Master Thesis

A qualitative case study of the influence of Sunny Beach on Bulgaria in a tourism context

Destination Image
and the affect on destination choice

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Abstract

The aspect of destination image in a tourism context has become increasingly important in the battle for attracting tourists in a world where the competition within the tourism industry keeps increasing.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the questions regarding people's perception of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria as tourist destinations. The thesis aims to investigate the importance of destination image in the case of Sunny Beach and how this destination image influences people's interest in visiting the tourist destination of Bulgaria. The study went in depth with the formation and construction of these images and furthermore addressed the issues of any influential inter-connection between the two images. The thesis also addressed how the destination images influence people's destination choice process.

The research is based on the selected theories in combination with a conducted online qualitative survey and a number of qualitative interviews. The chosen target group is represented by 26 people of the survey and 8 people in the interviews, all Danish and in the age between 25 and 35 years old.

It was found that the images, to a large extent, are formed in the organic phase of the destination image formation process, especially highly influenced by one single TV-show. The destination images were primarily constructed by external and internal inputs. These inputs consist of a number of diverse stimuli, where especially the symbolic stimuli dominate. It was found that the images of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach can be described as being rather simplistic and baldly. The two images were widely held by the absolute vast majority of the people, why a conclusion towards being stereotypes were relevant. Furthermore, the Bulgarian image was concluded to be both rather simplistic, but also distorted, concentrating on the aspect of alcohol tourism aimed at the youth segment. Additionally, the study showed that the widely held image of Bulgaria is highly influenced by the likewise widely held image of Sunny Beach and thus is was concluded that a unidirectional influence exists between the two widely held images. Hence, both images bring associations towards alcohol tourism, young drunken teenagers partying all night.

The associations of these images are of a rather negative character according to the targeted segment, why these also influences the segment's destination choice process. The affect on the choice of destination, however, is as negative as the images. The people within the targeted segment have absolutely no interest in visiting Bulgaria as long as they have this particular mental perception of the destinations.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recently I had the pleasure of being chosen for spending six months working and exploring the beautiful and to many Danes unknown South-Eastern European country of Bulgaria. Already in the initial phase of the stay when I was still in Denmark announcing to friends and acquaintances that I was going to spend the next six months in Bulgaria I was confronted with an initial question addressing if I was going to Sunny Beach. Often being said with a certain smile on the face implying that I was going to Sunny Beach to party, drink and enjoy myself for the next six months. After a while, the comment of Sunny Beach actually started to bother me, because for me, going to spend six months in Bulgaria was a huge thing and furthermore it was an important matter in my educational and professional life. Hence, I wanted to be taken seriously when telling that I was going to spend six month in Bulgaria. After, continuously, being confronted with the comment of Sunny Beach whenever people asked me where I was going to do my internship, instead of mentioning Bulgaria, I started saying that I was going to spend it in Sofia. I quickly realised that most people were unaware of where Sofia is situated and therefore, I suppose, to avoid revealing their ignorance, most people did not ask more after being told that I was going to Sofia. Primarily, it was from people at my own age that I met this initial confrontation, which increased my curiosity regarding this aspect.

Hence, this initial confrontation with associations between Bulgaria and Sunny Beach initiated my curiosity about how people at my own age, the post youth segment, in Denmark perceive Bulgaria as a tourist destination and whether or not this initial perception of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria could be a more general perception among people at my own age in Denmark.

Thousands and thousands of tourists visit Bulgaria each year, why the tourist industry in the country plays a major role in the Bulgarian economy. The industry generates as much as 11 per cent of Bulgaria's GDP (The Danish Embassy Sofia, 2013). Most of this money is generated along the coast of the Bulgarian Black Sea during the four summer months, which accounts for more than 60 per cent of the overall number of visitors in Bulgaria during the year (National Statistical Institute (NSI), 2014). The biggest and most visited destination along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is the destination of Sunny Beach, which has been a traditional tourist destination for Danish tourists for quite some years (BulgarienView, 2013). Because of the continuously importance of the tourism industry, attracting tourists in the years to come is rather important.

In the pursuit of attracting more tourists, one of the important aspects, is the destination image. Hence, during the last three decades a large number of academic studies concerning image and destination image have been completed (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu &

McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chen & Phou, 2012; Gartner, 1986; Pike, 2002; Reilly, 1990; Shani & Wang, 2011; Tasci & Holecek, 2007; Tasci et al., 2007; et al.). These studies acknowledge the importance of a tourist destination's image in today's world of marketing and are thus fully acknowledged among both practitioners as well as academic experts studying within this field of topic (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza et al., 2002). Furthermore, studies show that the destination image is rather significant is the tourists' process of choosing a destination to visit (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Tasci et al., 2007; Shani & Wang, 2011).

During the last five years, the destination of Sunny Beach has experienced a massive amount of publicity in the Danish media world. The exposure, however, has not always been of a positive character and it has mostly been concerned with the topic of young Danish people partying senselessly drunk while caring less and less about themselves and their surroundings. Thus, these articles and general publicity in the Danish media point towards a destination that, to a large extent, in the media, has become synonymous with a place where young people from the entire Europe go in the summer to party, drink and enjoy themselves. In relation to these escapades, the last couple of years, Danish people have been able to follow some of the happenings in Sunny Beach on TV. A TV crew has followed Danish bartenders and event personnel displaying these young Danish people and their summer in Sunny Beach. These people are, to a large extent, shown drunk or in the act of drinking alcohol at a certain bar in Sunny Beach. Drinking competitions, pub-crawls and other happenings involving alcohol is everyday life in the TV show, naturally causing certain associations among people of how vacation in Sunny Beach is like.

These associations about vacation in Sunny Beach have helped start my curiosity regarding the aspect of how Sunny Beach is perceived by people at my own age. Hence, this thesis investigates the relation between these associations and the perceptions of Sunny Beach. Furthermore, it becomes interesting to investigate how the perception of Sunny Beach influences the perception of the rest of Bulgaria as a tourist destination.

As the stories in the Danish media suggests (Hansen, 2013; Hove, 2011; Leth, 2011; Madsen, 2013), the tourist destination has almost been overtaken by young adults from the Western part of Europe spending their summer drinking, playing and partying and with studies showing that tourism, within the age group between 25-35 years, is considered to have great potential and appeal, along with the natural interest due to personal experiences, interest in this particular travellers segment becomes clear (Chen et al., 2012). Investigating how the associations made to these young people influences the targeted segment and their interest in

visiting the destination is rather interesting, however the affect that these associations have on the rest of Bulgaria as a tourist destination is even more interesting to investigate.

The targeted segment of this thesis will concern people in the age between 25-35 years. The reason for this is closely related to the motivation behind this research. As the researcher was met with initial presumptions from people at my own age about the association between Bulgaria and Sunny Beach, which initiated this research and clearly defined the targeted segment. Additionally, choosing this segment also relates to the physical limitations of this study. Choosing this segment narrows down the area of focus, which ensures full focus of the segment instead of a more widespread and perhaps shallow focus of looking at people in general.

The study aims to bring new knowledge to the academic field of destination image influencing the destination choice process of tourists. Studies within this field, so far, have not been contextualized to a Bulgarian context, why this thesis furthermore aims to do so. Additionally, the thesis will bring new nuances to aspect of destination image and its affect on the process of destination choice in a contemporary tourism context. The thesis aims to bring indications of the importance of destination image, as is acknowledged by the theoreticians and researchers of this topic. Tourist destination marketers can use this study to give an indication of how important destination image is in relation to people's interest in visiting other destinations in that particular country.

1.1 Problem Statement

This thesis is a qualitative study of the Danish post youth segment's attitudes towards Bulgaria as a tourist destination. The primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the destination image of Sunny Beach as a tourist destination in the minds of the post youth segment in order to clarify how this image influence the destination image of Bulgaria as a tourist destination, as Sunny Beach has been the subject of much attention in the Danish media. The problem statement will be accessed in terms of a theoretical framework addressing diverse theoretical aspects. First of all, destination image theory including the aspects of formation and construction of destination image is set to secure compliance in the image analysis of the diverse destination images. Secondly, destination choice theory is set to address the aspects of the segment's choice of destination aiming to explain what affect the images have on the process of destination choice. Hence:

How does Danish adults in the post youth segment in the age between 25-35 years perceive Sunny Beach as a tourist destination and how does it affect the destination image of Bulgaria and the segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria in general?

The research of this paper can be categorised as a case study, more specifically a single qualitative case study, which Robson (2002: 178, cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) explains as:

"*a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence*"

The study is seen as a single qualitative case study in the matter of Robson's explanation of this approach, because the images of the particular case of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach in relation. The perceptions from the people studied in this thesis create an imagery influence on the choice taken by the people of the segment. The topic of this research is surely a contemporary phenomenon as it is a process that is currently undergoing.

1.1.1 Research questions

Thus, the problem statement can be divided into the following research questions:

- How do the Danish post youth segment perceive Sunny Beach and Bulgaria as tourist destinations?

- In what ways do these two images affect each other? Is there any inter-influential effect of the images of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria?
- In what way does the image of Sunny Beach affect the post youth segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria?

The first research question intends to study the images of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria in the minds of the post youth segment, which is related to destination image formation and construction (Gunn, 1972, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). This question is the more dominating in this thesis, why it is considered as 50 per cent of the analysis. The second research question is aimed at analysing how the two images affect one another, which is important in terms of answering the last research question intending to study the segment's destination choice process and what role image plays in this (Um & Crompton, 1990). The second question is a pre questions of the last research question two should be regarded as 10 per cent and the last questions regarded as 40 per cent. It is the intension that these research questions will bring the thesis closer to answering the initial problem statement and thus along with the chosen theories create a framework for this thesis.

2.0 CHAPTER 2

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this thesis takes its stance in the beliefs of Bryman (2012) and Guba (1990) regarding paradigms as a fundamental matter within a piece of research. The paradigm of a research study can be defined as a cluster of beliefs influencing what should be studied, how the research should be carried out and how the results of the research should be interpreted (Bryan, 2012). And according to Guba (1990) the paradigm of a research study can be divided into different systems of belief. Each system of belief is based on three important elements; ontology, epistemology and methodology.

2.1.1 Ontological beliefs

First of all, the ontological element concerns the nature of reality (Guba, 1990; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Bryman (2012, p. 32) describes, ontology to be "*… the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors".* In other words it concerns the considerations of social phenomena and whether they exists externally to our social influence or if the phenomena is a product of social interaction (Bryman, 2012). In the case of the topic of this study it is important to determine and clarify to what extent, the image of Sunny Beach is created by the social actions of human interaction or whether it exists independent from these social actions. Stating the ontological position is thus rather important in this matter. According to Guba (1990) the overall and traditional belief system is the positivism paradigm, which is dominated by a realist ontology and thus constrained to an epistemological position as objetivist. A positivism belief system is focused on objectivity and the fact that a reality external to the actions of social actors exists. Furthermore, the paradigm is mostly aimed at ending up with a product or study where *"law-like generalisations"* can be made (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). That is, however, not the purpose of this study, why the positivism paradigm in this study seems pointless to take upon. Instead, I will be looking at the problem of Sunny Beach's image among the post youth segment of Danish people and it's affect of the image of Bulgaria from an ontological position of constructionism adopting Bryman's (2012) definition of this position. It is the belief "*that social phenomena and their meaning is continually being accomplished by social actors"* (Bryman, 2012, p.33), meaning that multiple realities exist because they are created in minds of social actors (Guba, 1990). The ontology of this particular study is a reality that is socially constructed and therefore only consists of all

the opinions and interpretations of all the individuals involved in this research (Guba, 1990). Thus, this particular ontology allows the targeted group individually to have a perception of the reality. There is no absolute truth about the image of Sunny Beach. Instead of this absolute truth there are numerous interpretations of the topic and thus an equal number of ways to investigate the problem, which will be approached later. A destination image can, to a large extent, be described as being of a nature that is often created individually among human beings according to the beliefs, ideas and impressions of this particular individual (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a). Two people can easily hold two different images of the same destination, due to diverse beliefs, ideas and impressions about this particular destination (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a). The image is in constant change due to the actions of human beings as social actors. Hence, it is not an objective entity that has a reality that exists externally to these social actors.

2.1.2 Epistemological beliefs

Secondly, the epistemological element of this research is concerned with *"… the relationship between the knower and the known"* (Guba, 1990, p. 18). In Bryman's (2012) words, epistemology concerns the considerations of how the social world should be studied. As researcher it is important to relate to what is acceptable knowledge of a research and what is not (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Within an epistemological stance of positivism collecting and describing concrete and crude data often dominate the study. This would have made the researcher keen on analysing "real" and tangible objects that were measurable. In this philosophy the researcher is sworn to the laws of natural scientist (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), which means that the researcher only relies on observable data as being credible. This thesis, however, is looking to be dominated by quite the opposite of this. The world is a subjective place in which, as mentioned above, each individual experience and interpret according to our own beliefs.

This thesis is looking to collect and analyse data that cannot be touched or observed. In this thesis, feelings and attitudes toward Sunny Beach and Bulgaria will be collected and analysed, making it clear that taking upon an interpretivism point of view is the right position to reach the goal of this thesis. Taking upon an interpretivism philosophy accepts the fact that it is necessary to understand the differences between human beings and social actors. In Bryman's (2012, p. 30) universe, it can be described as *"… predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences…"* It is believed that the participants of this study can view the image of Sunny Beach differently according to their preferences and possible position in life. Consequently, this research is closely connected to the views of this post youth segment without intending to uncover the

"ultimate truth", but rather to gain a deeper understanding of their impressions, attitudes and feelings towards Bulgaria and Sunny Beach as tourist destinations.

Furthermore, it is believed that these social actors have a strong and significant impact on the world (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Therefore, also acknowledging the fact that understanding and searching for this is to be found through interpreting the minds of the adult participants of this research. And the best possible way to acquire an insight in the reality of these Danish adults is through dialog and interpretation, which is also to be explained in the methodology section later.

2.1.3 Methodology

The last element of the paradigm, methodology, is concerned with the question of which methods the researcher is to use in the data generating process (Guba, 1990). The use of methods is strongly connected and related to the research philosophies adopted in this study. As mentioned above, a positivism paradigm often, but not always, aims to be concerned with numbers and tangible entities, why these often are investigated trough quantitative methods (Bryman, 2012). Contrary to what Bryman (2012) believes, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) is more liberal in their opinion about studying within a positivism paradigm, believing that qualitative research methods also can be used within the positivism paradigm. As a contradiction to the positivism paradigm, the constructivism paradigm often aims to collect and interpret intangible objects such as emotions and attitudes, why a qualitative study might be more suiting (Guba, 1990; Bryman, 2012). Hence, in terms of this case it is important to clarify and justify what methodological approach will be undertaken. This will be explained within the section of research design.

Additionally, when doing an investigating research study it is very important that the researcher clearly defines how to approach the study in a methodological sense. The outcome of a research study can be significantly different depending on what methodological approaches the researcher chooses for the particular study. Therefore, agreeing with Bryman (2012) that taking upon a quantitative approach is focused on numbers and patterns of these, this thesis focuses on the opposite, namely a qualitative study concerned with the reasons and attitudes behind the data and patterns. In terms of this study, the methodology is decided in terms of the problem formulation. This thesis strive to answer the problem formulation in the best possible way, which dominates the choice of methods in interaction with the theories chosen in the process. This thesis strives to investigate opinions, impression and attitudes, why a qualitative methodological study is chosen.

Because of the close interactions between theories and methods it is important to clearly define the relation of these in terms of this study.

Generally, according to Bryman (2012), the researcher differs between two different overall methods regarding the relationship between theory and research. Theory can be guidance to the study; the deductive approach or theories can be an outcome of the research also known as an inductive approach. The research of this paper is hard to define as being of an entirely deductive or inductive nature. The approach of this research, however, is more concerned within the term of hermeneutics, which Bryman (2012, p. 28) describes as *"… the theory and method of the interpretations of human actions".* Thus, hermeneutics deals with the understanding of human actions in a context of social studies, which also was underlined in the determination of the epistemological considerations of this research. Hence, the approach adapted in this study can be determined as a hermeneutical approach with certain inductive and deductive elements.

The hermeneutic approach undertaken in this research and the interpretivism position of epistemology is strongly connected in terms of the interpretive matter, complementing each other quite well. Behind the first ideas about the interpretivism epistemology is, according to Bryman, (2012), the hermeneutic thoughts about the understanding and interpretation of texts. The hermeneutic approach with an epistemological position of interpretivism is thus concerned with the interpretation of human behaviour as social actors. As this study is related to and interested in the attitudes and impressions of human beings the hermeneutic approach is ideal.

