such as the quality of the country's political institutions, its cultural attractiveness, the strength of its diplomatic networks, the global reputation of its universities, its economic attractiveness, and its digital relationship with the world. According to the *"Soft Power"* 30 index, Turkey ranked 30th in global *"Soft Power"* capacity in 2017 and rose to 29th as of 2019 (Soft Power 30, 2022). On the other hand, according to the IMF World Economic Outlook Report of April 2022, Turkey is the 21st largest economy globally (Euronews, 2022). Based on this comparison, it is also possible to say that Turkey's "*Soft Power"* level has not yet reached its economic power level.

On the other hand, there are also some criticisms about *"Soft Power"* in the literature. For example, some researchers assert that everything can be accepted as *"Soft Power"*, and using

it as a concrete tool will not be easy. Another criticism is that the distinction between soft and hard power is blurred, and its scope and applicability must be clarified (Henne, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study compares the *"Country of Origin Effect"* in marketing literature and *"Soft Power"* in international relations literature and conceptually reveals their similarities and differences. In order to achieve this aim, a literature review was conducted for both concepts, and their conceptual frameworks were revealed. Then, a table consisting of two columns and four rows was created to reveal the similarities and differences between the concepts in an understandable way.

FINDINGS

The *"Country of Origin Effect"* is shared on the left side of the table, and on the right side, the conceptual information about *"Soft Power"* obtained from the literature is given. The information conveyed is listed systematically. According to this systematic, contents in the same order point to similarities or differences between two concepts.

Table 2 Country of Origin Effect and Soft Power Conceptual Comparison Table

Country of Origin Effect	Soft Power
a- It has been in the literature since 1965.	**a-** It has been in the literature since 1990.
b- It is the power of a country to sell its products in other countries through attraction. In other words, it is a concept related to marketing and economics.	**b-** It is the power of a country to get what it wants in other countries through attraction. In other words, it is a concept related to foreign policy and diplomacy.
c- It is the positive perception of certain products of a country in other countries.	**c-** It is the positive perception of a country in the public mind of another country.
d- It consists of quality, design, functionality, and performance components.	**d-** It consists of components such as values, culture, and policies.
e- It is one of the results of a country's cultural, economic, and academic development level.	**e-** It is one of the results of a country's cultural, economic, and academic development level.
f- Historical, cultural, and ethnic relations between countries significantly impact the *"Country of Origin Effect"*.	**f-** Historical, cultural, and ethnic relations between countries significantly impact *"Soft Power"*.
g- It is the general perception level of a country's products in the minds of consumers in other countries.	**g-** The general perception level of a country on the citizens of other countries.
h- It affects a country's foreign trade volume.	**h-** Affects the sanction power of a country in foreign policy.
i- As the level of *"Soft Power"* of a country over another country increases, the *"Country of Origin Effect"* is likely to increase.	**i-** Positive and high *"Country of Origin Effect"* on a country's products is likely to increase the effect of *"Soft Power"*.

Table 2 shows a vast intersection between *"Soft Power"* and *"Country of Origin Effect."* The main difference is that one of the concepts is designed to focus on diplomacy, and the other to focus on trade. Although these two concepts are derived from different literature, there is an interaction between the two. As a country's *"Soft Power"* level increases, interest and positive perception of products produced in that country may also increase in other countries.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is seen that there are 25 years between the introductions of the concepts to the literature. However, as a result of the conceptual comparison, it was understood that both concepts have an extensive intersection set. The main difference between the two concepts is that one is economic-based, and the other is diplomatic-based. On the other hand, another up-front point is the capacity of concepts to affect each other. The positive perception of a country's products in other countries indicates confidence in that country's manufacturing skills. In this case, it will mean that the goods of the manufacturing country will be sold in high quantities. That will positively impact the public perception of the producing country in other countries.

Another critical issue is that the target audience of *"Soft Power"* is citizens of other countries. However, in some cases, public opinion may choose not to buy a country's goods to punish its diplomatic initiatives. For example, citizens in Turkey protested against Italian products in 1998 for protecting a terrorist leader (Hürriyet, 1998; Milliyet, 1998) and Chinese products for mistreating Uyghur Turks (Crimea News Agency, 2023). It is possible to find similar examples around the world. Boycotts were organized against French products in Qatar due to France's increasing anti-Islamic statements (Yeni Şafak, 2020) and in Kosovo against Serbian products due to the war crimes committed by Serbia (Haberler, 2014). These examples can be considered concrete examples of how diplomatic reasons can negatively affect the products' country-of-origin.

Properly used *"Soft Power"* elements can provide a competitive advantage in terms of marketability in foreign markets for the products produced by the country in the long term. That will increase the level of financial resources coming to the country from different countries and positively affect the dynamics in the domestic market. In addition, one of the primary conditions of having a commercial competitive advantage is to be effective in foreign markets when considered from the economic security framework. In this context, countries that are weak against other countries can be economically manipulated by the strong ones (Baltacı, 2023). Therefore, states should address both *"Country of Origin Effect"* and *"Soft Power"* planning with an integrated approach in line with their own foreign markets and foreign policy goals. The findings of this study also reveal the importance of countries' use of marketing discipline in their foreign policy designs. Countries must benefit from marketing approaches in their diplomatic initiatives regarding their ideologies, foreign policy priorities, and global expectations.

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