

Public Relations in Turkey during 1920-1955: The Display of a Western Image

1920 ile 1955 Yılları Arasında Türkiye’de Halkla İlişkiler: Batılı Türkiye İmajının Sergilenmesi

Besime Pınar Özdemir, Doç. Dr., Ankara Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, E-posta: pozdemir@ankara.edu.tr
Melike Aktaş, Doç. Dr., Ankara Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi, E-posta: aktasmlk@gmail.com

Keywords:

Public Relations,
History of Public
Relations, Turkey,
Image, Image
Cultivation, Nation
Building.

Abstract

This paper focuses on the early evidence of public relations in Turkey from 1920 to 1955, through analyzing national image cultivation and projection efforts in the international settings. It is argued that significant public relations activities were employed in order to cultivate a modern national image and promote a westernized image of Turkey to the West. Agencies were founded to manage media relations and produce materials targeting foreign audiences, and special attention was paid to international exhibitions and fairs overseas. However, due to the economic constraints and the lack of prevalent media during that period, alternative public relations tools were created to sustain national promotion

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Halkla İlişkiler, Halkla
İlişkiler Tarihi, Türkiye,
İmaj, İmaj Geliştirme,
Ulus İnşası.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de halkla ilişkilerin 1920 ile 1955 yılları arasındaki ilk gelişim safhalarına odaklanmakta ve uluslararası bağlamlarda ulusal imaj oluşturma ve sergileme faaliyetleri analiz edilmektedir. Çalışmada, ele alınan tarihsel dönemde, batılı ülkelerde modern ve batılı Türkiye imajının oluşturulabilmesi ve yansıtılabilmesini sağlayabilmek için önemli halkla ilişkiler faaliyetlerinin yürütüldüğü öne sürülmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda medya ilişkilerini yönetecek ajanslar kurulmuş, uluslararası hedef kitleye yönelik tanıtım materyalleri üretilmiş ve uluslararası sergi ve fuarlara katılıma önem verilmiştir. Dönemde yaşanan ekonomik kısıtlılıklar ve yaygın medyanın bulunmaması, ulusal tanıtımı sürdürmek için alternatif halkla ilişkiler araçlarının geliştirilmesini gerektirmiştir.

Introduction

Endeavours to cultivate and project the image of a nation are important aspects of the history of the field of public relations when public relations is conceptualized as the production of specific meanings, understandings and perceptions. Although, today, these efforts are regarded as essential parts of the public relations practices of nations; their role in the historical development of public relations is hardly mentioned in the literature. The most notable exception is the book by Michael Kunczik *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*, in which he addresses the importance of the images of nations in international relations. Kunczik presents several early examples of the manipulation and cultivation of the image of nations and underscores that their origin predates the age of mass media (1997, p. 152). He points out that attempts to promote the image of nations in early human history relied on symbolic instruments such as leaflets, coins, medals, festivities, art and architecture and targeted domestic as well as foreign audiences (Kunczik, 1997, p. 158-169). The invention of the printing press offered new instruments this enabled the preparation of large numbers of publications such as bulletins, brochures and books to convey specific messages to craft a favourable national image. With the growing influence of newspapers on public opinion, it was regarded essential to have positive media coverage. Thus, building press relations gained importance in the process of ensuring appropriate and positive publicity and generate a positive word of mouth.

According to Kunczik (1997, p. 12), the definition of public relations in terms of the nation-state is the “planned and continuous distribution of interest-bound information by a state aimed (mostly) at improving the country’s image abroad.” Image cultivation efforts are generally based on the needs and targets of the nations emerged at that particular moment in time, and influenced by long term domestic and foreign policies. During the times of foundation, transformation or regeneration of a state then the image cultivation and projection efforts of countries become more of an issue.

Crafting a favourable and positive image in the world arena provides nations with economic, social and political benefits. Primarily, a strong positive image is vital for a nation’s reputation, since it is a “pivotal force in international relations, along with military and economic resources” (Wang, 2006, p. 91). The perceptions and opinions held by the foreign publics are the main components of a nation’s reputation. Hence to attract attention, generate positive attitudes or diminish stereotypes, countries need planned communicative endeavours. Through these activities, the desired image can be transmitted then understanding, cooperation and dialogue can be sustained.