Figur 1 - The hermeneutic circle (self-made, 2014)

Furthermore, the hermeneutic approach can be seen in the fact that, as this process moves forward, the researcher generates more and more in depth knowledge, which is a process undergoing throughout the entire study. The hermeneutic circle, as illustrated, is a continuously and never-ending process, as illustrated in figure 1. Thus, the secondary empirical data has been used in both the analysis as well as in the initiating process of this thesis to supply the researcher with indications of how Sunny Beach and Bulgaria is perceived by the Danish people in the targeted segment.

The hermeneutic knowledge generation process, as it is illustrated in the hermeneutic circle, can be linked to how the empirical and theoretical data are connected to the

problem statement in an iterative process, allowing the researcher to move back and forth between the theories, problem statement and different empirical findings gathered throughout the process. An example of the iterative process undergoing within the hermeneutic circle is the dynamical process of altering the research questions, as the research moves forward and more in depth knowledge is generated.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

How does Danish adults in the post youth segment in the age between 25-35 years perceive Sunny Beach as a tourist destination and how does it affect the destination image of Bulgaria and the segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria in general?

THEORY
Destination Theory
Destination Image Theory
Decision Making Theory

Analysis and interpreta-tion of the researcher

EMPIRICAL DATA
Primary Data (Interviews & Online Survey) and secondary data (academic articles, netnography etc.)

FURTHER PERSPECTIVES FOR RESEARCHERS and PRACTITIONERS & CONCLUSION

Figur 2 - Research approach (self-made, 2014)

2.2 Research design

The research of this study is conducted on the basis of a single qualitative case study, examining the attitudes towards the before mentioned destinations. According to Robson (2002: 178, cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) a case study can be described as: "*a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence*". In the case of this thesis it is reflected in the studying of the phenomena of Sunny Beach and how this affects Danish people within the age category of 25-35 years. This definition will be adapted in this study, since I feel that it is connected significantly well with the acting of this research. A case study research is often used to explore and obtain an understanding of a

special phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This particular study aims at exploring the contemporary phenomenon of the image of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria in the minds of young Danish adults why it is believed that a single case study in this context is suitable.

The single case study allows me to obtain an understanding by exploring and examining the feelings and attitudes relating to the particular case of this topic. The status of the case is also introduced in the introduction to this study, where the increasing exposure of Sunny Beach and how most of this exposure is related to drunkenness, parties and young adults behaving scandalous at the destination, is mentioned. This research therefore attempts to clarify how Danish adults in the ages between 25-35 years are influenced by reputation and image of this single destination and how this affects their interest in visiting the country.

In the process of deciding a single case study, a comparative case study design was considered as well. However, the rather extreme case of Sunny Beach made it hard to compare it to other destinations that possibly could seem to have a comparative nature. Furthermore, a comparative case study design is often used to *"illuminate existing theory or generate theoretical insights as a result of contrasting findings uncovered through the comparison"* (Bryman, 2012, p. 710). This is, however, not the purpose of this study, why this thesis strictly concerns the Bulgarian case.

As indicated, the nature of this research draws upon a qualitative research strategy including qualitative research methods. As Bryman (2012) concludes, the strategy draws upon words rather than numbers, indicating that the purpose of a qualitative strategy compared to a quantitative strategy, is to clarify the views and opinions behind the actions. According to Bryman (2012) two of the key elements of a qualitative study are the epistemological and ontological positions of interpretivism and constructivist respectively - positions also dominating this research.

With the qualitative nature of this study in mind, the points of critique regarding qualitative research has been considered as well. According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research is often accused of being too subjective, however, the critique often comes from quantitative researchers, making the critique rather hollow. Furthermore, this qualitative study can be very hard to replicate, because of the important role of the investigator. Agreeing with Bryman (2012), the investigator is the main source of data in this study, why his view of what is significant is difficult to replicate and therefore, other researchers making the same study would have certain difficulties collecting similar data if they tend to emphasize on something different. Thirdly, according to quantitative researchers, qualitative research often face difficulties in generalization of the results, because it is argued that a study based on only a limited number of qualitative interviews this cannot be made representable for other settings

(Bryman, 2012). This thesis, however agrees with M. Williams' (2000, cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 406) argumentation of what he calls *moderatum generalizations*. He argues that individuals that are interviewed, as is the case in this study, in a qualitative research *"can be seen to be instances of a broader set of recognizable features"* (Williams, 2000, cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 406). Thus, adapting the belief in this study, it is believable that the findings of the qualitative interviews and the qualitative online survey can be regarded as features representable for large parts of the targeted segment.

2.3 Method triangulation

A triangulation of methods will be used to collect the empirical data of this thesis. Triangulating methods ensures that the empirical data is conducted from more than one source enabling cross checking the data (Bryman, 2012). In this case, however, it is more important that the data originates from diverse sources rather than the data being cross-checked. The study is of a qualitative nature, why it is important to reach a high level of understanding of the respondent's attitudes toward the subjects. This is more likely to be reached by employing multiple sources of data, because more sources supply the thesis with more diverse angels and views of the phenomena studied. As the study is of a qualitative character within the epistemological universe of interpretivism there is no right and wrong answers, why crosschecking the extracted data seems pointless. This thesis is interested in a more nuanced view of the topic, why also multiple sources of data have been used.

The empirical data for this study will primarily be supplied by two diverse qualitative methods. First of all, a qualitative online survey will be conducted. This survey is rather stringent and without any opportunity for the researcher to ask additional and follow up questions based on the answers from the respondents. Hence, this survey will be supplemented with eight qualitative interviews ensuring flexibility and follow-up questions. These interviews have been conducted after the survey, allowing the answers from the survey to be used in the interviews. This has provided a deeper understanding of the attitude. These two methods will be explained further in the next paragraphs.

2.3.1 Qualitative online survey

The popular online social media, Facebook, was used to conduct an online qualitative survey. The online qualitative survey can be argued to have certain similarities with both structured interviews as well as self-completion questionnaires. According to Bryman (2012) they have a little of both. According to the statistics, the percentage of Facebook users within the target group of Danish adults in the ages between 25-35 years is relatively high (Nielsen, 2013), why

the use of Facebook for this online qualitative survey ensures easy access to and a possibility to reach a majority of the target segment. Since this study is of a qualitative nature, the response rate is less important than in a quantitative study aiming to generalize. As mentioned, this study is more interested in the attitudes, impressions and opinions behind the decisions. However, even though the focus is on the qualitative nature of the answers, a high response rate still would supply me with more answers to study and thereby reaching more nuances and diverse angels of the attitudes of this the topic. Therefore, potentially only few answers from the survey would not supply me with much empirical data to base the analysis on. In a qualitative study, few answers is a relative entity, however in this case only a handful answers perhaps would have been too few, since the amount of data usable for the analysis would have been very little. The survey, however, supplied me with 26 answers from a broad demographic specter of people within the targeted segment.

Hence, this method helped me to reach a satisfactory number of people within the target group. However, to exceed my own network within this social media world the survey needs to be "shared" by friends of mine. Doing so would ensure that the survey reaches people outside my own network and thus ensures diversification within the target group. Diversification within the respondents is important in order to ensure a broad perspective on the topics and thereby supply the thesis with opinions from diverse respondents within the target group. In this thesis, it is believed that people tends to be influenced by one another, why people within the same network could be influenced by each other. The survey was conducted using the online survey tool Survey Monkey. To ensure that it was people within the target group, people were asked to state their age in the beginning of the survey. Furthermore, in the note that was posted on Facebook it was mentioned that only the opinions of people in the ages between 25-35 years were interesting.

A problematic aspect of the survey, however, was the lack of transparency in terms of who actually fills out the survey. Even though it was stated in the introduction to the survey that only people within the targeted segment was relevant, it cannot be guaranteed 100 percent that the respondents are actually who they say they are, which could influence the level of credibility of the study negatively.

Another pitfall connected to the online survey is the respondents' interpretation of the questions. Luckily there are no right and wrong answers in the survey, however, it cannot be guaranteed that the respondents' interpretation of the questions is equal to how the questions intentionally were supposed to be interpreted and thereby the answers could differ quite strongly from what is expected. This, however, could also generate some positive and diverse aspects that would not have been given thought on beforehand, which then can be posed and elaborated in the qualitative interviews explained below.

The survey is characterized by having a rather tight structure, leaving no room for the researcher to ask for elaboration on the given answers. The researcher therefore, does not have the opportunity to ask for a clarification of the given answers, if respondents were to answer unclearly. Hence, this method was supplied with a number of qualitative interviews explained in the next paragraph. The survey was divided into diverse topics ensuring that the respondents were not aware of which topics to be covered in the survey and thereby were forced to consider one subject at the time. This ensured that the other subjects did not influence the respondents and thereby create biased answers, which is not interesting in this thesis. Only the initial non-influenced opinions of the respondents were interesting. The survey was conducted in Danish in order for the respondents to come up with the most comprehensive answers and hence not leaving out anyone who might not be strong in writing English. Furthermore, the survey was constructed from primarily open questions in a way that the respondents will have the opportunity to answer what comes to his or her mind when reading the questions. The start of the survey is very general, hoping to gain some general opinions of the respondents and what preferences they have. As the respondents' moves forward in the survey, they will be addressed with more specific topics. Using open questions in the survey allows the respondents to answer in their own terms (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, open questions allow answers that are dominated by the nature of the interpretation of the questions. One of the negative aspects of using open questions is the fact that they tend to require a greater effort from the respondents, because they are asked to write something themselves, instead of ticking off what expression they believe fits their opinion. In this particular case it looks as if it has affected the patience of the respondents. Looking at the answers of the survey it becomes clear that the answers in the first half of the survey are significantly longer than in the second half, which indicate that the focus from the respondents was hard to keep throughout the entire survey.

In addition to the open questions, yes/no questions with an additional "why" were posed in the survey as well. These questions were posed in order to make it clear, how the respondents view different aspects. Again this was done in order to have as much elaboration from the respondents as possible, as this thesis looks to investigate opinions and attitudes. To increase the level of understanding of the questions and thereby minimize the confusion, theoretical terms deliberately were not mentioned in the survey. Therefore, the survey was done in a vocabulary framework that comes close to the everyday jargon that the respondents know. Furthermore, this is done to bring the researcher in eye level with the respondents, because it is believed that this will generate the best results.

Additionally, the questions of the survey have been tested on beforehand to ensure that the questions are understandable and easy to answer. The questions of the survey and how it was

build up can be seen in Appendix C, while the answers given in the survey can be seen electronically in Appendix D.

2.3.2 Qualitative interviews

To supplement the online qualitative survey, eight qualitative interviews were conducted. However, before choosing to proceed with the qualitative interviews, the qualitative method of doing a focus group interview was considered as well. The focus group interview would have given the opportunity to bring forth synergies produced during the interview along with spontaneous reactions on the particular topics discussed at the interview (Kvale, 2007). The focus group method is thus well suited for exploring meanings, perceptions and attitudes towards the exact topic, as is the case with the qualitative interviews. It allows each individual to share that person's opinion and at the same time be inspired by what it shared by the other individuals in the group (Kvale, 2007). This method, however, has certain pitfalls, which in this case would overpower the value of the positive aspects of the method. This thesis agrees with Kvale (2007) that the people involved in a potential focus group interview could be affected by each other's answers and thus the answers given is not guaranteed to be immediate and completely honest, influencing the research. Bryman (2012) introduces this as the group effect, however in this case it is believed it to be more negative than positive. Hence, the qualitative interviews were chosen instead. Using this method, in this particular case, is believed to increase the level of honesty in the answers of the interviewees compared to doing a focus group interview. The level of credibility of the answers is heightened, as it is believed that the interviewees are more likely to share their absolute honest opinion about the particular topics of the interview. This aspect will be elaborated in section 2.5. At the same time, the qualitative interviews likewise provide the opportunity to bring forth spontaneous reactions of the particular topic of this research from the interviewee (Kvale, 2007). Image is related to people's attitudes, beliefs and opinions about a particular place (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993), why the immediately or spontaneous reaction of the interviewees are rather interesting in this context.

The interviews were organized as semi-structured, dominated by certain themes covered and allowing additional questions to be posed if such should occur in the mind of the interviewer (Appendix B). Furthermore, it allows the interviewee to add additional information or thoughts about the topic if this should become relevant (Kvale, 2007). Hence, the qualitative interview often encourages the interviewee going off at tangents, giving the interviewer insights into what that particular interviewee sees as important and relevant in terms of the topic (Bryman, 2012). This was also the case in some of the interviews, where the interviewee initiated talks about topics such as the destination of Prague, which lead to information and angles on the topic that was not thought of on beforehand. The nature of the qualitative

interview allows the researcher to interpret the answers of the interviewees, which is in compliance with the ontological stance of this study. Furthermore, this method of interviewing allowed the interviewer to pose follow-up questions, leading to certain topics being explored even further (Kvale, 1996, cited in Bryman, 2012). This requires that the interviewer is fully attentive to what is being said by the interviewee.

Furthermore, the method allows the researcher to form an impression of the different viewpoints of the participants (Kvale, 2007).

Even though multiple positive arguments pro qualitative interviews exist, the pitfalls regarding qualitative interviews were taken into consideration when choosing this method as well. First of all, the fact that the interview primarily relies on verbal behavior could pose issues regarding certain matters that the interviewees could take for granted and therefore do not say anything about (Bryman, 2012). In addition, using qualitative interviews there is always the threat that the interviewees does not answer what they really mean, but instead replies what they think the interviewer would like to hear. To prevent this from happening, the interviewees were not told anything about the topic of the study on beforehand, but instead asked to say what comes to their mind when asked the question.

The interviews were held face-to-face, ensuring the interviewer to watch the reactions of the interviewee and easily adding the follow up question if something were to be elaborated based on the certain reaction on the particular question posed. An example of this is the fact that all interviews are not totally alike. They differ in accordance to how each person answers the questions. As can be seen from the interview guide (Appendix B), one guide for all interviews was used. Some of the interviewees, however, were unaware of the destination of Golden Sands, why the questions regarding this destination were omitted from the interview and instead focus was taken to other subjects. Moreover, the interviews were recorded ensuring the highest level of details and thereby it allows a more thorough examination of what the interviewees have said (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, recording the interviews also helps to correct the potential limitations within the memories of the researcher and allows the researcher to concentrate on listening to what the interviewee says allowing the researcher to ask probing and follow up questions. As mentioned, the nature of this study is of a qualitative character, why this thesis is interested in not only what the interviewees say, but also the way they are said (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, to ease the use in the analysis the interviews were transcribed and can be seen electronically in Appendix E.

Participants of the qualitative interviews are:

Because of anonymity the participants of the qualitative interviews will only be mentioned by their first name. Their age is mentioned in parentheses, as it is important according to the

target group being investigated in this study. Thus, the occupational statuses of the interviewees are mentioned as well in order to explicate the diversity among the interviewees.

- Rasmus (28) – Administrative employee
- Nikolai (25) – Job seeking
- Stine (26) – Master student in communication
- Anders (25) – Studying engineering
- Christian (27) – Trade Marketing Manager
- Nina (28) – Doctor
- Jonas (28) – Marine engineer student
- Cecilie (26) – Dental Hygienist

Common for all participants of the qualitative interviews is that they are currently situated in Aalborg. Some of the participants are acquaintances to the researcher, while the rest have been found in the city of Aalborg. The acquaintances are chosen because they represent the target segment and the fact that they are not close friends of the researcher means that they have no knowledge about the study and are therefore not biased.

To avoid influencing the participants by the knowledge of the researcher, they have been told nothing about the study on beforehand. This also helps minimizing the risk of biases. They were asked to answer with absolute honesty on the questions posed by the interviewer. They were told that there is no right or wrong in this matter, ensuring that the participants do not feel that they have to give, what they believe, is the right answer or what they feel that the interviewee wants to hear. Using this method compared to setting up a focus group interview heightens the level of honesty. The interviewees have been chosen to ensure a broad variety of respondents within the target group. Men and women, employed, unemployed and students have been chosen to represent the targeted segment in the best possible way.

