



PUBLIC PERCEPTION IN TURKEY ON GERMANY

Qualitative Research (Focus Group Study) Report | January 2022

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Reasons for the Research



REASON

A qualitative research was deemed necessary in order to better understand background of the existing perceptions on Germany in Turkey by the target audience.

In order to meet this need, a qualitative research was carried out with focus groups formed in a predetermined framework.



AIM

The main aim of this research is to understand the reasoning behind the target audience's perceptions on Germany.

Topics covered are;

- Meaning of Germany for the general pub in Turkey
- Perceptions on Germany's economic contribution to Turkey
- Perceptions on Germany with its social dimension
- Perceptions on Germany with its CSO dimension
- Perceptions on German media

Research Design

Methodology & Sample



Focus Groups

- 6 focus groups were formed.
- The study was conducted online between 14 and 23 December 2021.



Participant Criteria

- Consumers
 - AB ,C1, C2 SES
 - 18+ age
- Business people
- CSO affiliated persons

Focus Groups	SES	Age	Target Audience
1	AB	18-35	Consumers
1	C1C2		
1	AB	36+	
1	C1C2		
1	-	-	Business People
1	-	-	CSO Affiliates

Perceptions on Germany in Turkey

Significance of Germany for the Turkish Public

- Germany has a “closer country to Turkey” image when compared to other European countries among the interviewed groups, due to long-lasting affects of its alliance with Turkey during the First World War and deeper security partnership during the Cold War within NATO, as well as connections created by the labor migration that took place in the 1960s and as a result of continuous and open communication Germany carries out.
- The spread of social elements such as multidimensional impressions, observations, and following about Germany to the general population had started with the workers’ immigration, who were officially called “Guest Workers”, and became widespread with the migration of a relative or acquaintance of a large majority of the society to Germany.
- With this characteristic, Germany has gained a particular place and meaning for the Turkish society, beyond just being a “European country”, where an emotional bond - including lots of emotions, engagements, and expectations- has been formed.
- In terms of societal, social and cultural ties, Germany is disassociated from all other countries in the Turkish public imagination and has maintained a special dimension of closeness with such appellation as «the bitter homeland» that has been sustained over the years with various stories.

Significance of Germany for the Turkish Public

- When evaluated in terms of economic, political, commercial, and social perspectives, Germany, in its relations with Turkey, represents a relationship based on a multi-dimensional and sustainable solidarity understanding, through which common solutions could be found for critical (and/or problematic) issues such as migration.
- Compared to other European countries, Germany is thought to have an more Turkey oriented approach with an openness to dialogue, an an ability to listen and understand Turkey with a common sense.
- With their indisputable superiority in technological qualities, German global brands/products especially in the automotive, household appliances, and textiles, do not only determine Germany's overall perception in the Turkish society but also deeply affects the consumer behavior in the Turkish market.
- Germany is in a position to impress Turkey with its importance in terms of providing job opportunities to Turks in Germany and in Turkey, of being an important commercial business partner to Turkey with its import-export volume, and of having a supportive stance to Turkey in migration related issues.

Turks in Germany

- When it is evaluated in terms of the interviewed groups, there is a widespread and prominent perception regarding the Turks in Germany.
- According to this view, after the first generation migrants who have been attached to their traditions, resistant to development and change, and made their living as «blue collar» workers under heavy working conditions, a new perception of Turkish migrants is emerging with the second and third generation residents, who are better integrating to German society, culture and norms through their education and development.
- Nevertheless, the already established description of Turkish migrants as “*Almanci*” (German-o-Turk) and related strong prejudices about the preferences and behaviors of the Turkish migrants as someone who is a “hard working person in an inflexible disciplined German system” and who, with frugal living in Germany, “saves substantial amounts to invest them in Turkey to live comfortably” remain unaltered.

