



# DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY FOR EUROPEAN CITY DESTINATIONS

From a customer perspective

Master Thesis Project

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** There is a lack of theory related to destination brand equity, especially from a customer perspective. Furthermore there is lack of research in terms of measuring the destination of a brand without transferring theories from marketing tangible goods.

This study conceptualizes develops a multi-attributed destination brand equity model for European cities from a customer's perspective using an exploratory approach.

**Research approach:** A proposed conceptualization of destination brand equity from a customer perspective for European city destination has been done through the use of repertory grid technique in qualitative interviews. The Repertory Grid Technique has allowed for the elicitation of attributes used by the interviewees to evaluate destinations. Data was discussed and analyzed in the first part of the research in a way that a scale for use in a questionnaire could be made.

The second part of the research involved the quantitative testing of the attributes elicited in the first phase of the research through the Repertory Grid Technique. This has been done through an online and the findings have been analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis.

**Findings:** The first stage of the research resulted in nine themes each composed by a set of attributes used by the interviewees to assess destinations resulting in a conceptualization of destination brand equity.

The second study resulted with a multi-attribute model of destination brand equity based on the findings of the first stage of research. A four factor destination brand equity was developed which overall was supported by the data gathered.

**Value:** This research contributes to closing the current gap in destination brand equity from a customer perspective. For practitioners, this study offers a tool to measure the performance of destination's brand and this is relevant since there is little guidance in the current research on how measure brand equity for a destination.

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## **1. Introduction**

A significant amount of effort has been put in addressing the complex nature of a brand (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.401) especially when brands are means of achieving differentiation and competitive advantages (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.242). Taking into consideration that brands are present in many categories of tourism destination and services, very little research has been undertaken in the field of destination branding (Cai, 2002, p.720-721). Furthermore, with the increasing number of destination choices available for a traveler, it has never been harder for destinations to differentiate themselves and thus it has become important for destinations to create an effective destination brand (Pike, 2005, p.28).

The importance of an effective and strong brand in a destination context has to do with the complex decision-making process a traveler undertakes when choosing a destination (Cai, 2002, p.721). The decision-making process for a destination is being argued to have a higher level of uncertainty and risk than tangible goods (Ibid.) and thus a strong brand should facilitate the decision-making process and lower the levels of uncertainty and perceived risk (Ibid.).

Customer-based brand equity is being theorized as the most appropriate measurement tool for the effectiveness of a brand as it reflects the way the consumer is responding to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243; 258). Customer-based brand equity for a DMO would mean knowledge in terms of the attitudes and behaviors of tourists with respect to the brand (Pike et al., 2010, p.435), but it should also offer guidelines in marketing tactics and strategies and managerial decisions (Keller, 1993, p.2).

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

In a tourism context, there is very little research made regarding the assessment of brand impact and its effectiveness (Boo et al., 2009, p.219) especially from a customer-perspective. Moreover the little research in destination brand equity is transferring theories from the marketing of tangible goods and as such the findings may not be relevant for a destination (Boo et al., 2009, p.220).

DMOs are currently assessing the effectiveness in financial terms as part of a corporate balance sheet (Pike, 2010, p.12), thus the attitudes and behaviors of the travelers are not being taken into consideration. This lack of understanding of the importance of customer-based brand equity for a destination is being argued by the pragmatic guidelines the current research is offering to DMOs (Pike, 2005).

Furthermore, according to a report made by European Cities Marketing (2013), European city destinations are experiencing a remarkable growth in terms of the volume of tourists visiting the destination and thus the level of competitiveness is even higher between European city destinations and thus the assessment of a destination's brand from a customer perspective is even more paramount.

It is being argued by Boo et al. (2009) that the lack of relevant destination brand measurements has to do with the complexity in understanding how tourists evaluate a destination brand and hence a study measuring destination-brand equity from a customer perspective will further define the nature of destination branding.

## **1.2. Research questions**

Considering the topics and areas discussed above, the purpose of this paper is to conceptualize destination brand equity from a customer perspective for European city destinations. Thus the paper will try to answer to research questions:

- 1. What may be the elements of destination brand equity from a traveler's perspective?*
- 2. How may these elements be operationalized and tested in a multi-attribute model of destination brand equity for European cities?*

## **2. Methodology**

This part of the paper starts by discussing the philosophy of science chosen for answering the research questions of the paper. It is then followed by a discussion of the research methods and theoretical consideration used and implemented so that the objectives of the paper can be achieved. The section ends by discussing how the different research methods have been operationalized to answer the research questions of the paper.