2.3.3 Interview guide

The interview guide (See Appendix B) for the qualitative interviews have been structured according to the theoretical framework of this research. This ensures that the extracted data from this method is based on the theoretical frames of the study. First of all, by presenting some of those variables connected to the specific theories of destination image (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a; Gartner, 1986). Secondly, theoretical studies of previous research within destination image were used as inspirational sources for shaping the questions (Reilly, 1990; Gallarza et al., 2002). An example of this can be seen in the academic research paper by Reilly

(1990, p. 22), posing questions such as *"What three words best describe the state of Montana as a destination for vacation or pleasure travel?"*

The interview guide, however, is not solely based on the theoretical framework, but is to a larger extent also based on the personal experiences described in the introduction to this project. Those experiences can be linked to the questions posed in the interviews, since it has inspired me to investigate whether or not the encountered attitudes towards Bulgaria and Sunny Beach is a more widely spread phenomenon. In addition to own experiences a thorough content analysis of the information regarding Danish people's experiences in Sunny Beach posed in the Danish media the last five years has been conducted. This analysis have supplied me with a broad overview of what information the targeted Danish adults have been exposed to, allowing me to put my self in their position. Finally, the interview guide are also based on a netnographic study (Wu & Pearce, 2013) of several blogs and online forum, where average Danish people have expressed their opinions about vacationing in and traveling to Bulgaria and Sunny Beach in particular (Appendix A).

2.3.4 Netnography

Netnography is a rather new method of investigating consumer behavior, impressions and opinions. It has become even more useful for researchers as the popularity of online social communities, where people can share their thoughts and experiences, have increased (Kozinets, 1999, cited in Wu & Pearce, 2013). Within the last years, several studies within the field of tourism have been conducted using a netnographic approach (Mkono, 2011; Mkono, Markwell & Wilson, 2012; Podoshen, 2012; Podoshen & Hunt, 2011; Rageh, Melewar & Woodside, 2013), because a still increasing number of travelers share their thoughts and impressions online on diverse social platforms. Certain negative aspects of using netnography were taken into consideration as well. First of all, the identity of the online users, whose opinions were interesting in terms of this study, cannot be verified and therefore the identity behind the online users is very uncertain. Secondly, an ethical issue arose since the users were not contacted and therefore they were unaware of the fact that they were being studied (Janta, ?). Thirdly, the age of the online users investigated in the approach does not match the targeted segment, however, the approach still supplied this thesis with certain indications of how Danish people look at Bulgaria and Sunny Beach. Therefore, the age issue is not that important in this matter.

Netnography, however, is a powerful tool to gain insider perspectives on a certain topics of interest, why it is used in this study (Kozinets, 2002, cited in Wu & Pearce, 2013). Studying various online blogs and Internet forums have supplied this thesis with knowledge and certain indications regarding the impressions and attitudes toward traveling to Sunny Beach

and Bulgaria in general. Thus, this method has been used for both inspiring the initial thoughts of this study as well as in regards to posing questions in the survey and interviews.

2.4 Qualitative data analysis

The primary data extracted from the interviews and online survey will be exposed to a thematic analysis aiming to contextualize the data to the research questions of this thesis. The findings of the secondary data that was brought forth by the content analysis as well as the netnographic study of relevant online sources will be discussed in the analysis as well. Bringing in the secondary data to the discussion will add depth to the analysis and furthermore bring the discussion in the context enhancing the value of the analysis. Thematic analysis is a rather underdeveloped method of analyzing data (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of the method is to draw out themes from the data, which will ease the conditions for the readers while at the same time creating an overview. Additionally, this method will create a framework of the analysis, ensuring commonality as well as tight structure.

One of the issues of using this method is the subjectivity of the researcher. In this method, the researcher is solely deciding what themes are to be covered and discussed and therefore the themes chosen are the themes that are important in the view of this particular researcher. Thus, this is also connected to the interpretative nature of this study. Another researcher would, most likely, have come up with other themes to be covered.

2.5 Assessing the research - Trustworthiness of the qualitative research study

The trustworthiness of this qualitative research strategy is assessed in terms of four criteria – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2012). The trustworthiness of the study is important to evaluate in order to foresee that potential pitfalls is pointed out and taken into account. The four evaluation criteria is thus to ensure that the research is dominated by the best possible level of trustworthiness. In a qualitative study, the researcher does not have the ability to come up with a large number of statistical data, which can document the conclusions of the study, as is the case in a quantitative study. Reliability is concerned with the issue of consistency, which is of no intension in this study (Bryman, 2012). Validity, however, is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from the research and whether or not the measure of a concept really does measure that concept (Bryman, 2012). In terms of this study it is not the intention to clarify measurement, but instead identify certain beliefs and attitudes among the target group in accordance with the qualitative research strategy.

In a qualitative social study dominated by multiple accounts of social reality the issue of credibility is evident in order to determine the acceptability to others (Bryman, 2012). This study is carried out in accordance to good practice and the interviewees were afterwards given the reasons behind the study and what the researcher aims to obtain from the study. Therefore, in terms of this study, the credibility is argued to be on a rather high level. The issue of transferability is concerned with whether or not the findings actually do relate to the context of this thesis (Bryman, 2012). The primary data is obtained from interviews and survey that takes its stances within the framework of this study, why this data perfectly relates to the context of this study and in particular to the research questions. The secondary data, however, is taken out of various contexts, but the interpretative nature of this study leads to an acceptance of the researcher's interpretation of the secondary data.

Additionally, in terms of trustworthiness of a qualitative study, Guba & Lincoln (cited in Bryman, 2012) suggest that, as a parallel to reliability in a quantitative study, a qualitative study should be accessed according to the idea of dependability. A term where it is suggested that the study should be accessed by peers in an auditing approach in terms of validation (Bryman, 2012). This, however, will not be accessed in this study, as it does not seem necessary in the matter of this thesis.

Confirmability in this study relates to the subject of objectivity of the researcher. It is believed that complete objectivity is impossible, however, objectivity to a certain extent is highly valued in this study. Even though the motivation behind this study is grounded in personal experiences, it is still believed that the researcher has remained the objectivity needed to ensure a high level of confirmability in this study. The level of objectivity within a qualitative study is often assessed by the potential peers auditing the approach, however, since this is not the case in this thesis, the level of objectivity is assessed by the researcher.

3.0 CHAPTER 3

3.1 THEORY

Destination branding in a context of tourism is broadly acknowledged among researchers as a highly important element in the pursuit of attracting more tourists (i.e. Reilly, 1990; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a; Pike, 2002; Blain et al., 2005). Thus, Papadopoulos & Heslop (2002) reviewed a total number of 766 publications on the subject of place branding and place marketing. This high number of publications were published between 1952 and 2001 could indicate that this area of study is a major topic of research over a long period of time. Place marketing and branding is the overall umbrella encompassing multiple trends within this field. Some of these trends include place of origin branding, nation branding, culture and entertainment branding and thus also destination branding, which accounts for the majority of the studies and is highly tourism oriented (Kavaratzis, 2005). Reviews on these studies (Kavaratzis, 2005; Pike, 2002) indicate that destination branding to a large extent is concerned about destination images in a context of tourism (Kaplan et al., 2008).

A research made by Blain et al. (2005) furthermore relates destination branding with the concept of image, indicating that this concept is a rather important issue within the process of branding a destination. Thus, since the concept of image was acknowledged as an important element within branding destinations, the concept of image has been widely discussed and defined by various theoreticians and practitioners in the last twenty years and more (i.e. Chen & Phou, 2012; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a; Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002; Pike, 2002; Baloglu, & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1986; Reilly, 1990). Therefore, it can be hard to distinguish between the various ideas and opinions regarding this topic, which has become of great important for tourist destinations in todays globalized world. Thus, in order to understand how this term is defined and seen upon in this thesis, various views and opinions of this topic will be discussed.

The theoretical frames of this project are held within what can be seen in the figure below. Even though the diverse parts of theory are placed in boxes separate from each other, the theories are interrelated in a sense that they influence the outcome of each other. An example of this can be seen in the destination choice process, which is highly influenced by destination image. This issue will also be addressed more thoroughly later in this chapter.
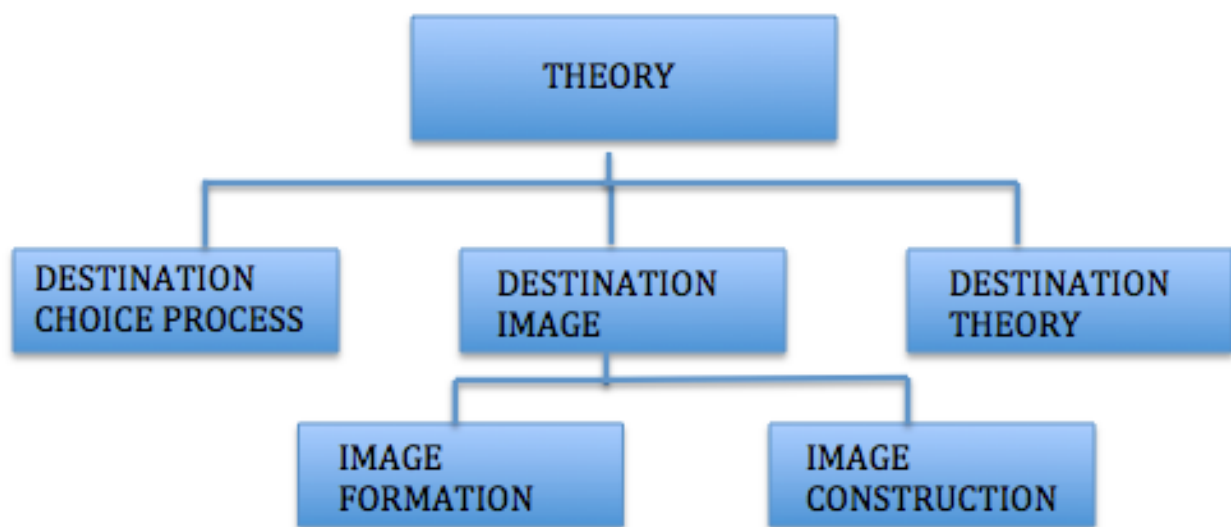
Figur 3 - Illustrative model (self-made, 2014)

3.2 Destination

A destination independent from any specific context is defined as *"a place to which somebody or something is going or being sent"* (Hornby, 2000, p. 342). This overall definition of a destination can be applied by various contexts regardless if it is in a tourism context or a matter of going from A to B in the everyday life. In that matter both A and B can be characterized as destinations. This definition sets an overall frame for the term of destination and is therefore rather broad in its expression, why this thesis aims to apply a definition, which is contextualized to this particular topic of destinations in a context of tourism.

3.2.1 Tourism destinations

Traditionally, tourism destinations have been regarded as a specific geographical area including countries, towns, regions, states etc. (Buhalis, 1999). However, as time went on, recognition of destinations as a concept that is subjectively interpreted by the tourist in accordance with purpose of travel, background, educational level etc., grew among both practitioners as well as theoreticians (Buhalis, 1999). Before this shift, tourism destinations was limited by geographical boundaries, whereas, as everything started to modernize, so did the view on tourism destinations. Attractions grew bigger and more active, why these also were to be considered as destinations by the tourists. These destinations were, to a large extent, defined and recognized by the tourists, and since the stakeholders seem to be influencing how a tourist destination is defined, today when discussing the origin and definition of a destination in a tourism context, it is important to keep the target group in mind (Manente, 2008).

In the beginning of this century, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) held a forum including academic institutions and destination management organizations aiming to define the concept of tourism destinations. The outcome of this forum ended up saying that a: *"… tourism destination is a physical space in which a visitor spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions, and tourism resources within one day´s return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local tourism destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations"* (UNWTO, 2002). UNWTO (2002) believes that this definition is suiting for a destination in a context of world tourism. According to this definition, cities and regional areas are included in the framework of a tourism destination, whereas entities such as resorts, states or even countries are excluded in this definition (Lew & McKercher, 2006). This definition understates the confusion and to some extent blurry nature of destination boundaries by recognizing the paradox that destination can *"nest and network to form larger destinations"* (UNWTO, 2002). Even though the definition still stands today, employing this definition in this study would cause issues in accordance to considering the Bulgarian country as a tourist destination. Therefore, other definitions are considered in this regard as well.

Buhalis (1999) believes that a tourism destination can be looked upon as something that offers a broad variety of tourism products and services. Under the name of this destination, tourists can consume these particular products and services. Looking at a destination in the light of that definition, it is limited to concern the products and services offered by that particular place. In the belief of this thesis, a destination does not have to be defined based on whether or not this place offers a broad variety of products or not. This thesis believes that the small waterpark offering the opportunity to have fun in the water for a day is just as much a destination as for example the city of New York is. A destination is thus, a place that people visit. It does not have to be for a certain amount of time, as is suggested in the UNWTO (2002) definition.

Therefore, in terms of this thesis, a destination is seen more as a place where people travel to pleasure themselves with an experience of some sort; this being for example spending a vacation in a particular destination or spending a day in the waterpark, as mentioned above. Thereby in this thesis business tourism is excluded. The majority of tourists in Bulgaria travel to the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast to spend their vacation near the beach relaxing, enjoying the water and the sun (NSI, 2014). These people therefore seek the experience of relaxation in a new environment than what they are used to. As Leiper (1995, p. 87, cited in Buhalis, 1999) is

convinced, destinations can be described as *"places towards which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while in order to experience certain features or characteristics - a perceived attraction of some sort"*. Adapting this definition of destinations includes both Sunny Beach and Bulgaria as a country to be seen as destinations. All mentioned places at the coast of the Bulgarian Black Sea can therefore be explored as destinations and thus, the term destination image becomes important, in regards to the research questions to discuss in a theoretical framework.

3.3 Brand or image? What is what?

The framework of a destination is now settled and therefore, the clarification of the image is important as well. However, there tends to be some confusion between the terms brand and image (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). This section therefore aims to clarify this confusion in order to proceed to clarify the destination image in a tourism context.

Ritchie & Ritchie (1998, cited in Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005, p. 329) define a destination brand as *"a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience."*

This definition of a destination brand seems clear and concise, however Tasci & Kozak (2006) believes to know that the lines between a destination brand and destination image when spoken of is almost obliterated. Hence, Tasci & Kozak (2006) performed a study aiming to clarify the blurry lines between a brand and an image within a context of tourism. It was concluded that the differences between brand and image were rather blurry due to different opinions among the respondents in the study. What was acknowledged, however, is the fact that the two terms are closely related, influencing each other. Additionally, image is merely seen as a sub-concept of a brand. Furthermore, the brand is seen as one entity, whereas image is seen a multiple entities, which will be discussed later in the section of destination image as well (i.e. Tasci & Kozak, 2006; Qu et al., 2010; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a). Besides these differences between the two terms, especially one more major difference is agreed upon and widely acknowledged: a brand is generated from and viewed as a product of marketing activities of destination marketers, whereas consumers generate images from perceptions of that destination (Tasci & Kozak, 2006; Qu et al., 2010). Qu et al. (2010) however, furthermore believes that the relationship between brand and image in a context of tourism is reciprocal, influencing each other. Tourists build an image of the particular destination in their minds based on the brand identity projected by the marketers. These marketers then try to enhance the brand identity based on what knowledge they can gain from the tourists, focusing on their

personal image of that destination. Therefore, the two concepts are reciprocal and rather important in the process of creating positive associations (Qu et al., 2010). This study focuses on destination image in a context of tourism. What is investigated in this study is the potential tourists opinion and beliefs of the destinations, why it relates to destination image rather than destination brand.

In relation to the discussion about the framework of the brand or image, a short discussion of the concept of the consumers of the destinations will be presented as well. This discussion aims to clarify the two concepts of consumers and tourists in this context.

It can be discussed whether or not the targeted segment should be mentioned as potential consumers of the destinations rather than potential tourists, however, it is believed that to be a consumer of something, the person should actively use the attraction. In this matter, the potential tourists are argued to not actively use the destinations, but rather be situated in the destinations, which is of a more passive character. They do become consumers in the second they use the attractions within the destinations; however, this is of no interest in this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis believes that consumers include locally consuming people as well, which are not included in this thesis. This thesis strictly looks at people from outside the destinations, more specifically people from Denmark, why using the phrasing "consumers" would be too inclusive for this thesis. Tourists on the contrary are *"temporary visitors staying at least twenty-four hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose journey can be classified under one of the following headings: (a) leisure (recreation, holiday…"*(Leiper, 1979, p. 393) why the using of the classification as potential tourists in this thesis is believed to be rightful.