Thoughts on German Working System

- There is a widespread perception and awareness regarding the existence of a settled and strong system in Germany, which is based on unbending rules and regulations as well as a conception of a rigid and hard work-life with corresponding earnings.
- Although the participants do not find such an intense and socially weak working system close to them and express that it is difficult for the Turkish society to adapt to such a strict system, they also find such a working approach –in which the employees are valued, receive right compensation for their efforts, and their rights are protected- as extremely stimulating and attractive. This attraction makes the target audience susceptible and willing towards possible job opportunities in Germany or offered by German companies in Turkey.
- In this context, the target audience's feelings and thoughts about Germany are in favor of working in a flexible and socializing working conditions that exist in Turkey, but being protected within the systematic working culture that exists in Germany, where labor is paid is due, employee rights are protected, and employees are valued.

Germany's Contribution to Turkish Economy

- Although the contribution of Germany to the Turkish economy is evaluated by the target audience by including the size of the trade volume between the two countries, it is mainly evaluated within the framework of the positive effects it has on the lives of migrant workers and their relatives. In the eyes of the participants, being able to find a job in Germany, having various job options and rights in the workplace, having a valuable currency and a high purchasing power, and most importantly getting paid fairly for their labor stand out as the most important contributing factors.
- Considering the tendency of the Turkish migrants in Germany to earn in Germany and spend and invest in Turkey, the contribution made to the Turkish economy, especially through foreign currency transfers, is considered valuable and substantial.
- Considering the importance given to both employment creation and employee rights by the German companies in Turkey, the importance of their contributions to the Turkish economy and social policies, especially in terms of human resources policies, are underlined.

Turkish Contributions to German Economy

- The participants in general evaluate the economic contributions of Turkey and Germany together. The Turkish consumer's trust in German brands and products and their consumption tendencies feed into the confidence and motivation to work in production when it comes to business opportunities. Taking part in the German system, being rewarded fairly for one's work and feeling valued stand out as main motivational factors.
- In addition to Germany's contributions to Turkey's economy, Turkey's economic contributions to Germany in terms of workforce and production are especially expressed by the target audience.
- The contribution of Turkish workers to the German economy is evaluated in terms of their contribution to the production processes both in Germany and in Turkey (in German companies); the importance of contribution is heavily underlined. It is stated that Turkish employees contribute positively to the German work culture and production processes with their personal qualities such as being hardworking, fair, open to communication, and sharing, and that the Turkish employees who can adapt to the system can move to "white collar" positions thanks to these characteristics.
- The production of parts in different sectors -especially in automotive, household appliances, and textile- in Turkey and/or their assembly in Germany and export to Turkey as a final product are considered as Turkey's contribution. In this context, they also mention their expectations to reach these products in the Turkish market at more affordable prices.

Germany with its Social Dimension

- Germany is a country that shapes the “social welfare state” understanding of the target audience. As a country where significant number of Turkish citizens live, Germany is appreciated by the target group for offering the same opportunities to the Turkish community living in Germany for health, education, accommodation and financial aids as it offers to German citizens.
- Germany is also admired by the participants because it presents a system that protects all segments of the society with access to financial resources, unemployment benefits, mother and child wages, as well as equal access to health, education and basic living standards.

Germany with its Social Dimension

- It is appreciated that the German state has been providing assistance to businesses and employees to somewhat compensate their financial losses during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The information that the employees of German companies operating in Turkey are also protected with advantages during the Pandemic is shared by people from the business world. This is also generally appreciated.
- The participants generally believe that there is no home-ownership problem in Germany, and both the minimum wage and the wages for an hour-work -which is, according to the participants, at a very good level of 9-10 Euros- are determined to meet the basic needs of the workers comfortably.
- Parents education and parent-school cooperation on child education, therapy programs, volunteer work as well as rewards for those who participate in such activities in Germany are appreciated.

Germany with its CSO Dimension

- It is stated by the participants that the non-governmental organizations in Germany are specially supported by the government policies and institutions, that they can freely express their opinions even in areas of sensitive social issues, that they can act comfortably and in a cooperative manner in activities benefitting the society, and that they usually conclude their works with concrete results. All these were appreciated by the participants.
- As a country where the social welfare state requirements are fulfilled by the system, it is widely believed that the current works of NGOs in Germany are mostly concentrated on activities in the fields of education and integration in connection with migration and immigration issues.