## **2.1. Philosophy of science**

Since the purpose of this paper is two folded, firstly to inductively generate hypotheses of how may destination brand equity be define from a customer perspective, and then secondly to conduct a confirmatory study of the findings of the first part of the research, a post-positivism paradigm was chosen to achieve these objectives.

Post-positivism is argued to be a research paradigm that emphasizes meaning and seeks to explain social concerns and is one of several paradigms that might be used in better representing the lived experiences of people related to leisure (Hederson, 2011, p.342). Furthermore, post-positivism legitimizes the use of mixed methods, which is being argued to improve accuracy of findings and furthermore, mix methods reveal a more complex and useful picture of the phenomena under study, especially in leisure sciences (Hederson, 2011, p.343).

Post-positivism is frequently used by researchers to uncover meanings from people connected to their interpretation of reality (Ibid.) which describes the purpose of this study, which is, as mentioned before, to uncover the meaning of destination brand equity from a customer perspective.

By adopting this paradigm it is possible to represent the complex behavior of people in a leisure context such as tourism but in the same time it embraces the ideology that fixing meanings on the researched phenomena is not a neutral act (Ibid.). As such the findings of this paper cannot be regarded as universal truths, as the outcomes of the research methods used to answer the research questions of this paper are dependent on the choices of the researcher and the interaction between researcher and the participants of the research.

## **2.2. Qualitative Approach**

As it can be seen from the introduction chapter of this paper, the goal is to explore and attempt to conceptualize a concept which is poorly research, which is the conceptualization of destination brand equity from a customer perspective. Thus the research necessary to reach this goal is composed of two stages, a qualitative stage that should result in hypotheses of what destination brand equity is from a customer perspective and a second stage of quantitative stage which will represent a test phase of the findings of the qualitative research.

The qualitative research phase of this paper consists of in depth interviews with the purpose of getting an understanding of the meaning of destination brand equity and rich descriptive details connected to this topic (Jakson II et al., 2007, p.23). Thus by using in depth interviews it is possible to get in depth responses about the way the interviewees have constructed and understood the phenomenon under study (Ibid.), which in this case is destination brand equity.

Furthermore by using qualitative data, a researcher is aware of their subjective influence on the research outcomes as *“the researcher notes that his or her study of others’ experiences borders the investigator’s experience as well, and this has implications for social scientific interpretation of data collected”* (Ibid.). This entails that the findings of a qualitative research cannot be generalized or cannot be said to be consistent, as they are available or accessible at the time of investigation for a sample of population (Jakson II et al., 2007, p.21-22).

To combat these challenges of qualitative research, it seemed appropriate to test the findings of this stage of the research quantitatively, with the purpose of confirming or not some of the hypotheses resulted from the qualitative research stage.

### **2.3. Quantitative Approach**

One of the qualities of the quantitative approach is that by applying a standardized instrument, i.e. a structured questionnaire, will enable descriptive and explanatory generalizations for the population in question (Henn et al., 2006, p.117). This aspect of quantitative approach should increase the external validity and generalizability of the findings of the qualitative research phase employed in the case of the current research paper. Furthermore by using a quantitative approach to the qualitative findings the influence and researcher’s biases may be reduced, thus making the findings more replicable and reproducible in different research scenarios (Bryman, 2012, p.176-177).

Using mixed methods, especially when researching people’s attitudes and meanings towards a topic, is being said to offer a more valid and holistic picture than using a singular research approach (Henn et al., 2006, p.19). Furthermore using mix of methods does not only combat the particular deficiencies of any singular method but their complementary strengths add to the validity of the findings (Henn et al., 2006, p.20).

## **2.4. Theoretical Considerations**

As mentioned in the introduction chapter of this paper, destination brand equity from a customer perspective is not only poorly researched, but the current research and theories in destination brand equity are solely based on theories of brand equity from tangible goods. Since the purpose of the paper is to explore the meaning of destination brand equity from a tourist's perspective, the theoretical considerations used in this paper have a deductive purpose, in a way that it helps in gaining knowledge about the topic of brand equity and destination brand equity.