The communication of information about the new regime and conveying a particular image to the world was one of the historical drivers of public relations in the Turkish Republic. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the young Turkish Republic gave importance to improving its national reputation and tried to reconstitute the identity of the country through the projection of a Westernized image. This image was particularly important in the development of cultural, social and economic cooperation with the West.

Starting from the opening of Turkish Grand National Assembly on 23 April 1920, the development of relationships with the Western World was considered critical. Based

on its founding goals, the Turkish Republic utilized public relations activities as an instrument to approach the Western block of nations and structure their view of Turkey. In the early years of the Republic, due to the lack of the conceptualization of public relations during that time in Turkey, efforts to cultivate the country's image in foreign countries was defined as propaganda or publicity. The leading cadres of the young Republic realized the significance of communicative activities to foster relationships with the Western World and regarded them as important tools to gain recognition and build awareness of the Turkish Republic as an independent, self-sufficient, and modern nation-state (Gençtürk Hizal, 2012, p. 160).

The construction of modern Turkey was the priority of domestic policy, however its communication to foreign publics was considered no less important. Accordingly, in order to cultivate a modern look and westernized image in the eyes of the West, agencies were founded that dealt with media relations and materials were produced that targeted foreign audiences. In addition, special attention was given to international exhibitions and fairs “to display Turkey's unity and modernity” (Ahıska, 2005, p. 91), and to demonstrate the transformation of the country after the decline and end of the Ottoman Empire.

Recent contributions have challenged the standard histories of public relations which “privilege the field's association with business enterprises” (Byerly, 1993, p. 2). There has been a movement away from the linear interpretations and the development of a “new set of parameters for understanding the field's history” (Lamme and Miller Russell, 2009, p. 283). From this perspective, this article offers a non-corporate view of the early developments of public relations in Turkish Republic. Although the term public relations was first conceptualized and institutionalized as a function at the end of 1950's in Turkey, there were significant activities that fall within the framework of public relations prior to these years especially in the field of politics. Therefore, this study seeks to reveal this early evidence and to approach public relations history in Turkey considering its role in national image cultivation and projection during the period 1920 to 1955.

For this paper, a historical research approach was undertaken, and archives and many secondary sources were researched to reveal the endeavours of the image cultivation and projection of a new nation. Initially database searches were conducted to identify sources that discussed Turkey's presentation and promotion in international contexts. Books, articles, essays, dissertations, conference papers, documentaries were collected and examined thematically. Turkish newspaper archives were scanned to identify important events and activities, and based on these findings digital archives containing international newspapers published in English were also examined. In addition, all 49 issues of *La Turquie Kemaliste* journal were thematically examined. Furthermore, individual and personal texts such as voyage notes, articles and autobiographies were taken into consideration. From this data, the important agents and events were identified, and goals, strategies and tools were explicated.

Westernization After the Establishment of the Turkish Republic

The national liberation struggle (Turkish War of Independence), began in 1919 in Anatolia under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and achieved its final victory

with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on 23 July 1923 that agreed to the establishment of the Turkish State. On 29 October 1923, the Republic of Turkey was established.

The establishment of the parliament in 1920 laid the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Parliament intended to form an independent country based on the examples of Western democracies, and they were firmly committed to participation in the Western community (Tunaya, 2010, p. 92). According to Tunaya (2010, p. 92), “struggling with the West to become Western” characterises this phase in the Turkish history.

The westernization movement, at which the Ottomans could not totally succeed, was regarded as the main will of Turkey starting from the 1920s. Becoming a modern and advanced society was declared the foremost goal of Turkey (Tunaya, 2010, p. 96), and unconditional westernization formed a basis for the development of Turkish reforms.

The Turkish Republic was established on the principle of transformation. In order to grow strong and survive, the inherited structure was radically changed and a series of regulations were implemented (Oran, 2003, p. 19). First, principles and institutions that had dominated political life were changed and a new legal order was created to protect the new life style (Tunaya, 2010, p. 97). Also, the announcing domestic reforms and their implementation abroad were assigned as an important goal.

