



## Tourism as a Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy from the Perspective of Women Ambassadors: The Case of Africa

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse one of the soft power elements of foreign policy: the tourism industry, Turkey-Africa relations in particular from the perspective of Turkish women ambassadors in Africa. In Africa's tourism sector, Turkey will create added value both for Africa and in terms of gaining economic and political power in Africa on the international platform. In this context, the positive developments since the 2000s, noting Turkey-Africa relations in tourism, will form the basis of this study. From this perspective considering the increasing number of women diplomats in Turkey and in the world of diplomacy, this study focuses on the evaluation of the tourism ambassadorship of Turkish women in Africa. In fact, the worldwide cracks that have begun in the male-dominated structure in diplomacy have also been effective in Turkey. Thus, female ambassadors were appointed to 16 of the 42 Turkish Embassies in Africa. Therefore, the effect of female ambassadors, who have an important place in Turkish foreign policy in Africa with their representation rate of 30%, has not only been limited to the development of tourism relations, but been an important factor that triggers cooperation in every field imaginable in Turkey's relations with African countries. Based on this, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with female Turkish ambassadors in Zambia, Rwanda, South Africa and Ethiopia. Within the scope of the interviews (Turkish women ambassadors in Africa), the number of tourists in the country they are in for the tourism sector, tourist information activities, studies on services offered to Turkish tourists, visa agreements, the presence of a tourism agency, bilateral tourism agreements, Turkish investors' investments in the tourism sector, and women's employment in the tourism sector are analysed. In the analysis, there is a general consensus on the need to increase investments in areas such as transportation, energy, water and telecommunications, as well as infrastructural problems, the problem of reduction in biodiversity, which is a result of climate change, security (e.g., terrorism, ethnic separatist movements), political and economic stability problems. It is concluded that there is an important potential that can be developed in the fields of adventure tourism, convention and fair tourism, and health tourism, if a solution is found.

### Article Type

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