Thus it has been chosen to structure this section of the paper as a literature review of the existing and relevant research in brand equity. It first starts with a discussion of brand and brand equity definitions and what they mean for a company and a destination. It then continues with an elaborate discussion of the main models of brand equity from tangible goods theories which are currently used in defining destination brand equity. Each factor of the models of brand equity is described and discussed in both a tangible goods context and tourism context. The literature review section ends in a discussion of the theories of brand equity used in the service industry, so that a more complex and robust understanding of brand equity can be achieved.

As mentioned before, the research design of this paper is exploratory, and thus the theories and models discovered and discussed in the literature review section will not be used in the field research stage. This is because destination brand equity is scarcely researched and even more is scarcely researched from a tourist perspective without transferring theories from tangible goods. That is why the aim of the paper is to gain an understanding of this phenomenon from a tourist perspective, without limiting the findings to the current research and theories. Nevertheless the literature review will be used in the findings section of this paper, when the findings will be discussed in terms of supporting or not the already existing research in destination brand equity.

## **2.5. Repertory Grid Technique**

Considering that the aim of this research paper is to uncover the attitudes and meaning tourists have toward the concept of destination brand equity through a qualitative approach, followed by a quantitative testing of these findings, the repertory grid technique was chosen to do so.

Repertory grid technique is based on the concept that a person's understanding of the world is accomplished through an active and constructive process of contrasting constructs which are used to make sense of the world (Mak et al., 2013, p.329). That is why repertory grid technique serves as a method of inquiry which enables respondents to bring forward their own constructs of how they interpret the world in an understandable manner (Ibid.).

An important strength of the repertory grid technique method is the fact that the respondents are not forced to respond to constructs pre-specified by the researcher and as such the bias of the researcher is reduced significantly and the validity of the findings are increased (Hankinson, 2004, p.146; Pike, 2007, p.380). Furthermore Pike (2007, p.378) suggests that repertory grid technique may be one exploratory technique which appears to be able to identify the dimensions used by travelers to differentiate destinations which represents the main purpose of this research paper.

The repertory grid technique methods entail two phases, one being element selection and the other being the elicitation of constructs. The element selection phase requires choosing the elements which are the focus of the study (Pike, 2007, p.382), which in this case are European metropolitan city destinations. The number of elements chosen for this research paper was six as it is a recurrent number in destination studies which have used repertory grid technique as a method of research (Pike, 2007, p.382). The next phase in the repertory grid technique is eliciting constructs, which are "*a way in which things are construed as being alike and yet different from others*" (Keller, 1995, p.105, as cited in Pike, 2007, p.383). The method used in this research paper to elicit constructs is the use of triad cards where the elements are presented to the participant in sequential sets of three (Pike, 2007, p.383), and how this has been done in practice will be explained in the next section of the paper.

What is important to underline is the fact that in qualitative research the number of interviews is determined by achieving redundancy in data gathered (Ibid.). As such it has been argued that a small sample of repertory grid technique interviews is sufficient to reach redundancy in data (Ibid.). Furthermore this technique suggests that the quantitative research should be made during the qualitative interviews, as the interviewees should be asked to rate the importance of each construct elicited on a five point scale (Hankinson, 2004, p.145). For the purpose of this paper, this part of the research method is being done separately through a

quantitative online survey, so that the hypotheses resulted from the qualitative interviews could be tested using a larger scale of respondents. This way the external validity and generalizability of the findings may be achieved.

## **2.6. Interview Situation and Sample Selection**

As discussed above, in order to discover as many rich and descriptive constructs connected to the topic of destination brand equity from a customer perspective, eight in depth interviews have been conducted in English using the repertory grid technique described above. All the interviews were recorded and later on transcribed. The researcher has decided to not conduct any more interviews as the constructs elicited by the interviewees started to be repeated and as such data redundancy was achieved. A purposive sampling technique was used in choosing the interviewees so that suitable participants that have the knowledge of the research topic could be chosen (Mak et al., 2013, p.329). The interviewees were both males and females, age between 24 and 55 years old with different marital status so that a complex and different constructs could be elicited through the interviews.

The interviews started with the researcher asking the interviewee to write on different pieces of paper two European city destinations that they have visited and consider to be good tourism destination, two European city destinations they have visited and are not good tourism destination and two European city destinations which they plan to visit in the future. The reason for choosing these elements for the repertory grid technique is firstly because this technique entails that there are elements which are alike and different from each other as the statements expressed for the similarity and or difference is what describes the personal constructs sought for with this research paper (Pike, 2007, p.383). Secondly since destination brand equity is scarcely researched from a tourist perspective, including also destinations which will be visited in the future should elicit broader and more complex sets of constructs and perceptions of the destinations may be discovered (Pike, 2007, p.384).