Image Cultivation and Projection Activities: Goals, Strategies and Tools

During the early years of the Republic, Turkey was determined to project a strong, civilized and westernized image abroad. Communicative efforts aimed to build positive attitudes toward the Turkish Republic and “Turkishness,” and eliminate negative perceptions that had existed towards the Ottoman Empire, such as “the label of sick man of Europe, which was used worldwide for a long time” (Kunczik, 1997, p. 115). Cultural, social and economic transformation of the country, communicated through symbols and communicative activities that represented new life styles, western values and modern citizenship. In this way, the new features of the young Republic were highlighted, and this underlined the historical affiliations with Western nations and Turkey’s acceptance of western values. The overall aim of the image projection efforts was to demonstrate Turkey’s new vision and the values of the new state.

During this period, exhibitions and fairs were an important way in which Turkey was able to introduce itself to the West and present the new mind-set (Akçura, 2009, p. 236). International exhibitions and fairs are significant instruments of public relations facilitating the construction a nation’s image. These international events can be considered as symbolic communicative resources that transmit particular messages and desired images. While these events serve to promote the country, at the same time they enable direct contact between cultures. Visitors create their own experiences through the interaction. By encountering cultural artefacts and attractions, visitors can learn about and enjoy key features of the country. These symbolic environments can be regarded as communicative tools of publicity, information and persuasion. Furthermore, these events may also produce positive news content and be positively conveyed through word of mouth.

Agents

General Directorate of the Press

The General Directorate of the Press was established on 7 June 1920, during the struggle for national liberation (İskit, 1939, p. 19). At that time, parliament, recognizing the importance of the press for managing domestic and foreign propaganda and for structuring public opinion, agreed to set up an organization regulating press and information activities (Uzun and Arsak Hasdemir, 2010, p. 80).

Following its establishment, the Directorate monitored the foreign press to understand its development and produced news items for the foreign press. To protect the national interest several representative units were established in European countries and USA to disseminate news in different languages about the Turkey's struggle and goals (Uzun and Arsak Hasdemir, 2010, p. 81). A total of 1,638,802 publications, including texts and photographs, were distributed between 1934-1938 (İskit, 1939, p. 227). In addition, as reported by Gençtürk Hızal (2012, p. 165) calendars, photo albums, brochures and magazines were printed and distributed to people in various foreign countries; moral and financial support was given to foreign authors writing books about modern Turkey, and certain foreign newspapers and magazines were encouraged to prepare supplements about Turkey.

One of the most important attempts of the Directorate to construct a desirable image abroad was the publication of *La Turquie Kemaliste* magazine. Starting from 1933, *La Turquie Kemaliste* published articles by respected authors written mostly in French but also, sometimes in English and German. Turkey's history, economy, touristic attractions, culture, art, new institutions and sports were the main themes of these articles. Special attention was devoted to artistic photographs to present the image of the new Turkey being modern and westernized image. The Austrian photographer, Othmar Phersch, produced work for the magazine with a "western eye" (Gençtürk Hızal, 2012, p. 166). Phersch's photographs were used extensively not only in the magazine, but also in different publications of the Directorate, and were also sent to the foreign press (Gençtürk Hızal, 2012, p. 165).

Turkish News Office

In the period following World War II in which a new world order was established the USA was an important ally of Turkey. Accordingly, the Turkish News Office was founded in 1947 in New York to promote Turkey and craft a positive image in the USA (*Cumhuriyet*, 19 December 1947, p. 3). The office worked as a public relations bureau aiming to publicize the accomplishments of the young Turkish Republic.

Nuri Eren, the head of the Turkish News Office, gave a number of interviews about modern Turkey. For instance, in an interview published in *The Post-Standard* newspaper on 20 May 1952, Eren explicitly described the orientation of the new state: "The empire is extinct, the Turkish Republic stands in its place. Also it is a mistake to think of Turkey in terms of the Near or Far East. It is definitely a member of the Western block of nations".

Among the important activities of the Turkish News Office was the development of press relations. The office organised 72 press conferences attended by 3070 journalists

in order to promote contemporary Turkey to the American public (*Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1952, p. 2). As a result, news items in some USA newspapers depicting a positive image of Turkey were published during that time. These news articles were particularly characterised by an assertion of the changing role of Turkish women in public life for example: “Women today in Turkey enjoy complete equality with men and many hold government and educational jobs” (*Newport Mercury*, 3 April 1953, p. 5). Newspapers in the USA showed that gender equality was a significant indicator of Turkish modernisation realised by the will of all Turkish citizens. An example of this kind of news was published in *The Indiana Gazette* on 27 August 1952: “progress in the last thirty years for Turkish women has been astonishing, it is because men have shown a surprising willingness to consider them equally. Today Turkish cities are full of women who are little different from their European and American counterparts...Whatever roles they assume, the women of modern Turkey know that they are respected as equals by their men and as responsible contributing citizens by their government” (p. 13).