3.4 Destination Image (DI)

The discussion of images has existed for decades, especially images of tangible product (Shani & Wang, 2011). It is acknowledged, however, that there are major differences between tangible product images and the image of tourism destinations. A destination image consists of far more facets than a simpler, tangible product and even more importantly, the destination image is not exclusively shaped by marketing activities (Ren & Blichfeldt, 2011). Especially, the fact that the tourism product is of a nature that is dominated by unique characteristics and high complexity, such as the evolution process of most products, is acknowledged within the theorists (Shani & Wang, 2011; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). The need to differentiate between tangible products and tourism products is thus rather high, why Gallarza et al. (2002) argue that four major characteristics can be drawn out to differentiate the nature of destination image in contrast to tangible products' image. These four characteristics are (I) complex – destination image is of an evolving nature, which makes the concept rather

complex leading to no universally accepted definition or accepted components. (II) Multiple – a destination image consists of multiple features representing its identity while likewise many sides of information is shaping it. (III) Relativistic – the destination is quite subjective and can be individually shaped from person to person (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a). (IV) Dynamic – Related to the complexity of a destination image is the fact that it tends to change over time (Gallarza et al., 2002).

Therefore, since Gunn (1970, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002) in the 70'ies revolutionized the discussion of image by adding it to a context of tourism, destination image has been discussed and widely defined amongst theorists and practitioners (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Shani & Wang, 2011; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a; Reilly, 1990; Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007; Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, et al). Multiple opinions of how to relate to the subject of a destination image exist, however one thing that marketers and researchers seem to agree upon is the fact that every destination and nation has an image, as is the case with every tangible product or business. But one of the more commonly acknowledged aspects that differentiate these images is the fact that a destinations image is rarely under control of the marketers of this destination (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Shani & Wang (2011) share that point of view in terms of the fact that a destination image is rather hard to control. According to Baloglu & McCleary (1999) images are generated from fragments of information about the destination that are derived from a wide variety of sources, while only few of them are under the direct or indirect control of destination marketing organisations (DMOs). Derived from the fact that multiple opinions of how one should relate to this complex term exist, is the fact that one overall definition hardly exists. Examples of the missing universally accepted definition is exemplified by Gallarza, Saura & García (2002) in their pursuit towards a conceptual framework for a destination image. This study clarifies the numerous examples of diverse definitions of a destination image ranging from Hunt's belief in 1971 that a destination image is *"impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside"* (Hunt, 1971, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60) over Crompton's definition in 1979 that *"an image may be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination"* (Crompton, 1979, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60) to Parenteau's definition that image "*Is a favorable or unfavorable prejudice that the audience and distributors have of the product or destination*" (Parenteau, 1995, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60).

In many definitions of a destination image, focus has been on the attributes part of the image (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Meaning that in the older studies of defining a destination image, the image has been defined in terms of a list of attributes not taking into account the overall and more holistic part of an image, including impressions and overall perceptions. Even

though multiple definition of destination image exist, not all definitions are suitable for this type of study, where feelings, impressions and perceptions of a destination are in focus. One of the more commonly acknowledged definitions of a destination image is the aforementioned belief and expression by Crompton (1979, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60) who believes that a destination image can be defined and described as *"the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place"*. Closing towards being a universally acknowledged expression, this definition is acknowledged by multiple researchers and likewise adapted in several studies including Kotler, Haider & Rein (1993a); Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil (2007); Tasci & Holecek (2007) and Chen & Phou (2012). In this study, one of the keys are to investigate the beliefs, ideas and impressions Danish people in the post youth segment (between 25-35 years) hold of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach as tourist destinations, why adapting this definition of destination image matches the framework. This definition tends to focus on what is important in terms of this study; namely the feelings and attitudes towards the destinations. Thus it does not focus on the more tangible and attribute based characteristics. If these were to be focused on, a more quantitative orientated research study would have been more suiting. Because of the exploration of feelings and attitudes towards the destination, the definition by Crompton (1979, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García) becomes essential for this thesis.

3.4.1 Stereotypical images - a paradox?

Not many studies consider the issue of image being a stereotype or a stereotype being an image. In the matter of this study, these two terms are quite diverse, which is important to take into account when discussing the images of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria in the mind of the respondents of the survey and the interviewees as well. A characteristic of this study is the qualitative nature of it. The qualitative nature in this study means that it is feelings, impressions and perceptions that are investigated. Furthermore, the defining of a destination image stated that an image in the matter of this study, can be held individually between persons and should not be regarded as something that occurs when shared between a number of people, such as other researchers have argued (Crompton, 1979, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Gartner, 1986). This is also perfectly consistent with the epistemological stance of this thesis, where the interpretivism approach requires respecting differences between people and their views (Bryman, 2012). When operating with a definition of a destination image stating that an image can be held individually, and image shared by a broad number of people suddenly becomes a stereotype, which increases the importance of adapting the definition of a destination image that fits into the equation of this study. Thus, what some researchers call image suddenly can be characterized as a stereotype in this study.

Kotler, Haider & Rein (1993a, p. 141) define a stereotype as *"a widely held image that is highly distorted and simplistic and that carries a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the place."* The inspirational sources of Echtner & Ritchie (2003, p. 42) agree to this definition and argue, *"… while each individual can have a somewhat unique mental picture of a destination, there also exists a publicly held common mental picture of that destination, or stereotype."* Related to the thoughts of image becoming a stereotype is the statement made by Papadopoulos & Heslop (2002, p. 395) who state that *"whether positive or negative, focused or diffuse, held widely or by only a few, developed deliberately or by default, and formed from education, the media, travel, immigration, product purchases, business experiences or any combination of sources, every place has an image".* What is interesting about this statement is the phrase *"has an image"*. Papadopoulos & Heslop (2002) mention image in singular in contrast to the above-mentioned researchers who believe that each destination can have multiple images created by each individual person (i.e. Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a; Crompton, 1979, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002). Therefore, according to the conviction of this thesis, Papadopoulos & Heslop's (2002) statement is closer to refer to a stereotypical destination image. Hence, talking of a stereotypical image in the matter of this study would seem a somewhat of a paradox in terms of individuality and united perceptions.

3.4.2 Is uniqueness always the right way to go?

In todays competing nature of the tourism industry, one of the broadly acknowledged theories is the fact that the destinations need to be able to differentiate from each other (i.e. Tasci & Kozak, 2006; Shani & Wang, 2011). Potential tourists are offered multiple destinations confusing them in the decision making process. Thus, today it is not enough to be in the evoked mind-set of the consumers, why destinations today, more than ever, needs to be able to differentiate themselves from competing destinations and hence creating a clear and concise image moving towards creating uniqueness as destination (Qu, Kim & Im, 2010; Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Agreeing with Ren & Blichfeldt (2011), who believe that simplicity and uniqueness is not always enough, this thesis does not agree that simplicity, uniqueness and differential status, as a tourist destination, is always the best goal to aim for in the competing nature within the tourism industry. In case a particular destination manages to create uniqueness by simplicity and a differential status on the basis of a distorted and twisted image, it could influence the entire destination in a negative matter instead of being an advantage in the pursuit of being chosen as destination by the potential tourists. Therefore, partly agreeing with Qu, Kim & Im (2010) and Tasci & Kozak (2006) it is not enough to be in the top of the minds among tourists, but it is important to be there with the right image.

Reaching the right image is difficult though and depends on which segments the destination wants to attract. The marketers of the destination can try to influence the tourists in a certain direction; however, the image is constructed by the tourists, why these also decide what is the right image in terms of whether the destination is attractive for them to visit or not. Furthermore, people as potential tourists use images to differentiate between tourist destinations (Shani & Wang, 2011), because of the aforementioned multiple choices they can choose from in today's globalized world of tourism. This strongly illustrates the importance of the image not only being simple, unique and diverse, but more importantly, being of a positive nature in these people's minds.

Therefore, this thesis is rather sceptical towards the broadly acknowledged idea that creating a unique and differential image is the goal that tourist destinations need to aim for. If this unique and differential image should turn negative, it could lead to the creation of a negative stereotype, as mentioned above, instead of a unique and differential image. A destination that is related to a negative stereotype will have a hard time breaking up this stereotype, since it is shared by a large number of people.

Thus, the destinations investigated in this study will by analysed with this scepticism in mind, ensuring that the images of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach respectively is seen from this perspective. The motivational approach to this thesis, mentioned in the introduction along with the content analysis in particular revealed indications that Bulgaria and Sunny Beach had reached a rather simple and unique image as destinations dominated by alcohol and drunk people. This means that the outcome of the analysis in terms of image is evaluated in the matter of the belief that having a simple and unique image is not necessarily the best way to go.

3.4.3 Destination image formation

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the first researchers to discuss the phenomena of destination image was C.A. Gunn in 1970's. Gunn (1972, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Lin et al., 2007) argued that the formation of a destination image primarily could be separated between organic and induced. The organic formation is a result of the particular person being exposed to information sources such as magazines, films, friends, relatives, news reports, TV-shows etc. Common for these sources is the fact that they are influenced very little by the destination tourism marketers. The organic image then turns to an induced image in the second the person chooses to spend a vacation at the destination and therefore starts to search for information about the destination via formal sources such as travel agencies, brochures etc. This means the sources where the marketing practices take place (Frochot & Kreziak, 2008).

Actually visiting the destination helps to form an even richer and more nuanced image of the destination, because it allows own judgement of the destination while accessing the information gained on beforehand. This phase of the image formation therefore creates an even more complex image than what is formed in the induced phase.

It is furthermore believed that in order to form a rather complex image of the destination, the individual needs to go through all phases of the formation (Frochot & Kreziak, 2008). Image formation is highly usable in the matter of this thesis, as it is important to know in what phases the images are formed in order to evaluate detailed the image formation is. Hence, these theories are applied in a full-scale matter in the analysis, as it is seen as highly applicable in the analysis.


IMAGE FORMATION

ORGANIC PHASE   INDUCED PHASE   COMPLEX PHASE
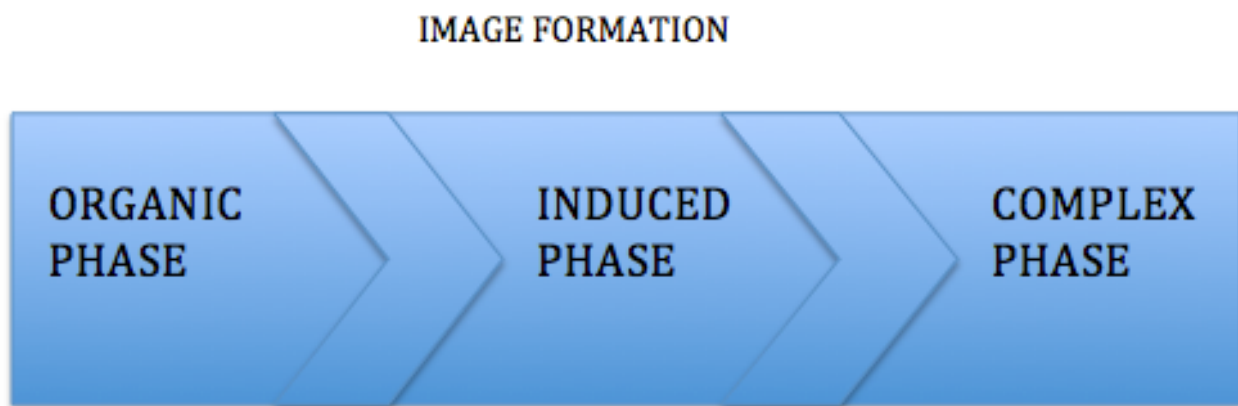
Figur 4 - Image Formation inspired by Gunn, 1970 (self-made, 2014)

3.4.4 Destination image construction

Since this theory of Gunn was released, the theory of destination image has evolved even further. One of the most recognized studies of how to construct a destination image was done by Echtner & Ritchie (2003), who developed the "Three-dimensional model" of the components of a destination image. The model suggests that attributes as well as holistic impressions should be measured. Each of these components should be measured in terms of both functional as well as psychological characteristics. Furthermore, in order to characterize a destinations image, one should consider both those attributes common for all destinations as well as those attributes unique for that particular destination being evaluated (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). According to Echtner & Ritchie (2003), a destination image is based on three different continuums as can be seen below. The first continuum is the functional and psychological characteristics where the functional characteristics concern the more tangible aspects of the destination and the psychological characteristics concern the more intangible aspects of the destination. Examples of tangible aspects or functional characteristics could be

accommodation facilities, scenery, price level and attractions, whereas the intangible or psychological could be atmosphere, friendliness or safety (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).
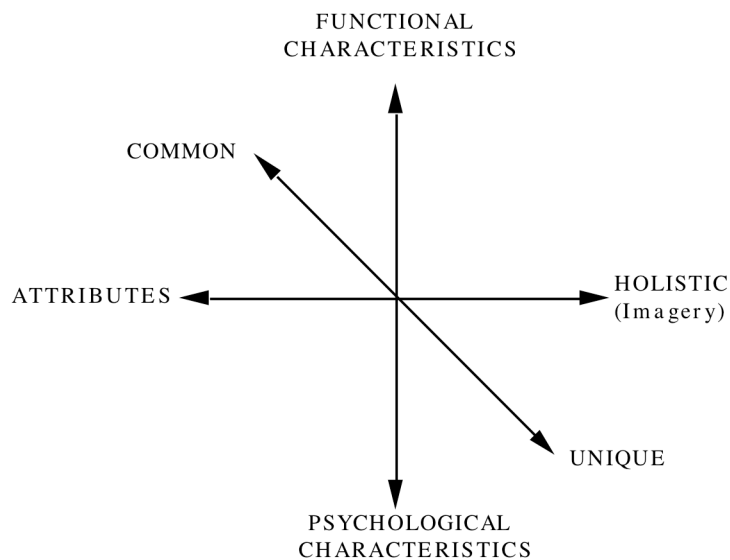
Figur 5 – "Three dimensional model" (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, p.43)

The second continuum concerns the individual attributes and the holistic impressions of a destination image. As mentioned, diverse studies of destination image define and interpret DI to be concerned with the individual attributes, whereas others emphasise the fact that DI is a holistic impression. An example of an attribute-based definition of DI is Gartner's (1986, p. 637) *"the tourists' and sellers' perception of the attributes of activities or attractions available within a destination area."* This definition is based on a belief that people are logical thinkers who are able to do a piecemeal evaluation of a destination including evaluating attribute by attribute (Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007). An example of a more holistic definition, contradictory to the aforementioned attribute based evaluation, is the definition of DI adapted in this study where Crompton (1979, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60) defines DI as *"the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person have of a destination"*.

The third and final continuum is taking into account the fact that distinction between common and unique traits should be acknowledged. This means that an image can both be evaluated and measured in terms of common functional attributes as well as common psychological characteristics. As an opposition to these measurable common characteristics and attributes, the DI can also include unique features in terms of events or special auras or emotions toward the DI. Example of unique functional features could be the Taj Mahal to India or the Eiffel Tower to Paris, whereas examples of unique psychological characteristics could be the image of romanticism to Paris or the religious aura of the Vatican (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

Sharing the thoughts of Echtner & Ritchie (2003) Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil (2007) generated the interactive system of DI components. This model was generated in the process of overlooking the conceptualization and operationalization performed by Echtner & Ritchie, trying to find issues overlooked and issues in the need for further research. One of the aspects that need to be considered in terms of the model is the belief of creating such a model where the different aspects are rather stringent divided. With such a term as destination image, which is acknowledged in this thesis to be created individually among people, it can be risky and hard to split up into boxes of such a stringent character.

Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil (2007) have adapted the general belief of the three dimensions of cognitive, affective and conative with the beliefs of Echtner & Ritchie (2003) and developed the interactive system of DI components. The core of the system is the cognitive knowledge of common and unique attributes as well as the affective response to those attributes. As the illustration shows, the interaction between the common and unique attributes combined with the feelings towards these attributes composes a holistic or overall image, which often simplifies the decision making process of potential decision makers (Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2007). The system is a dynamically interactive system, where every element of the system can be either

Figur 6 – Interactive System of destination image components (Tasci, Gartner & Cavusgil, 2002, p. 200)

the cause of a change or the effect of a change at any point in time. Each element of the systems cannot be evaluated individually and should hence be studied as integrated parts affecting each other and eventually determines the appearance of the destination image. These two models are believed to be the most adequate models of destination image construction. The models are rather similar, why only one of them will be directly used in the analysis. The elements of the "Three dimensional model" will used in the analysis as a framework in the pursuit of bringing forth the perceptions of the segment in order to construct a destination image as it is perceived by the target segment. This model is chosen because it is acknowledged, by the researcher, that the majority of the segment only reaches

the organic phase in the image formation process and as this model is not as stringent and fixated towards placing opinions and beliefs in boxes, it is acknowledged as the ideal framework for the analysis. When people's images of a destination are formed in the organic phase, they tend to be less complex as the images formed in the induced or complex phase. Therefore, the components of these images are also harder to place in separate boxes, as many of them are hard to separate from each other.