Germany with its Civil Society Dimension

- In addition to the orientation of current immigrants, it is stated that institutions that are working on immigration issues are even interested in the issue of transfer of the workforce comprised of educated, talented and people with abilities from other countries to Germany. It was mentioned as surprising that even the doctors who went to Germany from Turkey were included in orientation programs.
- It is stated that, apart from German NGOs, Germany as a state has in recent years created incentives to encourage doctors from Turkey to move to Germany; thus it is claimed that as result of these efforts, the number of doctors who started learning German has increased in this context.
- The fact that the federal system is organized in an autonomous structure, which enhances their ability to protect individual freedoms and rights, and facilitates activities and practices that favor the society as a whole are mentioned by the target audience among the factors that they approve in Germany. For example, it was noted as a unique case that each federal state was able to determine its own preventive measures during the pandemic, and, when in conflict with the central authorities, they had the right to challenge centrally adopted measure in courts.

Germany with its Civil Society Dimension

- The fact that university students can work in NGO activities and earn monthly salaries are mentioned positively in terms of state support given to students and universities in Germany.
- It is expressed by Turkish NGO employees that Germany provides funds to some university institutes, research centers and municipalities in Turkey and that the logo of the German Ministry of Economy is used in some of the already running projects is an indicator of this.
- NGO workers particularly appear as the most excited group about working and living in Germany in terms of working conditions, material and moral appreciation, and project realization processes.

German Media & Its Turkey Agenda

- It is expressed by NGO employees and people from the business world that the German media generally reflects the events without comments and has an impartial and independent approach.
- The information that there is a new immigration program specific to Turkey on the agenda of Germany and that new employees are needed to go to Germany from Turkey is expressed as an agenda that the general target audience welcomes with enthusiasm.
- There are those among the participants who think that the German media is following a generally negative discourse and theme processing strategy about Turkish society in an attempt to create a constant awareness of the Turks in the German society.
- In addition to the view that the German media's intensive coverage of Turkish political developments is due to Turkey's lack of prominence in fields such as culture, art, and sports, there are also those who attribute this to the existing partnership between Turkey and Germany in many fields.

Results and Executive Summary

- Turkey and Germany have inseparable political, economic, and social relations dynamics.
- Germany is perceived as a structure, dominated by systemic management that does not leave any room for personal initiatives, but where individual rights and freedoms as well as equal and fair usage of resources are invariable norms. The expression that best reflects Turkish society's perception of German discipline is "start a job like a Turk, finish it like a German".
- Germany's contribution to the Turkish economy is evaluated positively through Turkish workers in Germany and German manufacturers in Turkey.
- It is observed that German brands are highly effective in directing consumer preferences in Turkey due to their technical superiority and quality.
- Germany is a social state that, with its valuable currency, employee rights and state aids, creates excitement among the target audience for its living and working conditions.

- There is a perception that NGOs in Germany are supported by government policies during project creation, execution, and finalization processes, which ensures smooth operation of these processes.
- One of the most incentivizing characteristics of Germany among the participants is found to be the perception that the people living in the country benefits not only from economy as a developed country but they are also in an advantageous position regarding personal rights, freedoms, and social benefits.
- The knowledge that Germany provides project-based funding to civil society institutions as well as some universities and research centers in Turkey is affirmatively expressed by the relevant target groups and is considered as a positive element regarding Germany's economic and social state power.

- There is a widespread perception that Germany is a country where there is no homelessness problem, there are equal and free health services, there is a talent and profession-oriented education system that encourages students to be directed to a certain field in early age. It continues to be a center of attraction for many people living in Turkey, who are aware of the living conditions in Germany through their relatives in Germany.
- There are different views on German media policy. On the one hand, there is the view that the German media adopts an impartial, free and unbiased broadcasting approach, while on the other hand, there is the opinion that the German media gives unnecessarily a lot of space to Turkey's political agenda.
- While the close relations between Turkey and Germany are expressed as a reason for the aforementioned concentration about Turkish news in German media, it is also stated that this intensity aims to constantly remind the German society that they live together with the Turkish society.

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Thank you...

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