The office designed eight booklets targeting journalists and published 27 articles about Turkey in various publications. In order to disseminate pro-Turkish publications, the office sent 59 books to different people and organisations (*Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1952, p. 2).

In the process of establishing a positive image of Turkey the Turkish News Office targeted schools. A book entitled *New Turkey* along with a cartoon poster to be hung on school walls was prepared. This particular book and can be regarded as a creative step in the promotion of Turkey. Similarly, a packet of brochures and photographs, including puzzles and riddles about Turkey, was distributed to students. The riddles in particular were aimed at “correcting” misinformation about Turkey (*Cumhuriyet*, 6 September 1952, p. 2).

Günseli Başarır, crowned Miss Europe in 1952, was actively involved in publicising Turkey in the USA. *Cumhuriyet*, the leading Turkish newspaper of the period, stated that *Time* published an interview with Miss Başarır. She also appeared in a short film introducing Turkey which was distributed by the Turkish News Office and was broadcast on more than a hundred television stations in the USA (6 September 1952, p. 2).

The office also attempted to replace encyclopaedia entries which described Turkey from an orientalist perspective with up-to-date information regarding the Republican Era.

Following the success of the New York based office, another branch was established in San Francisco in 1956 (*Cumhuriyet*, 25 February 1957, p. 1).

Other Supporting Agencies

There were other relevant agencies which contributed to and facilitated image cultivation activities. These agencies published materials about the attractions of Turkey in order to promote Turkey at international exhibitions and fairs.

On the instructions of Mustafa Kemal the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey was established in 1923. First named as Turkish Travel Association (*Türk Seyyahın Cemiyeti*), later renamed as the Touring Club Turc (*Türkiye Turing Klübü*), and finally became the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club in 1930. One of the initial aims of the

organisation was “to introduce genuine characteristics and virtues of Turks to foreigners and to introduce foreigners and foreign countries to Turkish citizens in return”. This Club produced Turkey’s first prospectuses, posters, tourist guides and road maps (TTOK, 2014).

Another organisation, the National Economy and Thrift Society was founded in 1929 to develop Turkey’s participation in overseas exhibitions and fairs. Before this time, Turkey mostly participated in these events as an observer. According to Akçura (2012, p.102) in order to improve the level of participation, the Foreign Trade Bureau was established in 1929 with the responsibility of opening exhibitions and fairs within Turkey, participating in international exhibitions and preparing samples to be presented at these events. However, the most significant step was taken with the establishment of Turkoffice (*Türkofis*) in 1934 (Akçura, 2012, p. 102). With the efforts of these offices, the participation in exhibitions increased.

Events: Fairs and Exhibitions

Floating Exhibitions

The high costs of publicising Turkey abroad led the elite of the young Turkish Republic to seek alternative and economic means of promotion. Floating Exhibitions were considered a feasible choice.

1926 Karadeniz Floating Exhibition

The Karadeniz Floating Exhibition was an innovative public relations activity unique in Turkish history, although there are hardly any sources mentioning this creative attempt in the literature. A documentary titled *Karadeniz: Seyr-i Türkiye*, shot in 2007 and directed by Soner Sevgili, provides detailed information about the exhibition.

According to the documentary, at the suggestion of MP Ali Cenani, the ship *Karadeniz* was hired from the city transportation company and turned into an exhibition ship by Turkish engineers. The materials employed for the promotion of the floating exhibition were chosen as diligently as the design of the ship. First, a logo inspired by the god Hermes from Greek mythology was designed for the exhibition, which emphasised the Western character of Turkish modernisation. Commemorative stamps, stationery, posters and pamphlets were all produced with the Hermes logo. This choice of the logo is not surprising considering the preference of the Republic to design its new image on western symbols. The adoption of Hermes, the god of transition and boundaries is also interesting since it symbolizes the transformation that Turkey was undergoing at that time. Choosing a figure from Greek mythology for the visual identity of the ship can be interpreted as the intention to draw attention to Turkey’s historic and geographic proximity with those contemporaneous western civilizations. Moreover, using a symbol from the ancient Greek civilization can also be interpreted as the sign of orientation of the Republic to erase the traces of the wars and violence of the past and dominance of peace in the new international relations.