As opposed to how to define a destination image, the components explained above are broadly acknowledged among researchers within the branch of destination marketing. These ideas about the components of a destination image is thus adapted in this study and used in the analysis of the answers given in both the qualitative interviews as well as in the qualitative online survey.

3.4.5 Destination Image vs. Reputation

Another aspect within the frames of destination image is the common confusion between image and reputation (Barnett et al., 2006). These two terms are often, not deliberately, used in the same context, however even though the two terms could seem quite similar, they are different from one another in one important aspect. As it is acknowledged that destinations, in many cases, are equivalent to corporates (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993b), studies within corporate communications help clarify how to distinguish between the two terms. Image and reputation are clearly defined as distinct from each other (Marchiori, 2012). Within corporate communications reputation is considered to be the overall attractiveness of a company and it can be described as what is narrated by the stakeholders of this company, which means that it requires a verbalization of the image (Marchiori, 2012). A reported individual experience, however, cannot be considered as reputation, since the opinion of this experience must be shared in a group of stakeholders. Image can be argued to be a part of reputation together with the identity of the company, which also means that the reputation of a company can be influenced by the image of that particular company and not the other way around (Barnett et al., 2006; Marchiori, 2012). Thus, the image is what we think of a particular company whereas reputation is what we tell about that company (Mandelli & Cantoni, 2010, cited in Marchiori, 2012). Applying this in the context of destination image, reputation can be argued to concern what is being told about a particular destination, which has to be shared among the stakeholders of that destination. Image on the other hand concerns mental conceptions in terms of beliefs, ideas and impressions about that particular destination. These conceptions can be held within the frames of an individual person.

3.5 Decision making – the importance of destination image

Destination marketers use destination branding to try and influence potential consumers to choose their particular destination instead of choosing the competitor (Qu, Kim & Im, 2005). Research shows that the concept of a destination image is of great importance in the process of understanding the destination selection process among tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In this matter, potential tourists are influenced by various aspects affecting their decision making process. One of the more important influential aspects in this matter is the destination image (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Qu, Kim & Im, 2005). As concluded in the section of the destination image, the image is created individually in the potential tourist's minds. Hence, creating a positive image in the minds of the tourists is important for the destination. The fact that the images are created in the minds of each individual tourist makes it hard for the marketers to control, becoming an issue in this matter. Furthermore, the image is largely affected by external stimuli - stimuli that the marketers cannot control (Gartner, 1986; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Jeong et al., 2012). The affect of external stimuli also makes the image changeable, which can be argued to be the evolution of destination image.

Theory within the field of tourist decision-making has grown significantly throughout the last fifty-sixty years. Therefore, at this point in time, multiple diverse theories within this topic exist. From expected utility theory developed by von Neymann & Morgenstern in 1947 (cited in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) over prospect theory by Kahneman & Tversky (1979) to the theory of reasoned action translating into theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, cited in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Common for these theories is the fact that they are all developed in different contexts, where each context is likely to be targeting a specific aspect of the decision making process. Common for the theories is also the fact that they are all developed without the context of tourism in mind. Thus, this thesis will be adapting decision-making theory, which is created within a context of tourism, as is the subject of this thesis.

Decision making of tourists have been a quite complex topic, which has been the subject of important studies since it was recognized in the late 90'ies within the field of destination marketing (Sirakay & Woodside, 2005). It has often been an unconscious process, why it has not been acknowledged and recognized by the researchers until the late 90'ies. The difficulties with decision making is the fact that it is often an unobservable and unconscious process in which the tourists are not fully aware. The goal in decision-making research is to reach an understanding of, why the tourists take the decision they do (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). The theoretical framework of the connection between destination image and

destination decision-making or choice takes its stance in the model beneath developed by Um & Crompton (1990).

3.5.1 The model of destination choice process

In 1990, Um & Crompton (1990) completed a study investigating the process of travel destination choice. Up till now, this study has been acknowledged and cited by multiple researchers i.e. Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). The outcome of the study is presented in the model of the pleasure travel destination choice process. This model is chosen within this theoretical
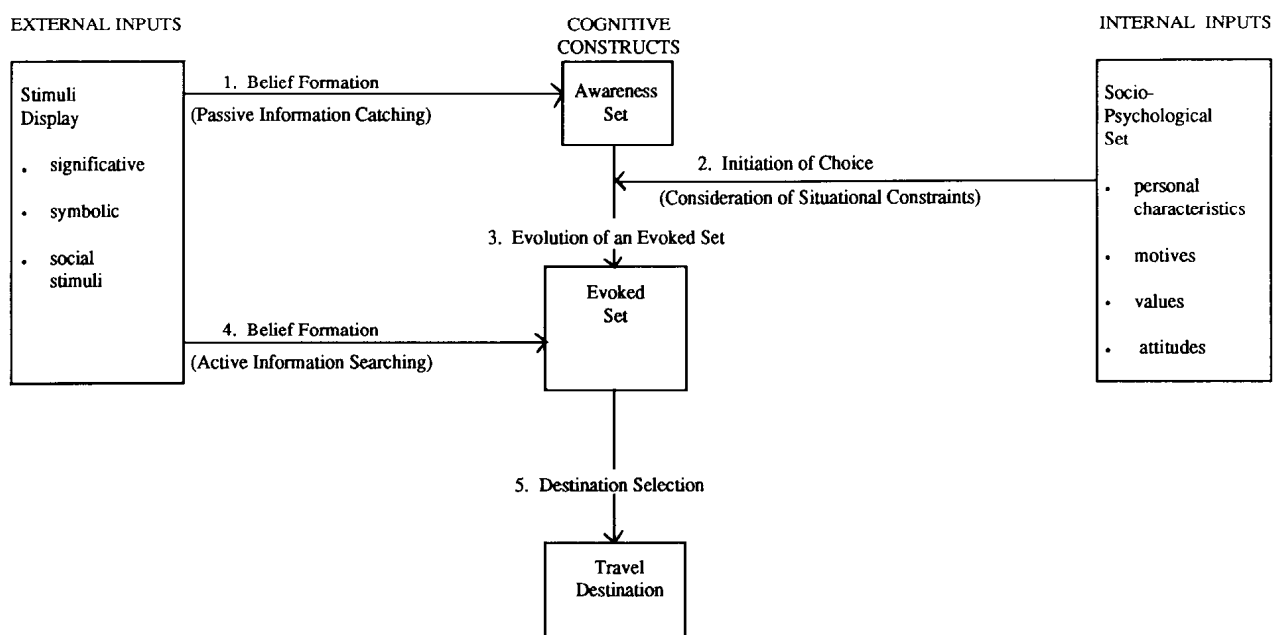
Figur 7 - Destination Choice Process (Um & Crompton, 1990, p. 435)

framework because it is based on a study that was researched within a context of tourism and traveling. Many models are normative models, having a tendency to explain how tourists "should choose", whereas this model is a descriptive model, explaining how tourists choose (Abelson & Levi, 1985, cited in Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Furthermore, the study recognizes the importance of the destination image, as is the case with this thesis. Lastly, this model is chosen because it recognizes the fact that human decisions are not perfectly rational, because of influence from a wide array of aspects, which is also the case of the target group of this thesis (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). The targeted segment is influenced by a broad variety of influencers such as TV, travel websites, commercials, daily news etc.

The model is based on a framework consisting of external inputs, cognitive constructs and internal inputs. The external inputs derive from the social interaction and marketing communications to which, the tourist is exposed. As can be seen from the model, the external

inputs can be divided into significative, symbolic and social stimuli. The significative stimuli derive from physically visiting the destination. The symbolic stimuli derive from the promotional material used by the media to try and influence the tourist's decision and finally the social stimuli originate through social interactions with other people through conversations with other tourists (Um & Crompton, 1990).

The internal inputs originate from the socio-psychological features of the decision maker through personal characteristics, personal values, attitudes, impressions etc.

Finally, the cognitive constructs consist of a combination of the two mentioned inputs; external and internal. These are combined into the awareness set of destinations, which include all the destinations that the tourist is aware of and considers as potential destinations even before any decision making process is initiated. After the decision about going on a trip or vacation is taken, an evoked set of alternative destination is developed. It consists of potential destinations, which the tourist might see as reasonable alternatives to the destinations existing in awareness set. These alternative destinations are presumed to be developed after the decision of going on a trip or vacation is taken, why it can be argued to act as an intermediate stage between the awareness set of destination and the final decision (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Developed were five sets of processes, which in the figure is presented as flows. (I) Formatting a set of subjective beliefs about the destination attributes; (II) deciding to undertake a travel; (III) developing an evoked set of thoughts related to the awareness of the destination; (IV) Formation of a set of subjective beliefs on the basis of an active search of information about the destination attributes of alternatives in the developed evoked set of destinations; (V) and finally the ultimate decision is taken and the destination is chosen.

To make the model more understandable it can be argued that a travel destination choice, taken by a potential tourist, can be split up into an overall two-stage process. The first stage consists of developing an evoked set of destinations from the awareness set. The second stage is about selecting a destination from the evoked set (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Agreeing with Um & Crompton (1990), Sirakaya & Woodside (2005, p. 815) performed a research study concluding that tourists tend "*to follow a funnel-like procedure of narrowing down choices among alternate destinations*". Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) partly agrees with what Um & Crompton (1990) have developed in the model above. Sirakaya & Woodside (2005) felt a need to add additional stages, dividing the decision making process into seven stages instead of five.

First of all, recognizing that there is a decision to be made. Secondly, becoming aware of what goal and objectives needs to be fulfilled. Thirdly, generating alternative objects to choose from. Fourthly, searching for additional information regarding the considered alternatives. Fifthly, making an ultimate judgement or choice between the alternatives and sixthly, acting out the decision chosen and as a final act in the process, providing feedback to be used for the next decision (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Common for all stages in this process is the fact that they are influenced by psychological, internal and external variables relating to Um & Crompton's (1990) overall framework consisting of internal and external inputs as well as cognitive constructs.

The internal variables are variables such as attitudes, motivation, intensions and beliefs. These variables are shared with what is concluded previous in this study to define the destination image connecting the two terms. The external variables are variables, such as marketing mix, pull factors and time. Thus understanding the interconnection between these variables is evident in order to understand the complexity of decision-making in a tourism context (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

In the use of this destination choice model in the analysing chapter, this thesis is concerned about the external and internal inputs, from which the potential tourists are influenced. Thus, this thesis will not assess the awareness set of destinations, which exists in the mind of each individual, as this phase is determined as a pre phase undergoing even before choosing a destination. Therefore, this thesis is focused on inputs influencing the decision maker.

4.0 CHAPTER 4

4.1 ANALYSIS - PART ONE

The introduction to this thesis gave an indication of the situation in Bulgaria in the context of Danish tourism. To supply the reader with a better understanding an overview of this particular case, a more thorough and explanatory overview will be presented in the following. This will generate a basic understanding regarding this particular case in the readers mind.

Bulgaria is situated in the South Eastern European region dominated by a continental climate ensuring warm, stabile and sunny summers and rather cold winters. This climate supplies the country with multiple opportunities to offer a broad variety of vacationing possibilities. From sun and sea tourism along the Bulgarian Black Sea coastline, which runs from the borders of Romania in the North East to the Turkish and Greek borders in the South East over culture vacation spread all over Bulgaria to mountain/ski tourism in the Rhodope or Rila Mountains in the inland of Bulgaria (Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria, 2013). Taking a thorough look at the webpages of the different Danish travel agencies offering travels to Bulgaria, it becomes clear that the most popular vacation type among Danes is the Sun and Sea vacation along the Black Sea Coast. The vast majority of the travel agencies only offer travels to the Black Sea Coast with only quite few and specialized companies offering alternatives such as cultural and historical round trips, skiing trips, city breaks in Sofia etc. The statistical numbers from the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria also conclude that more than 90 per cent of the Danish people visited Bulgaria during the summer half from May to October (NSI, 2014). These are most certain affected by what the travel agencies offer, since the majority of Danish people visiting Bulgaria have a vacation purpose. In recent years, the activities of the Danish people in Bulgaria in the summer months have caused much attention within the Danish media. A search on the Danish media intelligence alliance, Infomedia reveals a large number of articles published within the Danish media involving the Danish tourists in Bulgaria and their escapades during their vacations in the country. Unfortunately for Bulgaria, as mentioned in the introduction, many of these articles are of a negative character concerning all the bad things that have happened to people down there. The absolute vast majority of these articles concern the destination of Sunny Beach and how young Danish adults have behaved and what they have been exposed to (Infomedia search, 2014).

4.2 Attitudes towards the destinations

4.2.1 Initial attitudes towards Bulgaria

Going through the articles within the Danish media involving Bulgaria as a tourist destination a rather dominating pattern of the attitudes towards Bulgaria is quickly revealed. The majority of the articles, relating to Bulgaria as a tourist destination are dominated by the theme of Sunny Beach and partly Golden Sands. More particularly, the articles are dominated by stories about young Danish adults and how they tend to behave on their summer vacation at the destination. This initial observation is confirmed by especially the interviewees who all mention Sunny Beach, when asked about what they think of, when thinking of Bulgaria (i.e. Appendix E #1; Appendix E #2; Appendix E #3 etc.). The respondents of the online survey tend to agree with the interviewee and the online articles, where half of the respondents mention Sunny Beach (Appendix D – Q8). Multiple of the interviewees furthermore mention young people, nightlife and alcohol. Those respondents who do not mention Sunny Beach in this context confirm this, since instead of mentioning Sunny Beach, these respondents mention drinking, alcohol, young people and teenagers (Appendix D – Q8). Looking at these responses it becomes clear that the targeted segment of post youth adults seem to associate Bulgaria with Sunny Beach and thereby the initial approach that met me before traveling to Bulgaria seem to be more general than random. What cannot be concluded of the response from the respondents in the online survey is whether or not these words and attitudes towards Bulgaria are meant in a positive or negative matter. It is believed, though, that when mentioned by the respondents it is with a rather negative tone, as is the case with the interviewees. Those interviewees who were asked about whether or not bringing up Sunny Beach is of a positive or negative matter, all agree that it is of a rather negative matter, why their first impression of Bulgaria is associated with something negative influencing their beliefs of the country (Appendix E #1; Appendix E #5; Appendix E #7; Appendix E #8).

The respondents and the interviewees revealed that their initial impression of Bulgaria in general is rather similar to their initial impression of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. There is a tendency that it is somewhat the same vocabulary used to describe Bulgaria as a tourist destination as is used to comment on their initial thoughts of Bulgaria. Words like "drinking", "young people" and "party"[1] are dominating the response from the respondents of the survey, however, other negative toned words like "cheap", "low quality of hotels" and "boring"[2] are also used in this matter. In general the respondents have a rather negative impression of Bulgaria as a tourist destination, even mentioned multiple times that Bulgaria is not a place for them to visit (Appendix D – Q9). This impression is, to a large extent, confirmed by most of

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[1] Translated from: "druk", "unge mennesker" and "fest".
[2] Translated from: "billigt", "hotel af dårlig kvalitet" and "kedelig".

the interviewees, who describe Bulgaria as a tourist destination with words like "party place", "cheap", "poor", "filthy", "youth", "drinking" and "alcohol"[3] (i.e. Appendix E #2; Appendix E #3; Appendix E #4; Appendix E #8 et al.). Thus, the words used to describe Bulgaria in general and Bulgaria, as a tourist destination, is quite similar and all dominated by a rather negative tone. The only positively toned words used by the interviewees are limited to "warmth", "sun" and "nice beaches"[4] (Appendix E #3; Appendix E #7) and these are only mentioned by two of interviewees, so it could easily be argued that the segment's overall impression of Bulgaria is associated with Sunny Beach and some, for this segment, negative words.

4.2.2 Initial attitudes towards Sunny Beach

The netnographic study of the online communities and websites (Appendix A) gave an initial indication of how people tend to experience Sunny Beach. In general there seemed to be an acceptance of the destination by young people who had been there before. It seemed as just the right place if one wanted to spend a vacation where party, alcohol and flirting was to be the main features. Asking if one could recommend going to Sunny Beach as a youngster, most answers from the younger online users were of a positive matter.

The conclusion that the destination is enjoyed by the younger generations is also confirmed when looking at the reviews on various travel agencies (Appendix A). It quickly becomes clear that the travel agency specialised in the younger segment of Danish people receives excellent reviews, whereas the travel agencies that are more aimed at family vacation and other segments than the younger segment received more mixed reviews. This could be seen as an indication that young people who have travelled to Sunny Beach are extremely happy with, not only the travel agency, but also the destination. Families and the targeted segment, however, seem to be less happy.