Once the interviewee had written the six destinations, the eliciting constructs phase could be started. The interviewee was presented with the names of two destinations, i.e. one good and not good tourism destination. Then the interviewees would be asked to say in what important way the good and not so good destination are different from each other and as such different

constructs were mentioned. If the constructs were too abstract, e.g. heritage or culture, the interviewee was asked to explain and describe in simple words what these constructs stand for. Once the interviewee could not come up with other constructs, the names of the destinations would be changed and the process repeated until no more constructs could be discovered and no more combinations were possible of good and not good tourism destinations. Once this step was done the third card with the name of the destination they plan to visit in the future was showed and the interviewee was asked again to say in what important way the three destinations are different or similar to each other. The cards were interchanged until there was no more possible combination and more importantly until the interviewee could not come up with constructs other than those already mentioned.

## **2.7. Online Survey and Sample Selection**

As discussed above, the findings of the qualitative interviews will be used in constructing an online survey so that the goal of this research paper could be achieved. An advantage of the repertory grid technique is the simplicity in terminology of responses elicited from the interviews and thus the results can be easily understood by another reader (Pike, 2007, p.385). Nevertheless the amount of statements can be substantial and thus an analysis of the data is required (Ibid.). Nevertheless, there is no specific rule on how to analyze data resulted from a repertory grid technique research. That is why this research paper is following Pike's (2007) categorization of qualitative data in themes, were there was a commonality in wording.

Thus the online survey was structures after the following themes resulted from the qualitative interviews i.e. *"history and heritage"*, *"attractions"*, *"activities"*, *"locals"*, *"services"*, *"image"*, *"atmosphere"*, *"esthetics"* and *"safety"*. These concepts had factors and statements derived from the interviews which had to be measured and tested and to do so a five point Likert-scale was used. The reason why a five point Likert-scale has been used in the online survey is because in the current tourism research which makes use of repertory grid technique as a research method, e.g. Mak et al. (2013), Hankinson (2004), have used a five point Likert-scale to measure the degree of importance of the different elicited constructs. Consequently the respondents of the online survey were asked to rate the importance of the different factors in assessing a European city destination, by choosing from 1- not important to 5-very important (see Appendix 1).

The sample selection of the online survey was not as restrictive as the one used in the qualitative interviews, as the purpose of this survey was to reach a large amount of respondents so that validity and generalizability of the findings could be assured. This sampling method is also known as probability sampling, which has the advantage of making the findings more reliable as it allows researchers to calculate confidence limits for sampling errors (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.107). The online survey was distributed via a link and was posted on different forums and Facebook pages, but was also distributed via e-mail to different network communities and thus a randomness in the selection of participants should be obtained.

## **2.8. Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Looking at the current research in tourism which uses repertory grid technique as a research method, e.g. Hankinson (2004, p.149), it can be seen that the quantitative data generated for the level of importance for the different constructs elicited is being analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (Ibid.). That is why the findings of this paper resulted from the online survey will also be analyzed using exploratory factor analysis and how this has been done will be discussed in the analysis section of this paper.

Exploratory factor analysis is said to be one of the most used statistical technique when researching human behavior (Treiblmaier & Filzmoser, 2010, p.198). The main purpose of exploratory factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables observed in fewer factors so that a better interpretation of the data can be done and also to uncover hidden structures in the data (Ibid.). The purpose of the exploratory factor analysis is congruent with the second goal of this research paper, which is the conceptualization of destination brand equity from a tourist perspective. Furthermore as it can see from Appendix 1, the qualitative research phase resulted in a significant number of variables, thus factor analysis should aid in reducing these variables in fewer factors as discussed above.

Methodologically, exploratory factor analysis is able to explain correlations between variables quantitatively and qualitatively and as such the variables measured are a function of factors (Park et al., 202, p.564-56). Thus exploratory factor analysis focuses on discovering latent structures of the variables used and clustering them into factors, thus reducing the number of variables (Park et al., 2002, p.563).