Considering the significance of the national image that was to be projected by the floating exhibition, the hosts of the ship were chosen from the educated elite of the

Turkish Republic. Well educated women and men who spoke foreign languages and were accustomed to western codes of behaviour and presentation were the symbols of modern Turkish ‘civilized citizen’. In particular, it was the modern Turkish woman that represented a strong, joyful and open-minded Turkey and symbolically expressed Turkey’s determination to eliminate orientalist stereotypes. It was important that Turkish women were seen as possessing a privileged and equal role in the process of project a positive image abroad.

An orchestra of 47 musicians joined the team of the floating exhibition to perform Western classical music. Changes in the field of cultural consumption were one of the most significant signs of the cultural transformation. Turkey’s affinity with West was represented through the common tastes and similar patterns of cultural consumption particularly in the field of music. Having an orchestra performing Western style of classical music in the exhibition was an important communicative attempt to signal Turkey’s familiarity with Western culture and musical taste.

The three-month tour left Istanbul on 12 June 1926 and was to include 16 cities in 12 countries. The exhibition arrived in Barcelona on the 20th of June and was visited by 11,000 guests.

When the floating exhibition approached La Havre in France, it attracted great public attention. In addition to the French press, the exhibition came to the attention of Americans via various newspapers:

...beautiful Turkish women gowned in Paris modes and emancipated from the veil of former years added a feminine touch to a reception held on the *Karadeniz* at Havre, during the stay of a floating exhibition of Turkish goods and products, the first of its kind ever seen in European waters ... the products of Turkey are displayed on the *Karadeniz*, which looks more like a private yacht than a floating national exhibition. The ship carries a crew of 150 and 160 connected directly with the display. Some attendants in charge spoke three languages besides their own and several had been educated in England, France and Russia (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 25 July 1926, p. 21; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 1926, p. 3; *Altoona Tribune*, 6 August 1926, p. 4).

Soner Sevgili’s documentary reports that in London the floating exhibition was visited by 25,000 people over six days. A newsreel entitled *Stamboul Bazaar in the Thames* was shown in various cinemas in London to present the ship and introduce the Turkish women as the new face of Turkey (*Stamboul Bazaar in the Thames*, 1926).

In Amsterdam, the Republic orchestra that was on board the ship, gave a concert to an audience of almost 8000 in a large park in the city. The musical program presented the westernised image of Turkey. The *Karadeniz* floating exhibition returned home on 5 September 1926 after spending 86 days abroad.

Ali Suad wrote in a magazine called *Istanbul Sehremaneti Mecmuasi* that, “[t]he floating exhibition was warmly, sincerely, ostentatiously welcomed by all the places it visited. It was honoured not only by local governments and municipalities, but also by national level senior officials in some harbours. It drew the attention of merchants and artists and received the compliments of many” (Suad, 1926).

SS Tarsus: Europe and USA Voyages

The second floating exhibition that should be mentioned is the SS *Tarsus*, which visited Europe and the USA. Lütfü Kırdar, the head of the Turkish Tourism Institution, announced the exhibition in a press conference on 23 May 1953:

This year we aim to promote Turkey with all its characteristics to Mediterranean countries and have organised a comprehensive floating exhibition on the Tarsus ship. The exhibition is supervised by Professor Vedat Ar, and will portray military, political, economic and touristic aspects of Turkey with pictures (...) The exhibition will present a collection of 770 pieces of the Technical School of Girls. (*Milliyet*, 24 May 1953, p. 2).

The ship departed on 30 May 1953 with 353 passengers and arrived in Genoa on 19 June with exhibits of Turkish goods and products in different galleries (*Milliyet*, 31 May 1953, p. 2). In the attempt to transform the field of economy, the Republic was struggling to define Turkey as a country with huge economic potential by exhibiting the Turkish goods. Publicizing the country's economic potential would help Turkey to be perceived as having economic relations that could be developed and this was part of the image to be created in line with the economic development programme targets of modernization.