The study also revealed that the most dominating words in the discussion of Sunny Beach on these online societies are of a character, which can be characterized as both positive as well as negative. It is similar words similar being used no matter what segment discuss the destination, but depending on the segment; the words are used in either a negative or positive matter. The most common words are words like "young people", "party" and "alcohol".[5] Clearly, these words are used in a positive matter when discussed between the younger generations. On the contrary, when discussed between the elder generations it seems that the words are used negatively and supplied with words like "charmless" and "overcrowded".[6]

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[3] Translated from: "fest sted", "billigt", "fattigt", "beskidt", "unge", "druk" and "alkohol".
[4] Translated from: "varme", "sol" and "gode strande".
[5] Translated from: "unge mennesker", "fest" and "alkohol".
[6] Translated from: "ucharmerende" and "overfyldt"

The online survey revealed that all of the respondents have heard about Sunny Beach. Mostly, they are affiliated with the destination through the Danish reality TV-show "Sommer i Sunny Beach". Most people have seen the TV-show about young Danish people spending their summer in Sunny Beach and most respondents tend to agree that it, to a large extent, portrays the reality, which is rather negative. The respondents tend to be affected by the show in a way that it does not do anything good for their interest in visiting Bulgaria. On the contrary, the show seems to confirm the respondents' prejudices against Bulgaria and thereby it affects their interest in visiting the country negatively. A few of the respondents' state that the show helps shape the negative image they have of Bulgaria.

A rather negative attitude towards the destination of Sunny Beach also exist among the respondents, where words like "discount", "100 % shit", "crap", "drunkenness", "drunken people"[7] dominate the vocabulary when asked about the impression of the destination (Appendix D – Q14). The only positive vocabulary being used by the respondents is the fact that it is well suited for young adults who want to have a vacation dominated by drinking, flirting and parties. Asked about how the respondents think of Sunny Beach as a tourist destination, more or less the same words, as mentioned above, turn up. Added to the mentioned words is a word like hor, which is used frequently among multiple of the respondents (Appendix D – Q15). It is obvious that the tone towards Sunny Beach as a tourist destination is rather harsh among the respondents. A tone that is more or less shared by the interviewees where the negative words, to a large extent, are confirmed by the use of words like "drinking", "party", "hor", "youth", "teenagers", "alcohol", and "noise"[8] when describing their initial thoughts of Sunny Beach (i.e. Appendix E #3; Appendix E #5; Appendix E #6; Appendix E #8, et al.). The general view of Sunny Beach can thus be argued as rather negative, as is confirmed by both the netnography, the respondents of the survey as well as the interviewees of the qualitative interviews.

Looking at the words being used to describe Sunny Beach as a tourist destination, they are strikingly similar to those words being used to describe Bulgaria as a tourist destination (Appendix D – Q15). Therefore, looking at the overall initial impression of Bulgaria as a tourist destination, it can be concluded, to a large extent, to be synonymous with Sunny Beach. Both in terms of the direct mentioning of Sunny Beach, but also in the using of words similar to each other in the description.

In general the first impression of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach seem to be rather baldly and quite simplistic.

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[7] Translated from: "discount", "100 % lort", "crap", "druk", "fulde folk"
[8] Translated from: "druk", "fest", "hor", "ungdom", "teenagere", "alkohol", "larm".

4.3 Image formation

As introduced in chapter 3, the theory section, Gunn (1972, cited in Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002) concluded that image basically is formed at three different phases; organic, induced and complex. As previously concluded, the majority of the respondents as well as the interviewees seem to agree upon the fact that, basically, the two destinations are seen to be much alike, why the formation of the images will be analysed and discussed within one single section.

Respondents as well as interviewees all reply to know Bulgaria as a tourist destination and in particular Sunny Beach. Remarkably, none of them knows other tourist destinations along the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast besides Sunny Beach and Golden Sands (i.e. Appendix D; Appendix E #1; Appendix E #2 et al.). This tells a great deal about what they are offered by the Danish travel agencies and most definitely it also says something about the marketing of Bulgaria as a tourist destination in Denmark.

Furthermore, only approximately a third of the contacted people have actually visited Sunny Beach or Bulgaria in general. Therefore, the majority of the respondents and interviewees have not actually reached the induced phase of forming an image, why their impression or initial formation of the destination image is purely formed in the organic phase. The online survey concluded that the majority of the respondents are generally influenced a great deal in the organic phase. Especially, the TV reality show of "Sommer i Sunny Beach" is pointed out among the respondents as a major influential factor. Almost all of the respondents have seen the TV-show and the majority claim that it affects their impression of, not only Sunny Beach, but also Bulgaria in general, and that it definitely does not make them want to visit Bulgaria or in particular Sunny Beach. This indication is confirmed by the interviewees, who also point out the TV-show as the biggest cause of influence. Some of the respondents even mentioned the TV-show when asked about what they associate with Bulgaria (Appendix E #2; Appendix E #6; Appendix E #7). Furthermore, a multiple number of the respondents comment that the reasoning for the influence of the TV-show is, to a large extent, related to the fact that they have no existing information about Bulgaria to compare the impressions of the TV-show with (Appendix D). Because of the lack of additional information about Bulgaria, the people in the organic phase tend to let themselves be influence by how Sunny Beach is displayed in the TV-show. Even though, many of the interviewees mention to be aware that Bulgaria is more than what happens in Sunny Beach, they still seem to be influenced by what is displayed in the TV-show.

Moreover, a few of the interviewees mention the interaction with friends as a smaller influential factor. Even though they have friends who have visited the destination and brought

back positive feedback, they still tend to be influenced by how the destinations are displayed in the TV-show.

The major role of the TV-show as an influential aspect of the targeted segment is also confirmed and pointed out by one of the interviewees who have made it into the induced phase of image formation. This person tend to be more influenced in the organic phase by the TV-show even though that person was exposed to influential impressions at the induced level, by first hand experience from two vacations in Sunny Beach (Appendix E #5).

Another of the respondents who have been influenced in the induced phase by first hand experience with Bulgaria in terms of having worked there, also expresses that the TV-show has a certain effect on her impression of Bulgaria as a tourist destination (Appendix D – Q9).

In general, those interviewees with first hand experience from visiting the destination (induced phase) all expresses that they can easily recognize the picture of Sunny Beach given in the TV-show. Therefore, they are also easier influenced by what happens in the TV-show and thus it becomes more difficult for them to ignore. Therefore, one of the biggest concerns regarding the major influence of the TV-show is the fact that the targeted segment does not have any other information about the country that could stand as a counterpart to what is shown in the TV-show.

The fact that only few of the interacted persons reaches the last phase of forming an image, also means that not many people are able to form the nuanced and complex image that is desirable. Instead, as was discovered, most images are formed at the organic level, why these images easily become rather superficial, baldly and simplistic. The observations of this thesis are confirmed by the netnography, where people who have not been in Bulgaria tend to come up with a simplistic and baldly image (Appendix A). These impression, however, are actually agreed upon by the impressions of those people who have been at the destination where the majority do not recommend traveling to Sunny Beach, as they believed that the destination were meant for younger people.

Furthermore, there seem to be a tendency among both the respondents as well as the interviewee that they do not get their impression of Bulgaria from the written Danish media. The majority of these people reply that they are not familiar or very little familiar with what is being written about Bulgaria and in particular Sunny Beach in the Danish media. Instead, some of the interviewees mention the happenings in Prague as something they have paid attention to and even though they have not read much about Sunny Beach, they still seem to draw similarities between the two destinations.

4.4 Destination image construction

4.4.1 The construction of the destination image of Sunny Beach

The theory section described the construction of a destination image with the "Three-dimensional model", which consists of three continuums. This model is used in the analysis because it takes into account the holistic idea about the destination image, which is also the belief of this thesis as it is also shown in the definition of a destination image adapted in this study. The idea is that the attributes are seen as a holistic part of constructing the destination image and thus not evaluated attribute by attribute, but rather as a whole. The model consists of three continuums accessing different perspectives of the destination image. As mentioned in the theory section of this thesis, the first continuum concerns the functional and psychological characteristics, where the functional characteristics concern the more tangible aspects of the destination and the psychological characteristics concern the intangible aspects. In relation to the destination image of Sunny Beach, there seem to be a clear tendency regarding the functional characteristics. Multiple of the respondents mention cheap and bad hotels as something they relate to Sunny Beach. This is confirmed by some of the interviewees who argue that the hotels in Sunny Beach are discount and thus also low quality. The price level, however, is mentioned by the vast majority of both respondents as well as the interviewee as being rather cheap. Since, many of the respondents and interviewees mention price, as a major factor when looking for a destination to visit, the fact that Sunny Beach is seen as being rather cheap, should be seen as an advantage for the destination. However, in this case, it does not seem to be the case. Looking at how the word cheap is connected to discount in the answers of the respondents it indicate that cheap in this matter, is a rather negative aspect. Hence, the functional characteristic, the price, is argued to be a negative aspect of the destination image.

Furthermore, mentioned among the functional characteristics is the biggest attraction in Sunny Beach namely the parties of the destination. These are mentioned by the absolute vast majority of the respondents in the survey, but only by some of the interviewees in the interviews. The respondents also mention the scenery of Sunny Beach as being of a rather negative character. They use words like "*ugly*", "*boring*" and "*unfortunate*"[9] (Appendix D – Q15). These impressions are confirmed by one of the interviewees who claim that Sunny Beach is "*filthy*"[10] (Appendix E #8). The respondents and interviewees also tend to mention what can be seen as psychological characteristics. Characteristic about the intangible or psychological aspects is the fact that the atmosphere is connected to young people and parties. Almost none of the interacted people comment anything else than the youth

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[9] Translated from: "grimt", "kedeligt" and "uheldigt".
[10] Translated from: "beskidt".

atmosphere. It seems that there is a broadly recognized impression that Sunny Beach is filled up with drunk, young Danes, other Scandinavians and Brits. This is an aspect, which is not seen as a positive aspect. On the contrary, one of the respondents mentions that the *"Danes seem repulsive and drunk"*[11] (Appendix D – Q14). In the belief of this thesis, this quote is a symbol of, how the interacted people believe that it is the general opinion that Sunny Beach is filled up with young, drunk people, which definitely does not appeal to the targeted segment.

The second continuum of this model involves the issue of looking at the attributes individually or seeing them as a whole. As mentioned above, this thesis believes that the attributes should be accessed in an overall holistic matter, instead of being accessed individually. It is believed that the targeted segment does not evaluate the image of Sunny Beach by looking at each attribute individually, but rather sees it as a whole. As the vast majority of the people do not even reach to the phase of creating an induced image of Sunny Beach, the majority of the images created are created in the organic and rather shallow phase. If more people would reach the induced phase, they would also be able to create a more nuanced and complex image of Sunny Beach, by accessing many of the attributes individually and then potentially reaching a totally different image, than what is created in the organic phase.

The third continuum concerns the common and unique features of the destination. As mentioned in the first continuum, Sunny Beach has some features mentioned by both the respondents as well as the interviewees. These features or characteristics can be accessed as either common or unique. Both common and unique features are a part of the destination image of Sunny Beach. It is, thus, important that both are taken into account. In the functional characteristics, a large part of these are rather common features. These are features that basically could be linked to other youth destinations in Europe, which naturally often are cheap and of a rather low standard.

The level of youth tourism in Sunny Beach however, can be argued to be rather unique. As one of the interviewees mention about his summer vacation, which is to be spend with four other guys at his age of 25 years. They talked about going to Sunny Beach, because one of the important aspects of their vacation was the opportunity for nightlife and other rather young people. However, they ended up deselecting the destination because they were of the impression that it was too extreme (Appendix E #7). Hence, this thesis believes that the level of youth alcohol tourism is rather unique in Sunny Beach, why this is seen as a unique characteristic of the destination. Thus, the aspect of alcohol tourism in Sunny Beach could be equivalent to the idea of romanticism most people associate with Paris.

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[11] Translated from: "… danskere virker frastødende og fulde".

4.4.2 The construction of the destination image of Bulgaria

In general, the first impressions of Bulgaria gave the clear impression that the Bulgarian destination image is highly influenced by and similar to the destination image of Sunny Beach. Hence, the characteristics of the two images are rather similar as well. As earlier mentioned, there is not much difference in the words used to describe the two destinations. As Bulgaria seem to be adapting their tourism destination image from the destination image of Sunny Beach, and the fact that people, in general, are not able to differentiate the two destinations make the two images become rather alike.

As the two destinations seem to be described as rather alike, the functional characteristics of the Bulgarian destination image are, more or less, synonymous with those mentioned above, however, there are certain exceptions.

The scenery of Bulgaria is mentioned and is highly related to the scenery of Sunny Beach. Only very few of the respondents mention Bulgaria's unique nature and historic attractions (Appendix D – Q10). The majority is clearly relating the Bulgarian scenery with what it is believed to be like in Sunny Beach. Words like "*boring*", "*common*", "*worn*" and "*poor*"[12] is used from the respondents, as was the case with Sunny Beach (Appendix D – Q10). Some of these words are confirmed by the interviewees who also use a word like "*filthy*"[13] (Appendix E #8).

Mentioned within the psychological characteristics of Bulgaria by the interacted people are primarily things that originate from the destination image of Sunny Beach. It is things like the nightlife atmosphere along with the drinking environment that is believed to be the case in Bulgaria. A few of the respondents also mention safety as an issue in the psychological characteristics. Safety in a sense that the bombing that happened a few years back in the airport close to Burgas on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast is mentioned (Reuters, 2014). Only rather few respondents mention this, why it does not seem to be a general association between the people of the segment.

One of the interviewees also mentions that he believes that the approach to things in Bulgaria is of a character, which is rather loose. He argues that this can be seen in the mentality in Sunny Beach, where the young adults are allowed to drink senselessly amounts of alcohol and act crazy (Appendix E #6). Another thing that can be put into the psychological characteristic continuum is the partying atmosphere mentioned by the vast majority of the respondents and also originates from the destination image of Sunny Beach.

One overall unique functional feature of Bulgaria as a tourist destination that is repeatedly mentioned by both the respondents as well as the interviewees is the impression that Bulgaria is synonymous to Sunny Beach. As the Eiffel Tower is a unique functional feature for

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[12] Translated from: "kedelig", "almindelig", "slidt" and "fattigt".
[13] Translated from: "beskidt".

Paris, so is Sunny Beach for Bulgaria, according to the interacted people and the theoretical framework of this thesis. It is thus impossible to mention Bulgaria without causing a reaction where Sunny Beach is mentioned.

Hence, as a unique characteristic of Bulgaria as a tourist destination is the perception that Bulgaria is merely for young people in close relation to alcohol tourism, obviously originating from the unique functional characteristic of Sunny Beach being synonymous with Bulgaria.

Another important unique, intangible characteristics of Bulgaria as a tourist destination are the association to discount. A large number of both respondents as well as interviewees mention discount in relation to Bulgaria as a tourist destination, why it seems that whenever Bulgaria is mentioned, the majority of the target segment believes it to be discount vacation. This, of course, fits perfectly with one of the functional features mentioned in the first continuum, the price, as was mentioned to be rather low. This feature is confirmed by one of the interviewees who believe Bulgaria to be a place where the Danish middle class goes (Appendix E #7).

This also perfectly corresponds with what could be seen from looking at the major Danish travel agencies, where the tendency is that travels to Bulgaria are among the cheapest compared to neighbouring and competitive countries such as Greece, Turkey, Spain, Italy and Cypress.

Summing up, the respondents of the online survey and the interviewees all seem to agree that what affects the image of Bulgaria, to a large extent, is what happens in Sunny Beach. This has caused the image to be associated with this single destination, which, according to the respondents, does not do anything good for the country as a tourist destination. Thus, the interacted people agree that the image of Sunny Beach is of a rather negative character, dominated by young, drunken teenagers partying the entire summer. Hence, Bulgaria as a tourist destination is associated with the same things, becoming the party destination for young Danish adults discouraging the post youth segment to visit the country. Beside from one of the respondents from the survey, who is able to look beyond Sunny Beach and the influence from this destination, not one single of the respondents mention the Bulgarian image as being of a positive matter. It is striking that even a person, who mentions to have worked in the country, reveals that she has a hard time looking beyond Sunny Beach when thinking of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. Therefore, according to the respondents it, more or less, takes personal relations to be able to look beyond Sunny Beach when discussing the image of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. In addition and closely related to, the image of Sunny Beach, the destination image of Bulgaria is also associated with discount and cheap prices.