### 3. Literature Review

This section of the paper consists of a literature review of the relevant theories needed for understanding the field of brand equity. The section starts with a discussion of what a brand and brand equity is and what it means for a business. It is then followed by an ample discussion of brand equity following Aaker's (1996) and Keller's (1993) models of brand equity. These models are being discussed in parallel with the current research in destination brand equity which is based on the above mentioned models. The section will then end with a discussion of brand equity in the service sector based on Berry's model (2000).

#### 3.1. Defining a brand

It is being argued that one of the most important assets of a firm is its brand and as such it is imperative for a business to be able to create and nurture a brand using all the marketing mix variables (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.241). Nevertheless, the concept of a brand is complex as it is being said that a brand does not only represent “[...] *a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify goods or services*” (Ibid.) but it is also about “*adding emotional meaning to product or service, a strong layer of emotional affinity, or identification between brand and target audience*” (Bergstrom et al., 2002, p. 134, as cited in Dahlen et al., 2010, p.195). On the other hand, both Dahlen et al. (2010, p.195) and Kotler and Keller (2011, p.242) argue that brands should not be regarded only as means of identifying a product or a service, but they should be seen as means of achieving differentiation in such a manner that it provides a competitive advantage to the business. As such, it might be said that managing a brand in an effective and strategic manner is vital for businesses.

Managing and developing a brand, especially a strong brand, requires significant investment in developing deep and prominent associations in customer's minds, which are not only connected to short-term need fulfillment, but create a meaningful long term relationship with the customers (Dahlen et al., 2010, p.195). Furthermore, even though businesses use different marketing tools to push the development of a brand, ultimately, a brand is an entity rooted in reality and it reflects the perceptions and peculiarities of consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243). That is why it is important for businesses to realize that building a strong brand is a



two-way process where the interaction between customer and brand is reciprocal (Dahlen et al., 2010, p.195).

As such it can be argued that building a strong brand needs to be relevant for the consumers, as consumers seek information and content relevant to their needs (Windahl et al., 2009, p.214). Kotler and Keller (2011, p.242) further argue this point by saying that a brand's ability of understanding the needs and wants of a consumer and simplifying their decision making process is an invaluable asset in developing a strong brand.

### **3.2. Brand Equity**

Brand equity is the most common tool used to represent brand performance (Pike, 2010, p.124) as it represents the added or subtracted value a brand gives to products or services (Aaker, 1996, p.7-8) and as such brand equity should reflect “[...] *the way customers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand*” (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243). Furthermore the performance of a brand has a direct link to pricing strategies used by the business, its market share and profitability (Ibid.) and may ultimately lead to higher return on investment (So & King, 2009, p.590).

From the above definition of brand equity it can be pointed out why this area is subject of many studies. One of the reasons is that brand equity should reflect the value of the brand which in turn can be used as an intangible asset for the company, hence adding or subtracting to the value of the company on the market as a whole (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p. 4). Another reason for the prevailing presence of brand equity in current studies may be that brand equity can be also used as a tool for measuring the performance of marketing strategies used by the company as brand equity should reflect consumer responses towards the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243; 258).

Nevertheless, as mentioned before the concept of brand and brand equity is somewhat intangible and as such it may prove difficult to measure the performance of a brand. Many businesses measure brand performance, and thus brand equity, from a financial perspective in terms of measuring the cash flow intake as a result of branding strategies, as brand equity is seen as a balance sheet asset (Dahlen et al., 2009, p.228). This reasoning is argued by the fact that brands are considered to be “*wealth-generating financial assets, albeit intangible ones, so that*

*we can actually place a financial value on them*” (Batchelor 2000, p.4, as cited in Dahlen et al., 2009, p. 228). Nonetheless, recent studies argue that such a perspective on brand equity is not sufficient, as it does not take into consideration the evaluation of a brand from a consumer perspective which as mentioned before, represents a significant part of brand equity since it should reflect what customers think and act in respect to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243). Customer-based brand equity acknowledges that the power and value of the brand lies in customer knowledge of the brand as a result of the marketing strategies used to develop a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p.244). Furthermore it is being argued that a customer-based brand equity perspective offers guidelines for marketing strategies and tactics and it may be useful in managerial decision making (Keller, 1993, p.2).

### **3.2.1. Destination Brand Equity**

The importance of developing a strong brand and relevant brand performance tools, as mentioned above, is even more paramount for destinations as the broadening of tourist opportunities is resulting in a lack of differentiation between destinations (Pike, 2005).