In *Panorama*, the magazine of the Turkish Tourism Institution, the Mediterranean tour of the SS Tarsus was described as follows:

...This floating exhibition was not presenting Turkish agricultural and industrial products as we were accustomed to. This exhibition demonstrates a developed country with its industry, agriculture, cultural institutions and touristic aspects for those who have no idea about Turkey; moreover, it attempts to favourably interpret the notion of Turkishness in the mind of those who visited this exhibition. What we tried to say was that Turkey is a democratic country in the Western sense of the term (cited in Akçura, 2009, p. 194-195).

SS Tarsus departed for the USA in 1954 with similar ambitions. It arrived in Miami on 7 July 1954. The floating exhibition was welcomed by a crowd and US navy helicopters. The Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* reported the arrival of the exhibition, in these words: "The welcome banners were hung from helicopters announcing 'Turks welcome!' and the Turkish national anthem was played in the harbour to announce the arrival of the ship to the entire city" (8 July 1954, p. 3). *The Herald Tribune* published an editorial on the *Tarsus* on 21 July 1954 (*Milliyet*, 22 July 1954, p. 3). *Milliyet* also reported that New York Major Robert W. Wagner met a committee from the *Tarsus* and proclaimed 21 July to be Turkish Republic Day. The exhibition was visited by 6000 people in New York on the first day (22 July 1954, p. 3).

A distinguished writer of the period, Sürreya Ergün, reported on the success of the ship with these figures:

145,000 visitors in only four harbours, 8500 invited guests, a fashion parade with an audience of 10,250 ... Moreover, embracing Turkishness American cities were decorated with Turkish flags by mayors, chambers of trade, military and civil institutions, women's and men's clubs. Turkish Weeks were declared and Turkish Exhibitions were organised. The American press with a circulation of 150 million people, published 420 articles and

pictures. American radio and television broadcast 60 programmes addressing audiences of similar numbers, and American companies shot 34 newsreels (cited in Akçura, 2009, p. 202).

International Fairs in Europe

In the early 1930s Turkey participated in many international exhibitions. Prominent among these were the 1932 Milano Exhibition, the 1935 Brussels Exposition, and the 1936 Konigsberg Fair. Through these international fairs and exhibitions Turkey was able to present the desired image as well as promote Turkish trade. These events not only publicized the Turkish goods but also provided the basis for developing economic relations with the west.

The 1932 Milano Exhibition was the first large scale international exhibition in which Turkey participated (*Cumhuriyet*, 26 March 1932, p. 3). The Foreign Trade Bureau represented Turkey in this exhibition, which took place from 12 to 22 April (*Cumhuriyet*, 27 March 1932, p. 5). The Bureau Chief, Mr. Naki stated that a special pavilion was allocated for Turkey and touristic materials as well as traditional Turkish souvenirs to be presented to the guests were provided by the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club (*Cumhuriyet*, 28 March 1932, p. 2). The 13th Milano Exhibition was visited by almost 2 million people (*Cumhuriyet*, 30 April 1932, p. 3). Since the Turkish pavilion was very popular, Turkey attended the Milano exhibition in the following years (*Cumhuriyet*, 12 September 1936, p. 5).

The Brussels International Exposition was a universal exhibition held between 27 April and 6 November 1935. The Turkish pavilion in the Brussels fair included a gigantic cigar placed on top of the pavilion in order to attract attention to Turkish exports, including tobacco. This pavilion had a modernist style but ironically, the neighbouring Bulgarian pavilion was a replica of a house in Philippopoli, resembling the traditional houses of Turkey (Zelef, 2003, p. 63).

The request of Turkey to exhibit at the 24th Konigsberg Fair was facilitated by the Turkish Chamber of Trade in Germany. Turkey regarded the Konigsberg Fair as an important opportunity to meet people from the Baltic and Eastern European countries who were regular participants in the fair (*Cumhuriyet*, 3 August 1936, p. 5). The Turkish pavilion was visited by 191,000 people and 20,000 pamphlets distributed (*Cumhuriyet*, 12 September 1936, p. 5). Turkey also participated in the fair the following year (*Cumhuriyet*, 16 August 1937, p. 3).