4.5 Similar images or stereotype?

With only one or two exceptions among the interacted people of the segment, all have the same images of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach. As mentioned, these images are, to a large extent, dominated by young, drunken teenagers partying and acting all crazy. Added to the Bulgarian image is the aspect of the destination being a rather cheap discount destination. In relation to the theoretical discussion of image and stereotypes, the big questions now is whether or not the images of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria as tourist destinations should be regarded as a stereotype instead of multiple different but yet similar images.

According to the definition of destination image adapted in this thesis, image should be regarded as the belief, impression and attitudes *a person* holds of a particular place. Hence, a destination image is held by each person individually, however, once this image becomes the belief and opinion of multiple persons, it can suddenly be discussed whether or not it can be characterized as a stereotype more than an image. In the theory section Kotler, Haider & Rein (1993a, p. 141) defined a stereotype as *"a widely held image that is highly distorted and simplistic and that carries a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the place."*

With this definition in mind, the destination image of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach can be discussed. Concluding from the analysis of the destination images, these can definitely be regarded as being *widely held*, as the absolute vast majority of the interacted people agreed to this. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the images could be characterized as rather simplistic. First of all, the predominance of organic phase formed images suggests that the images formed are rather baldly and simplistic. Secondly, the fact that the induced formed images tend to be similar to the organic phase formed images confirms the simplistic characters of the images. Thirdly, the words used to describe Bulgaria as a tourist destination do not exactly give a nuanced description of Bulgaria as a tourist destination, but instead, it gives an indication that what happens in Bulgaria is related to young people partying with plenty of alcohol in rather cheap and low quality hotels (Appendix D – Q9). Thus, this confirms the simplicity of the image and adds the distorted aspect to the Bulgarian destination image. In addition to this, it was concluded that the attitude towards both Bulgaria and Sunny Beach is of a rather negative character. Only, few of the interacted people had a positive attitude towards Bulgaria and no one had a positive overall attitude of Sunny Beach. Hence, these attitudes towards the destinations are not exactly favourable in the pursuit of attracting more tourists.

Hence, looking at the definition of a stereotype, the widely spread images of both Bulgaria and Sunny Beach seem to fit the description. The associations of the images have become so strong that they are shared by the absolute vast majority of the people within the segment

making the images fit perfectly into the definition of a stereotype, as it is believed in this thesis.

4.6 ANALYSIS – PART TWO

4.7 Destination choice process in relation to Destination Image

The theoretical framework concluded that the relation between the destination image and the destination choice process is relatively close. Therefore, it is important to take the results of the destination image of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria into the discussion of the potential tourists' destination choice process. Since the images has turned into stereotypes and thus shared by a number of people, they become rather interesting in terms of influencing the segment in the process of choosing a destination.

The online qualitative survey revealed that the majority of the respondents have planned to travel this year, where especially Spain, Turkey and Greece were highlighted as the destinations to visit. Furthermore, this impression was shared among the majority of the interviewees. However, even though the majority of the interacted people had planned to travel this year, none of them had planned to visit Bulgaria.

When asked to explain what features were of importance when choosing where to travel, the vast majority of the interviewees mentioned price as the dominating feature in the decision process. Surprisingly, this aspect was only mentioned by a few of the respondents as a dominating factor when choosing the destination for the vacation. Instead of the price, the majority of the respondents mainly look at climate, attractions, sun and culture/history of the destination when ask to highlight which aspects are most important when choosing a destination for pleasure travel (Appendix D – Q5). The survey revealed that none of the respondents mentioned Bulgaria as the destination to visit if they could choose freely among European destinations, disregarding price or other influential factors (Appendix D – Q7. The interviewees confirm this by mentioning destinations such as Normandy, Rome, Sicily and Venice instead of Bulgaria (i.e. Appendix E #1; Appendix E #2; Appendix E #3 et al.). By these answers it could seem that the targeted segment is more interested in visiting destinations offering culture and historical attractions rather than the youth alcohol tourism stereotype that Bulgaria is perceived to offer.

Despite these opinions, it is interesting and perhaps still surprising that a rather cheap destination as Bulgaria does not appeal to the interviewees who generally mention price as a major influential factor when deciding where to spend their holiday. Many of the respondents

as well as the interviewees even mention the word "*cheap*"[14] in connection to both Bulgaria as well as Sunny Beach. A quick look at the websites of the biggest travel agencies in Denmark showed that Bulgaria is, by far, the cheapest destination to go to, when comparing with other major holiday countries like Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Cypress and France. However, supposedly the cheap prices are not enough for the targeted segment to be interested in visiting Bulgaria.

Interestingly, none of the respondents or interviewees mentions their impression of the destination as a dominating factor when deciding which destination to visit. Even though, neither the respondents nor the interviewees mention this aspect, it could seem that the impression of the destination, unconsciously, is of greater importance when deciding the destination than what is expressed. The indication acknowledges what was concluded in the theoretical framework of the decision making process, namely that the destination choice process often is of an unconscious character. Hence, this is acknowledged in this thesis, why the tourists are not always fully aware of how they are actually influenced more than they realise. Thereby, they are not consciously aware of the fact that they are exposed to multiple sources of influential information affecting their choice of destination. Thus, the theoretical framework suggests that the targeted post youth segment is exposed to a series of external and internal inputs. These inputs influence the potential tourists in deciding to visit either Bulgaria or Sunny Beach or some competitive destination.

4.7.1 External inputs

The theory section concluded that the external inputs consist of three different sets of stimuli influencing the potential tourist - this being symbolic, social and significative stimuli.

4.7.1.1 Symbolic stimuli

The content analysis of Bulgaria, in the Danish media, based on the Infomedia search, revealed that the targeted segment actually is exposed to large amounts of symbolic stimuli in the form of multiple articles related to Bulgaria as a tourist destination. More specifically, most of them were related to the happenings in the destination of Sunny Beach. Searching on Bulgaria it becomes clear that the majority of the articles involve the qualification prior to football World Cup in Brazil this upcoming June. During this qualification the Danish national team were up against the Bulgarian national team among others, which clearly created plenty of attention in the Danish media. What is striking in this search is the dominating aspect of these football articles. This could indicate, as is also indicated in the results of the online survey (Appendix D), that Danish people are not exposed to particularly much information about the Bulgarian

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[14] Translated from: "billig"

country and what it offers. Searching on Bulgaria in relation to Sunny Beach, however, it becomes clear what themes are related to this aspect. Going through the articles it is rather easy to form an overview of these themes. The majority of the articles in the Danish media, the last five years, are concentrated to the summer period and especially on the happenings in Sunny Beach and how Danish people behave and vacate at the destination. This is, however, not surprising, since the destination has been visited by approximately an average of 80.000 Danish people per year in the last five years (NSI, 2014). This rather high number of visiting people naturally triggers situations to be discussed in the Danish media. What is interesting however, is the fact that these articles seem to be written in a rather negative style and are often dominated by words like young people, alcohol, party and drunkenness (i.e. Leth, 2011; Eskesen, 2012; Hansen, 2013; Lund, 2013; et al.). It is interesting that the words dominating the articles are similar to the words used by the interacted people, since the majority of these people do not pay any attention to what is written in the media (Appendix D – Q34).

Instead quite a few of the interviewees mentioned what happened last year in Prague. Prague has become a popular destination for young Danish people to spend their winter vacation and last year the week of vacation was dominated by alcohol, brawls, stabbing and in general young Danish adults who wandered around in Prague extremely drunk. This drew the attention of the Danish media and thus, multiple articles regarding this issue were published in the Danish media (i.e. Andersen, 2013; Jespersen & Pittelkow, 2013; DR Nyhederne, 2013). It is interesting that the interviewees assimilate the happenings in Prague with Bulgaria and Sunny Beach, but looking at the stereotype of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach it is of no surprise. Having the number of articles published about Sunny Beach in mind, it is rather surprising, though, that this many of the respondents as well as the interviewees do not pay any attention to what is written.

Instead of the written media, both respondents of the survey as well as the vast majority of the interviewees state that their information about Sunny Beach, to a large extent, come from the Danish reality TV-show "Sommer i Sunny Beach". The majority of the interviewees claim that they are able to ignore the stereotype of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach in particular displayed in the Danish TV-show, however when asked about their thoughts of Sunny Beach, they describe the exact stereotype as displayed in the TV-show.

Interestingly, none of the asked people mention marketing activities as the source of information about the destination. Hence, it seems that the dominating influential factors within the symbolic stimuli segment, to a large extent, is limited to the TV-show "Sommer i Sunny Beach".

4.7.1.2 Social stimuli

Aspects within the social stimuli are mentioned only by a few of the interviewed people considering them as influential aspects in the destination choice process. Nikolai (Appendix E #4) and Christian (Appendix E #6) both mention that they could be influenced a great deal by friends and social acquaintances if these were to talk positive of visiting Bulgaria. They both state that they, in general, would not choose Bulgaria as destination for their next vacation, however if one of their friends talked positive of the destination, they would highly consider visiting the country. On the contrary to this and as a part of the social stimuli, one of the interviewees states that she believes that Bulgaria as a tourist destination is not for everyone, but rather for young people. This is being said despite the fact that she knows some of her parent's friends having spent a vacation in Sunny Beach and who had a great experience (Appendix E #1). Therefore, based on the expression it could seem that people's stereotypical impression of Sunny Beach is overpowering the social stimuli they receive.

4.7.1.3 Significative stimuli

The significative stimuli include the aspect of physically visiting the destinations. The vast majority of the interacted people have not visited the destination, why the influence by significative stimuli is none existent for these persons. Hence, as was learned in the image formation process, the majority of the segment has an organic set of impressions, beliefs and attitudes towards the destinations.

There is a tendency, however, among those of the interviewees who have managed to create an induced impression of Sunny Beach that they are recognizing the same picture of Sunny Beach as can be seen in the media and especially in the aforementioned TV-show (Appendix E #3; Appendix E #5; Appendix E #8). The fact that they are able to draw similarities between the induced impressions and the impression given in TV seems to make it difficult for the interviewees to focus on the fact that they are aware that Bulgaria offers something more than what is offered in Sunny Beach. Even despite the fact that they express that they are aware that what happens in Sunny Beach not necessarily is an expression of what Bulgaria offers. All of the interviewees agree that the TV-show does not have a positive affect on their interest in visiting the destinations. Furthermore, they agree that they belong to a segment, which is no longer interested in what is offered and displayed in the TV-show. The majority of the interviewees even mention, directly or indirectly, that they are too old for that kind of vacation (i.e. Appendix E #3; Appendix E #4).

4.8 Internal inputs

As the theoretical framework of this thesis suggests, a destination image is defined by beliefs, attitudes and impressions towards a destination, in this case towards Bulgaria and Sunny Beach. In the destination choice process, these beliefs, attitudes and impressions can be situated within the aspect of socio-psychological internal inputs.

In this regard, the majority of the respondents of the online survey state that they have no interest in or intentions to visiting Bulgaria and the majority of these respondents state that the reason for this is related to their current stereotypical attitudes and impressions towards the destination (Appendix D – Q12). They are not convinced that it is possible to experience something different than what can be experienced at other destinations in Europe. Again this confirms the picture of Bulgaria as a destination offering nothing else but what can be offered other places where youth alcohol tourism is highly valued. Those respondents that truly are interested in Bulgaria seem to be aware of the fact that the country has something else to offer than what Sunny Beach offers. Reasons such as beautiful nature, low costs of living and city break in Sofia stands as confirmation of the fact that the limited percentage within the segment actually is capable of ignoring the widely held image of Sunny Beach and its affect on the rest of the Bulgarian country as a tourist destination (Appendix D – Q12). Several interviewees furthermore state that they are not interested in visiting the country before that image of Bulgaria has chanced significantly. Thus, the image of the destination of Bulgaria is of a rather big importance in the destination choice process. Since the image is created by own beliefs, attitudes and impressions, it seems as a rather difficult process, as the individual person needs to be interested in changing the image. As the current situation is, it seems that not many people are interested in changing their organic perceived image of Bulgaria. Asked about whether or not they would be interested in offers for other types of vacation in Bulgaria, most interviewees indicate to be interested, however, at the same time, they reply that they have not searched for any additional information about Bulgaria or Sunny Beach, than what they are exposed to by the TV-show and from the travel agencies (i.e. Appendix E #2; Appendix E #3; Appendix E #5 et al.). Therefore, their image of Bulgaria remains the same as the rest of the majority becoming the concluded stereotype.

Concluding on the destination choice model, it becomes clear that especially the internal inputs are of high importance among the segment.

In that context it is rather problematic that the majority of the respondents do not even make it to the induced level in their process of forming an image of both Bulgaria and Sunny Beach, because as we learned in the section of image formation, the created organic image is most certainly highly simplistic and baldly. Even more concerning is the fact that those of the

respondents and interviewee who do make it into the complex phase of forming an image, still have a hard time differentiating the complex image with the organic image. Hence, the number of people reaching the complex phase of image formation is rather small, why it is believed that the higher percentage of people reaching the complex phase, the easier it would be to differentiate the complex image from the organic image. Thus, the powerful image of Sunny Beach has a significant and negative influence on the post youth segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria.

With the destination image of Sunny Beach's major influential affect on the destination image of Bulgaria, this thesis do not believe that the destination image of Bulgaria is able to be altered unless something radically changes in the destination of Sunny Beach, which will make people start associate this destination with something more than just alcohol tourism and young, drunken teenagers.

4.9 Challenging simplicity and uniqueness of the image

A simplistic and rather unique destination image is not always the thing to aim for. With the theoretical thoughts of Ren & Blichfeldt (2011) and the results of the analysis in mind, it becomes clear that Sunny Beach as a tourist destination has managed to create a unique, simplistic and differential image, in the minds of the people within the target group. But the result of the analysis also stands as a firm example of the fact that creating a simplistic and unique image is not necessarily always the thing to aim for. The simplistic and, to some extent, distorted widely acknowledged destination image of Bulgaria clearly shows that being unique and differential not always improves the attractiveness. In this case, it is clear that the differential image of Bulgaria does not exactly improve the post youth segment's interest in visiting the Bulgaria. Even though multiple respondents and interviewees reveals that they are aware of the fact that Sunny Beach is a rather small, limited geographical area on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast and acknowledges that the entire Bulgarian Black Sea Coast offers much more than Sunny Beach they still does not have any urge of visiting the destination. Thus, it is argued that, according to the context of this thesis, it is agreed with Ren & Blichfeldt (2011) that a simple, unique and differentiated image not always is the way to go. Hence, it could seem that the simplicity of the image could be challenged by an image closer to multiplicity embracing multiple tourist segments in accordance to what the diverse destinations along the coast have to offer.

In general it seems that the simplistic and somewhere unique destination image of Sunny Beach overpowers everything else and negatively affects the targeted segment's interest in visiting not only Sunny Beach, but also the Bulgarian country in general.

5.0 CHAPTER 5

5.1 CONCLUSION

This research investigates the questions of people's perception of the tourist destination of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach and how these images affect the segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria.

This thesis acknowledges the fact that destination images are created individually in people's minds, which means that each individual person can hold his/her own personal image of a particular destination. Since an image is accepted to be defined as *"the sum of beliefs, ideas and impression a person have of a destination"* (Crompton, 1979, cited in Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002, p. 60) it is also accepted that this thesis cannot conclude the destination of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria to have *one* definite image. On the contrary, this thesis can, based on the analysis and the theoretical framework, conclude that the majority of the targeted segment, holds a rather identical individual image of Bulgaria and Sunny Beach, respectively, as tourist destinations. Hence, this thesis provides the reader with a widely held image that can be argued to have turned into a stereotype idea of how Bulgaria and Sunny Beach are like. The analysis of this thesis, which was made based on the chosen theories and conducted interviews and online survey, showed that the absolute vast majority of the segment perceives Sunny Beach with an almost identical mental perception, therefore becoming a widely held image.

First of all, this perceived image of Sunny Beach is formed in the organic phase of the image formation process, which becomes a problem for Sunny Beach, because it only allows a rather shallow and simplistic image to be formed. Reaching the induced or complex phase, theoretically allows the tourist to form a much more thorough and nuanced image of the destination, however those of the segment who actually did reach the induced phase formed an image that were surprisingly similar to those images formed in the organic phase. Hence, it seems that the organic phase in the image formation is quite strong in this context and almost overpowers the physical experience in the induced phase. Thus, the images formed were of a rather simplistic and baldly nature, which is of no good for the destinations.

Secondly, the thesis revealed that this widely held image of Sunny Beach was constructed by primarily various external and internal inputs, where especially the symbolic stimuli within the external inputs was found as an important part of the image construction. Especially the reality TV-show, "Sommer i Sunny Beach" had its affect on how the segment perceives the destinations. As the TV-show displays Sunny Beach as a destination aimed for and concerned

the youth segment interested in drinking, partying and interacting with other young adults, this influence the destination image of Sunny Beach largely in this matter. Hence, a negative attitude towards Sunny Beach is experienced within the targeted post youth segment.