Given the importance of destination branding, the current research has focused on developing destination brand identities and strategy development (Pike, 2009, p.858), thus leaving the field of destination branding in its infancy (Cai, 2002, p.720-721). Furthermore, the literature search made by Pike (2009, p.858- 861) suggests that the field of destination branding is not only poor, but there is also a lack of research in the area of brand performance measurement, which is defined above as brand equity.

Despite the fact that the importance of customer-based brand equity for destinations is being acknowledged, there is very few research made in this field of study. The research made by Konecnik and Gartner (2007) of customer based brand equity for Slovenia is often being mentioned in current literature as one of the few research made regarding destination brand equity (Im et al., 2012, p. 385; Boo et al., 2009, p.219). The research made by Boo et al. (2009) of customer-based brand equity for gambling destinations and the research made by Pike et al. (2010) and Pike and Bianchi (2013) regarding customer-based brand equity for Australia and long and short-haul markets are other examples of research in the field of destination brand equity.

The common denominator of the studies in the field of customer-based brand equity for a destination, e.g. Konecnik & Garner (2007) or Pike et al. (2010), is the structuring of conceptual frameworks after the models of customer-based brand equity theorized by Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) which are based and build upon the characteristics of tangible goods. Despite the fact that Pike (2005, p.258) points out the complexity and multidimensionality of destinations compared with tangible goods, the research in the field of destination brand equity seems to result in very similar dimensions (Low & Lamb, 2000, p.350-351).

Furthermore the current research in destination brand equity is either about transferring the model of customer-based brand equity from tangible goods to destinations, e.g. Pike et al. (2010) or Boo et al. (2009), or about testing the relationship between the dimensions of Aaker's model in a tourism context, e.g. Im et al. (2012). Researchers use the study made by Yoo and Donthu (2001) to argue for the transferability of Aaker's and Keller's model of customer-based brand equity in a tourism context. Yoo and Donthu (2001) test and prove the reliability, validity and generalizability of these models. It must be pointed out that the research is solely based on tangible goods, (Yoo & Donthu, 2001, p.1) and thus the multidimensionality and complexity of a destination (Pike, 2005, p.28) is not being taken into consideration.

Finally it should be pointed out that the current research in customer-based brand equity for destinations define the dimensions of brand equity either following Aaker's and Keller's definitions of these dimensions, e.g. Pike et al. (2010), or by using extensive literature research, which is mostly derived from marketing tangible goods, e.g. Boo et al. (2009). Nevertheless Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.415) in their research, point out that transferring the notions and definitions from tangible goods to destinations may cause validity problems when defining customer-based brand equity for a destination. This underlines the lack of qualitative exploratory research in how tourists define destination brand equity, even though it is being acknowledge that brand equity is reflected in the way consumers think, feel and act regarding the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p.243).

The next section of this paper will thus describe and discuss Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) model of customer-based brand equity and how these models are being used in a tourism context.

### **3.3. Brand awareness**

According to Aaker (1996, p.8-10) and Keller (1993, p.12) one of the dimensions building customer-based brand equity is brand awareness which is defined by both researchers as being the strength of brand presence in the mind of the consumer (Ibid.). Brand awareness is considered to be an important factor of customer-based brand equity as it has a significant impact on customer decision making process, especially in the information search stage (Keller, 1993, p.3). Both researchers argue that there are several methods of measuring brand awareness and that is in terms of brand recall and brand recognition (Ibid.)

Brand recall is being defined as a measurement of the presence of a brand in customer's minds. Aaker (1996, p.13) considers brand recall when the customer thinks of the brand when the product category the brand is part of is being mentioned. On the other hand, Keller (1996, p.12) considers that capturing the extent to which the name of the brand is top of mind should be an element included in customer-based brand equity. This is vital for the businesses as consumers will consider the brand when looking to purchase a specific product (Aaker, 1996, p.13).

Brand recognitions is defined by both Aaker (1996, p.8-10) and Keller (1993, p.3) as the ability of the consumer to recognize the brand. In other words it is about if the consumer is able to identify the brand and the source of exposure to the brand is not relevant (Ibid.).

#### **3.3.1. Destination brand awareness**

Looking at the research made in a tourism context regarding customer-based brand equity destination brand awareness is being defined as the strength of the brand's presence in customer's mind (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.404; Boo et al., 2009, p.221), and in other research the strength of the brand presence in customer's mind is named as destination brand salience (Pike & Bianchi, 2011, p.9).