1939 New York World's Fair

Turkey attended the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair. Turkey took the construction of the pavilion seriously since in the 1925 Paris Expo the Turkish pavilion was designed in the style of a mosque by a French architect, Maurice Fildier. In an article in the Turkish architectural magazine *Mimar*, this was considered to be risky as a “representation of the idea of a new Turkey” (cited in Zelef, 2003, p. 66). This experience led the young Turkish Republic to build a pavilion for the New York World's Fair that blended modernist and neo-Ottoman forms. For example, it synthesised residential prototypes reminiscent of the numerous Ottoman structures from nineteenth-century expositions, with modern forms (Çelik, 1992, p. 185).

The goods and services displayed in the fair were discussed by the intellectuals of the period in terms of the image of Turkey. The employment of young American rather than Turkish women in the pavilion was criticised by Kemal Sünnetçioğlu as a missed opportunity stating “we could benefit well from cultured Turkish women for propaganda on this occasion... Publicising Turkey with the message that the Turkish nation has ideals as high as the American would have done an ideal service to our girls” (Sünnetçioğlu, 1944, p. 48).

The information office in the pavilion disseminated information and attracted visitors (Ezine 1940, p. 147). This office distributed an eight-page flyer entitled *The Turkish Exhibits at the New York World's Fair* which emphasized the modern character of Turkey by displaying a nude male sculpture (Zalesch, 2009). The first page of the flyer, headed *Women Emerge To Freedom*, narrated the rights of Turkish women granted by the Republic as follows:

The Turkish woman who had legally one fourth the right of the Turkish man is today as much as a legend as are the harem, the fez, the sultan and the caliph. The laws of the Turkish Republic recognize the social and political equality of women with men. In this atmosphere of freedom the Turkish woman has developed her potential and has taken her place beside the Turkish man as student, teacher, doctor, lawyer, deputy, and aviator.

The second page introduced the Turkish pavilion: “if you have not visited the Turkish Pavilion, why not go now? This building which is on Market Street is in the classical Turkish style yet with modern implications”. On the sixth page of the flyer, another nude man is depicted standing on two rocks symbolising the continents of Asia and Europe, with one foot on Asia and the other on Europe. In the text box next to this depiction, Turkey’s connection to Anatolian civilisations was specifically emphasised: “...on the walls to your right are four murals. They represent in brief the most important of various civilizations that have existed on Turkish soil: Hittite, Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Selchuk and Ottoman” (The Turkish Exhibits at the New York World's Fair Brochure, 1939). In this fair there were attributions to the transforming status of women in social life as well. What differentiated the 1939-1940 World Fair from the others is that art forms and cultural products, which were quite new for Turkey, symbolized Republic of Turkey’s ties with the Anatolian civilizations of the past. These new art forms and cultural products were at the same time important in making Turkish secularization visible.

Conclusion

The young Turkish Republic was determined to accelerate the westernization process and interact with Western countries, and thus, engaged in public relations efforts to cultivate the desired image abroad. These attempts also contributed to the construction of a new Turkish identity and enhanced the self-esteem of its citizens. The overall aim of these attempts was to construct a strong perception of Turkey in order that economic, social and cultural relationships could be developed, and the country could become a political and cultural ally of West. This perception was structured through public relations efforts utilizing symbolic codes and signs that presented Turkey’s western orientation, features of cultural and social life held in common and the new values of the country. The aim was for Turkey to be treated equally with western nations and the entrenched negative conceptions concerning Turkey, Turkishness and Turkish citizens could be eliminated.

Although, at that time, these attempts were not regarded as public relations, the leading cadres of young republic realized the importance of strategic communication to develop relationships with citizens of other countries' and generate new perspectives both at home and abroad.

The image cultivation practices of the Turkish Republic during its establishment and afterwards were planned and managed professionally through both overseas and domestic agencies, and a number of communicative activities were realized. In this sense, it should be noted that these endeavours were strategically oriented, deliberately focused and carefully managed in consideration of the different overseas target audiences. During the years from 1920 to 1955 media relations, international exhibitions and fairs were the main tools arenas in which this image was promoted. Furthermore, due to economic constraints and the lack of prevalent media, alternative media was created, such as floating exhibitions, hence different ways of national promotion were sustained. Considering the vision of these inspired endeavours that time in history, they should be regarded as milestones in the history of public relations both national and international.