Thus, the analysis revealed that, generally, Bulgaria as a tourist destination is associated with Sunny Beach and everything this has to offer, why this destination is also influenced and associated a great deal by the same features. Sunny Beach is seen as a rather extreme place, situated only for the youth segment looking for parties, alcohol and other young people to interact with. Hence, the absolute vast majority of the targeted segment is also convinced that spending a vacation in Bulgaria is limited to young adults creating this widely held, but rather simplistic and baldly image of Bulgaria.

Furthermore, this study revealed that there is a unidirectional influence between the widely held images of Sunny Beach and Bulgaria as tourist destinations. The fact that the Bulgarian image experiences the major influence from the destination image of Sunny Beach, it seems to be unable to differentiate itself in a direction that moves away from what is associated with Sunny Beach. Despite Sunny Beach's enormous influence on the Bulgarian image, the destination image of Sunny Beach is not at all influenced by the destination image of Bulgaria, why a unidirectional influential process is underlined. For Bulgaria it means that the destination is affected by how Sunny Beach is exposed and ultimately it becomes problematic for Bulgaria's image to be associated too much with Sunny Beach, because the widely held image of Sunny Beach is of a rather negative nature. The simplistic and negative image of Sunny Beach also has a negative effect on the segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria, because they believe it to be all about drinking, partying, making social relations and strictly limited to the youth segment.

As was concluded earlier, the majority of the segment is influenced a great deal in the organic phase, which means that they have no deeper knowledge about Bulgaria as a tourist destination. Hence, they let themselves influence more easily than having had an induced impression of the destinations. As a result of this, the reality TV-show, "Sommer i Sunny Beach" has managed to become a major influential factor in the destination choice process of the post youth segment in Denmark.

The absolute vast majority of the segment does not have any intentions of visiting Bulgaria before the stereotype picture has been altered and that it is shown that the country offers something else than what is currently believed. Thus, as the widely held image has such an important role in the destination choice process, this stereotype picture of Sunny Beach also has a significant influence on the segment's interest in visiting Bulgaria. As long as this stereotype is a reality, people within the segment does not seem to be interested in spending their vacation in Bulgaria.

6.0 LIST OF FIGURES

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APPENDIX A

Netnographic study

As mentioned in the methodology section of this paper, a netnographic study has been used to gather pre interview information, which supplied me with certain indications and impressions of the general opinion regarding the topic of Sunny Beach. A wide range of diverse travel blogs, travel forums and other webpages where debates and comments about the topic of Sunny Beach as a tourist destination is discussed, has been assessed and analysed. The online sources are listed below and have all been assessed in terms of a series of criteria, which will be mentioned in the following.

1. Overall opinion regarding Sunny Beach and Bulgaria
2. Impression of Sunny Beach after spending a vacation at the destination.
3. Age groups discussing the topic
4. What type of vacation has been enjoyed in Bulgaria?
5. Behaviour
6. Satisfaction
7. Terminology used in debates

- www.godtur.dk
  - Nothing worth mentioning
- www.tripadvisor.dk
  - General indication that the young people are happy with the destination whereas the older generations are more dissatisfied.
- www.zoover.dk
  - Most of people are satisfied with the place.
  - Various age groups
  - Younger generation very satisfied with the place.
- www.trustpilot.dk
  At Trustpilot, all people can write reviews of almost everything. I have been looking into people's review of vacationing in Sunny Beach. The reviews are foremost based on the experience the travel agency gave them, and are therefore bound more on the companies instead of the destination of Sunny Beach. However, I am still convinced that these reviews help me creating a picture of what people travels to Sunny Beach.
  - DUF Rejser: It become clear that almost all reviews of DUF Rejser[15] is extremely positive with words as fantastic, eminent, world class and indescribably. DUF Rejser scores an overall score in satisfaction of 9.5 of 10. No other travel agencies reviewed Trustpilot are anywhere near that score.
  - Falk Lauritsen Rejser: Patterns indicating that young people are very satisfied with the stay in Sunny Beach, whereas families are dissatisfied.
  - Spies: Nothing worth mentioning
  - Star Tour: Nothing worth mentioning
  - Bravo Tours: Nothing worth mentioning

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[15] "DUF Rejser" is a Danish travel agency specialised in selling travels to young people in the age of 18-25.

- Apollo Rejser: Mixed reviews of traveling to Bulgaria.

- http://magazine.trendsales.dk/debates/debate?id=27390
    - Debate about whether or not it is worth traveling to Sunny Beach with smaller children. Mixed opinions about the topic, however a predominance of people whom advices against it.
    - People describe Sunny Beach as a drinking paradise, charmless and crowded and filled with young, drunk people.
    - Other people describe it as a fantastic destination and believe it is a shame that the reputation of Sunny Beach is patchy.
- http://dindebat.dk/ferie-i-udlandet/751489-er-sunny-beach-kun-unge-der-vil-feste-2.html
    - People refer to the TV programme "Sommer i Sunny Beach" and assimilate this with the reality of Sunny Beach
    - Again words like young drunk people, party, charmless dominate the debate.
    - The destination of Sunny Beach is only to blame it self for the lack of tourists, because of the reputation as a destination for alcohol tourism.
    - Sunny Beach is charmless, but once out side Sunny Beach Bulgaria is wonderful.
- http://www.djz.dk/interaktivt/forum/visemne/133419/
    - Young people discussing vacationing in Sunny Beach and are generally happy and satisfied.
    - Do note recognize what the stories the Danish media suggest.
- http://www.dailyrush.dk/boards/94/topics/52747/
    - Young people agreeing that Sunny Beach is an amazing destination dominated by party, drinking, beautiful women and cheap alcohol.
    -
- http://www.sol.dk/debat/183-mine-rejsetips/1336120-sunny-beach-om-varme-voldtaegt-og-vade-varer/1336120?limitstart=0&limit=450
    - The world's largest Tivoli
    - Noisy, unsafe, cheap alcohol
    - Positive opinions about Sunny Beach as well. Bulgaria is lovely
    - *" When I tell people that we are going down there (ed. Sunny Beach), the first thing people say is: "That is where people get raped etc.!"… We are sad that the reputation has become this way; because of a TV show etc. We understand the worries if people has been exposed to something unfortunate or worse… but destroying it (ed. reputation) totally is just unfair"[16].*

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[16] Translated from: *"Når jeg fortæller folk at vi skal derned, er det første mange siger : " det er der de bliver voldtaget osv." ja, men hvor er der ikke chance for det ?*
Vi er kede af at det har fået sådan et ry pga. et program i TV m.m. vi forstår alles bekymringer hvis de har været ude for noget uheldigt eller værre eller kender nogen der har, men at ødelægge det totalt er urimligt".

APPENDIX B

Interview guide for qualitative interviews

Navn:?
Alder?
Beskæftigelse?

Danskernes rejselyst

Når snakken i dagens Danmark falder på danskernes rejsevaner, er det ifølge undersøgelser, ikke længere et spørgsmål *om* man skal ud og rejse, men snarere *hvor mange* gange man skal afsted. Star Tour forudser, at danskernes rejselyst fortsætter med uformindsket styrke i år (Larsen, 2014).

- Har du planlagt at skulle ud og rejse i år? Hvis ja, hvorhen?
- Hvilke ting vægter du højest, når du skal vælge ferie?
- Hvilke ting vægter du højest, når du skal vælge, *hvor* rejsen går hen?
- Hvilken europæisk destination ville du vælge at tage til, hvis du frit kunne vælge?

Bulgarien som turistdestination
- Hvad er det første du tænker på, når du hører ordet Bulgarien?
- Hvad er dit umiddelbare indtryk af Bulgarien som turistdestination?
- Hvad forbinder du turistdestinationen Bulgarien med? Nævn gerne min. tre ting!
- Har du besøgt Bulgarien? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Og hvad var dit indtryk?
- Kunne du tænke dig at besøge BG? Hvis ja, hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?

Sunny Beach som turistdestination
- Har du hørt om feriedestinationen Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, hvor fra?
- Hvad er dit overordnede indtryk af Sunny Beach som turistdestination?
- Hvis du skulle beskrive feriedestinationen Sunny Beach med tre ord, hvilke tre ord vil du da bruge?
- Har du besøgt Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Hvad var dit indtryk?

Golden Sands som turistdestination
- Har du hørt om turistdestinationen Golden Sands? Hvis ja, hvor ligger den?
- Hvad forbinder du med Golden Sands? Nævn tre ting!
- Har du nogensinde besøgt Golden Sands? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Hvad var dit indtryk?
- Hvilke forskelle ser du mellem Sunny Beach og Golden Sands?

- Er du bekendt med andre destinationer på den bulgarske sortehavskyst? Hvis ja, hvilke?
- Er du bekendt med, hvilke typer ferie landet Bulgarien ellers byder på? Hvis ja, hvilke?

Bulgarien rummer udover sommerferie langs sortehavskysten en lang række muligheder for andre ferietyper. Blandt andet har landet flere gode skisportssteder, der bl.a. bliver brugt til afholdelse af World Cup løb.

- Var du klar over dette? Hvis ja, har du besøgt disse?
- I hvilken grad ville det være interessant for dig, hvis der blev udbudt rejser til disse vinterferiedestinationer?

En turistdestinations image kan beskrives som: *summen af de overbevisninger, tanker og indtryk en person har omkring dette sted* (Kotler, 1993).

- Med det in mente, hvorledes vil DU beskrive Bulgariens image som turistdestination med dine egne ord?
- Hvorledes vil du beskrive Sunny Beach's image som turistdestination?
- Hvorledes vil du beskrive Golden Sands' image som turistdestination?

Når man gennemgår danske rejseselskabers hjemmesider for udbudte rejser til Bulgarien, er langt størstedelen af det der bliver udbudt koncentreret om solrejser til Sunny Beach og Golden Sands.

- Ville du være interesseret i at få muligheden for at købe rejser til andre turistdestinationer i Bulgarien? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?

Tv programmet
De seneste fire år har man på TV3 kunnet følge livet hos en række unge danskere, der vælger at bruge deres sommer som bartendere og eventpersonale i Sunny Beach.

- Har du set TV udsendelserne "Sommer i Sunny Beach"? Hvis ja, hvad er din holdning til programmet?
- Hvorledes mener du, programmet skildrer virkeligheden i Sunny Beach?
- Giver programmet dig lyst til at besøge turistdestinationen Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?
- Hvorledes påvirker programmet din lyst til at besøge Bulgarien?

Der er ligeledes blevet skrevet meget omkring Sunny Beach i de danske medier gennem de senere år.

- Hvorledes er du bekendt med dette?
- Hvad bliver der lagt vægt på i fremstillingen af Sunny Beach efter din mening?
- Hvorledes påvirker dette dit syn på Sunny Beach som turistdestination?
- Hvorledes påvirker dette dit overordnede indtryk af Bulgarien som turistdestination?

APPENDIX C

Online qualitative survey

The survey was posted online on the private wall on the researcher's Facebook profile. In relation to the survey the following was used as a motivator in the attempt to attract participants to the survey.

"Gør dagens gode gerning og HJÆLP en studerende med at færdiggøre sit kandidatstudie. Hvis du er mellem 25-34 år, må du MEGET gerne svare på nedenstående spørgeskema samt evt. dele dette. Alt hvad det kræver, er din helt og aldeles ÆRLIGE mening omkring en række emner og omkring 10 min af din tid!!! Jeg vil være yderst taknemmelig og takker på forhånd mange gange.." ☺

Each question was placed on a separate page in the survey provider program, making it 37 pages in total.

Page 1
Alder?

Page 2
Køn?

Page 3
Beskæftigelse?

Page 4
Når snakken i dagens Danmark falder på danskernes rejsevaner, er det ifølge undersøgelser, ikke længere et spørgsmål *om* man skal ud og rejse, men snarere *hvor mange gange* man skal afsted. Star Tour forudser, at danskernes rejselyst fortsætter med uformindsket styrke i år (Larsen, 2014).

- Har du planlagt at skulle ud og rejse i år? Hvis ja, hvorhen?

Page 5
- Hvilke ting vægter du højest, når du skal vælge ferie?

Page 6
- Hvilke ting vægter du højest, når du skal vælge, *hvor* rejsen går hen?

Page 7
- Hvilken europæisk destination ville du vælge at tage til, hvis du frit kunne vælge?

Page 8
Bulgarien som turistdestination
- Hvad er det første du tænker på, når du hører ordet Bulgarien?

Page 9
- Hvad er dit umiddelbare indtryk af Bulgarien som turistdestination?

Page 10
- Med hvilke tre ord vil du beskrive Bulgarien som turistdestination?

Page 11
- Har du besøgt Bulgarien? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Og hvad var dit indtryk?

Page 12
- Kunne du tænke dig at besøge BG? Hvis ja, hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?

Page 13
Sunny Beach som turistdestination
- Har du hørt om feriedestinationen Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, hvor fra?

Page 14
- Hvad er dit overordnede indtryk af Sunny Beach som turistdestination?

Page 15
- Med hvilke tre ord vil du beskrive Sunny Beach som turistdestination?

Page 16
- Har du besøgt Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Hvad var dit indtryk?

Page 17
Golden Sands som turistdestination
- Har du hørt om turistdestinationen Golden Sands? Hvis ja, hvor ligger den?

Page 18
- Med hvilke tre ord vil du beskrive Golden Sands som turistdestination?

Page 19
- Har du nogensinde besøgt Golden Sands? Hvis ja, i hvilken forbindelse? Hvad var dit indtryk?

Page 20
- Hvilke forskelle ser du mellem Sunny Beach og Golden Sands?

Page 21
- Er du bekendt med andre destinationer på den bulgarske sortehavskyst? Hvis ja, hvilke?

Page 22

- Er du bekendt med, hvilke typer ferie landet Bulgarien ellers byder på? Hvis ja, hvilke?

Page 23

Bulgarien rummer udover sommerferie langs sortehavskysten en lang række muligheder for andre ferietyper. Blandt andet har landet flere gode skisportssteder, der bl.a. bliver brugt til afholdelse af World Cup løb.

- Var du klar over dette? Hvis ja, har du besøgt disse?

Page 24

- I hvilken grad ville det være interessant for dig, hvis der blev udbudt rejser til disse vinterferiedestinationer?

Page 25

En turistdestinations image kan beskrives som: *"summen af de overbevisninger, tanker og indtryk en person har omkring dette sted"* (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993a).

- Med det in mente, hvorledes vil DU beskrive Bulgariens image som turistdestination med dine egne ord?

Page 26

- Hvorledes vil du beskrive Sunny Beach's image som turistdestination?

Page 27

- Hvorledes vil du beskrive Golden Sands' image som turistdestination?

Page 28

Når man gennemgår danske rejseselskabers hjemmesider for udbudte rejser til Bulgarien, er langt størstedelen af det der bliver udbudt koncentreret om solrejser til Sunny Beach og Golden Sands.

- Ville du være interesseret i at få muligheden for at købe rejser til andre turistdestinationer i Bulgarien? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?

Page 29
Tv programmet

Studier viser, at personer i større grad bliver influeret af det de ser i TV og at TV programmer kan have en væsentlig indflydelse på en destinations image (Govers et al., 2007; Shani & Wang, 2001).

De seneste fire år har man på TV3 kunnet følge livet hos en række unge danskere, der vælger at bruge deres sommer som bartendere og eventpersonale i Sunny Beach.

- Har du set TV udsendelserne "Sommer i Sunny Beach"? Hvis ja, hvad er din holdning til programmet?

Page 30

- Hvorledes mener du, programmet skildrer virkeligheden i Sunny Beach?

Page 31

- Hvorledes bliver du påvirket af programmet?

Page 32
- Giver programmet dig lyst til at besøge turistdestinationen Sunny Beach? Hvis ja, hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?

Page 33
- Hvorledes påvirker programmet din lyst til at besøge Bulgarien?

Page 34
Der er ligeledes blevet skrevet meget omkring Sunny Beach i de danske medier gennem de senere år.
- Hvorledes er du bekendt med dette?

Page 35
- Hvad bliver der lagt vægt på i fremstillingen af Sunny Beach efter din mening?

Page 36
- Hvorledes påvirker dette dit syn på Sunny Beach som turistdestination?

Page 37
- Hvorledes påvirker dette dit overordnede indtryk af Bulgarien som turistdestination?
Tusind tak for din tid og deltagelse.