Destination brand awareness is mostly being studied under the field of tourism decision-making process (Pike et al., 2010, p.439), which is congruent with Keller (1993, p.3) which, as mentioned above, considers brand awareness an important factor in customer decision-making process. Brand awareness stage is being theorized as a prerequisite of destination choice during a

tourist decision-making process, as the destinations known by the tourist are being put together to accomplish an awareness set (Decrop, 2010, p.97). Pike and Bianchi (2011, p.9) propose that the presence of a destination in the brand awareness set, especially if it is an unaided awareness of the destination, can be a source of competitive advantage.

Most of the research in customer-based brand equity for destinations, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007), p.407, use the definition of Aaker (1996) for brand awareness and regard destination brand awareness as part of brand image, which is following Keller's model of customer-based brand equity (1993). Furthermore research in the area of destination brand awareness is scarce and as such researches use theories from the field of marketing tangible goods, such as Yoo and Donthu (2001), thus pointing to the need of more investigation in the area of destination brand awareness which is not based on previous theories derived from tangible goods.

### **3.4. Brand image**

According to Keller (1993, p.3-4) another factor of brand equity is brand image and *“brand image is defined here as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in customer memory”*. Keller (1993, p.4) goes further and defines brand associations as being the attributes, benefits and attitudes towards a product and its brand. Attributes are being defined as the descriptive features of a product, benefits are connected to the personal value consumers attach to the product in terms of what is the product doing for the consumer and finally attitudes is being defined as the overall evaluation of the brand (Ibid.).

Aaker (1996, p.25) uses brand associations as another element of customer-based brand equity and defines it as the perceptions customers link to the brand. These associations can take the form of attributes of the product or service, a particular symbol or a spokesperson (Ibid.).

#### **3.4.1. Destination brand image**

The current research in customer-based brand equity for a destination is somewhat divided into research that uses brand image as a factor of destination brand equity (Boo et al., 2009, p.221; Pike & Bianchi, 2011, p.744), thus following Keller's model, or research that considers brand associations as part of destination brand equity (Lee & Back, 2008, p.334; Pike, 2009, p.862). Nevertheless it should be pointed out that the difference between these studies in

regards to this factor of brand equity rests only in the name used for this factor of brand equity as the definitions used to describe destination brand image or associations are very much similar and are a combination of both Keller's (1993) and Aaker's (1996) definition of brand image and associations, that is why this sections is named destination brand image and will thus discuss research made in the field of destination brand image.

There is extensive research made in the field of destination brand image in terms of its attributes (Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.657-659) and destination brand image evaluation criteria, e.g. Baloglu and McCleary (1999). Nevertheless there is a significant gap in the research of destination brand image and that is a universal and reliable measurement of destination image from a traveler's point of view (Pike, 2007, p.378).

When it comes to the attributes of destination brand image, the research of Beerli and Martin (2004, p.659) uses a comprehensive literature review to determine and categorize the attributes used in defining destination brand image. As such they suggest that there are nine categories of attributes determining destination image (Ibid.) and these are *culture, history and art* (e.g. museums), *natural and social environment, political and economical factors* (e.g. safety), *natural resources* (e.g. beaches), *general infrastructure* (e.g. airports), *tourist infrastructure* (e.g. restaurants), *tourist leisure and recreation* (e.g. theme parks) and finally *the atmosphere of the place* (e.g. relaxing). However, it must be pointed out that having a universal measurement of destination image may be difficult to accomplish, as constructing such a scale is dependent on the purpose of the image assessment and also on the attractions of the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.660). These aspects should have an influence on choosing which kind of attributes to use when analyzing destination brand image, as depending on the circumstances, more general or specific attributes are more appropriate (Ibid.)

As mentioned above, when discussing destination brand image, evaluation criteria should also be taken into consideration (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p.870). Researchers argue that formation of destination brand image entails both cognitive and affective evaluation (Ibid.). Affective evaluation is being defined as the feelings and attachment towards the destination (Ibid.), while cognitive evaluation has to do with the beliefs and knowledge the tourist has about destination's attributes (Chen & Phou, 2013, p.270). Even though it is being acknowledge that destination brand image is formed by both cognitive and affective evaluation, there is few

research which uses both cognitive and affective evaluation to define and/or understand destination brand image (Qu et al., 2011, p.467). This is pointing again to the need of more research in order to better understand destination brand image but also to achieve a universal measurement scale, as mentioned above.