References

- Ahıska, M. (2005). *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik*. Metis: İstanbul.
- Akçura, G. (2009). *Türkiye Sergicilik ve Fuarçılık Tarihi*. Tarih Vakfı: İstanbul.
- Altoona Tribune*, 6 August 1926
- Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 1926,
- Byerly, C. (1993). "Toward a Comprehensive History of Public Relations", Paper presented in public relations division AEJMC, August 1993. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED361812.pdf>. Retrieved: April 8 2014.
- Çelik, Z. (1992). *Displaying The Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*. Berkeley: University California Press.
- Cumhuriyet*, 12 September 1936.
- Cumhuriyet*, 12 September 1936.
- Cumhuriyet*, 16 August 1937.
- Cumhuriyet*, 19 December 1947.
- Cumhuriyet*, 25 February 1957.
- Cumhuriyet*, 26 March 1932.
- Cumhuriyet*, 27 March 1932.
- Cumhuriyet*, 28 March 1932.
- Cumhuriyet*, 3 August 1936.
- Cumhuriyet*, 30 Nisan 1932.
- Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1952.
- Cumhuriyet*, 5 October 1952.
- Cumhuriyet*, 6 September 1952.

- Ezine, C. (1940). *Amerika Mektupları*. İstanbul: Kenan Basımevi.
- Gençtürk Hızal, G. S. (2012). “Cumhuriyetin İlk Dönemlerinde Bir ‘Rıza Mühendisi’: Vedat Nedim Tör”, *Journal of Turkish Studies/TUBA*, 37, pp. 153-176.
- İskit, S. (1939). *Matbuat Rejimleri*. Ankara: Ülkü Yayınevi.
- Kunczik, M. (1997). *Images of Nations and International Public Relations*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc: New Jersey.
- Lamme, M.O. and Miller Russell, K. (2009). “Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations History”, *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 2009 (11), pp. 280-362. DOI: 10.1177/152263791001100402.
- Milliyet*, 22 July 1954.
- Milliyet*, 24 May 1953.
- Milliyet*, 31 May 1953.
- Milliyet*, 8 July 1954.
- Newport Mercury*, 3 April 1953.
- Oran, B. (2003) (Ed.). *Türk Dış Politikası Cilt I (1919-1980)* (8th edition). İletişim: İstanbul.
- Retrieved: 14 May 2014.
- Stambul Bazaar in Thames (1926). “Stambul Bazaar in Thames: 1926”, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/stamboul-bazaar-in-the-thames/query/Deniz>.
- Suad, A. (1926). *Istanbul Sehremaneti Mecmuası*.
- Sünnetçioğlu, K. (1944). *1939 Nev York Sergisi Seyahat Hatıraları*. İstanbul: Güven Basımevi.
- The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 25 July 1926,
- The Indiana Gazette*, 27 August 1952
- The Post Standard*, 20 May 1952.
- The Turkish Exhibits at the New York World’s Fair Brochure (1939). “The Turkish Exhibits at The New York World’s Fair: 1939”, http://www.1939nyworldsfair.com/worlds_fair/wf_tour/zone-3/turkey/turkey.aspx. Retrieved: April 23 2014.
- TTOK (2014). “The History: The Touring and Automobile Club Of Turkey”, <http://www.turing.org.tr/eng/tarihcemiz.asp>. Retrieved: May 10 2014.
- Tunaya, T. Z. (2010). *Türkiye’nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri* (2nd edition). İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları: İstanbul.
- Uzun, R. and Asrak, H. T. (2010). “Genç Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin Üst Yapı Kurumları: Matbuat Umum Müdürlüğü, Anadolu Ajansı, Radyo”, Nazife Güngör (Ed.), *Cumhuriyet Döneminde İletişim*, Ankara: Siyasal Yayınevi, pp. 77-100.
- Wang, J. (2006). “Managing National Reputation and International Relations in The Global Era: Public Diplomacy Revisited”, *Public Relations Review*, 32, pp. 91-96.
- Zalesch, S. (2009). “Turkey at New York World’s Fair 1939”, <http://ephemerastudies.org/gallery/turkey-at-new-york-worlds-fair-1939>. Retrieved: 13 May 2014.
- Zelef, H. (1993). *A Research on the Representation of Turkish National Identity: Buildings Abroad*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Middle East Technical University.