### **3.5. Brand perceived quality**

According to Aaker (1996, p.19) this factor of customer-based brand equity: perceived quality, is considered to be the most important and distinctive contributor to a company's return on investment and thus an essential asset for a company. Aaker (Ibid.) further suggest that the establishment of perceived quality is made through a combination of actually delivering quality through systems such as Total Quality Management and through creating associations between quality and the company. Nevertheless to create perceived quality a business must firstly find out how and what consumers use to define and evaluate quality (Ibid.) and deliver the expectations.

On the other hand, Keller (1993, p.5) does not use perceived quality as a standalone variable of customer-based brand equity like Aaker (1996) considers it to be, but considers perceived quality as brand of brand image. As mentioned above, one of the factors considered by Keller (1993, p.4) to be part of brand image is the attitude towards the product and brand. He then argues that the beliefs about product-related attributes and also the experiential and functional benefits are what is considered to be perceived quality (Keller, 1993, p.5).

#### **3.5.1. Destination perceived quality**

Compared with tangible goods, defining perceived quality for a destination may be difficult, as this assessment of a destination is directly connected to the tourist offerings a destination has to offer and its attributes (Zabkar et al., 2010, p.537-538). Furthermore since destinations have general and more specific attributes, as mentioned in destination brand image section of this paper, it may then prove difficult to create a universal measurement scale of destination perceived quality (Ibid.).

These challenges may be a reason for why there is scarce research in the area of destination perceived quality (Horng et al., 2012, 2609) even though this factor is considered to have a significant impact on tourist behavior (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.405). Furthermore,

Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.410) in their research of destination brand equity from a customer perspective, point out the difficulty of separating image and quality variables as both of these variables, as discussed previously, look at the descriptive attributes of a destination and tourist's attitude toward these attributes.

In the research made by Zabkar et al. (2010, p.538) regarding destination perceived quality, it is being suggested that perceived quality should be defined according to the attributes of the destination. More specifically the theory of the six A's (Buhalis, 2000, p.98) is considered to incorporate the attributes necessary to define perceived quality of a destination (Zabkar et al., 2010, p.538). According to Buhalis (2000) a destination can be described by its *attractions*, i.e. natural, artificial and cultural, by *amenities*, i.e. accommodation and catering facilities, by its *accessibility*, i.e. destination infrastructure, *activities*, *available packages*, i.e. any kind of pre-arranged packages and finally *ancillary services*, i.e. banks, hospitals. Zabkar et al. (2010, p.538) add to these factors by mentioning the quality of service delivery in terms of the friendliness, courtesy, reliability and efficiency of the persons delivering a service to the tourist.

Nevertheless as mentioned before some of the attributes used to describe perceived quality coincide with the ones used in defining destination brand image, pointing out not only the difficulty of separating these factors of customer-based brand equity for a destination but also to the difficulty of creating a universal scale for these factors.

In the current research of destination brand equity from a customer perspective, researchers, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412), have used the quality of transportation and accommodation as factors defining perceived quality. Nevertheless, as Aaker (1996, p.19) is stating as well, defining perceived quality requires the knowledge of how and what customers use to define and evaluate quality. This point is further argued for by Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412) as "*tourists' opinions are viewed as one, if not the most important, variable to evaluate quality*" (Ibid.) and as such tourists' perspective should be used to classify the variables defining perceived quality.

### **3.6. Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is viewed by Aaker (1996, p.22-23) as being an important dimension of brand equity as a brand does not have a value without loyal customers. It is further argued that



loyal customers have a predictable and repeated sale pattern which in turn makes this type of customers a very profitable segment (Ibid.).

While Aaker (Ibid.) considers brand loyalty as another factor of customer-based brand equity which can be achieved by offering a consistent and relevant product to consumers, Keller (1993, p.8) sees brand loyalty as a direct result of positive brand image and high levels of brand awareness and not a standalone factor of brand equity from a customer perspective.

### **3.6.1. Destination brand loyalty**

Looking at the current research in destination brand equity from a customer perspective, it can be seen that researchers take on the view of Aaker (1996) on brand loyalty as a variable of brand equity, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.406) or Pike (2009, p.864). On the other hand research in destination brand equity which focuses on the relationship between the different factors of brand equity, e.g. Im et al. (2012, p.389) take on the view of Keller (1993) on what brand loyalty is, as mentioned above.

Much of the current research in customer-based brand equity for a destination and more specifically destination brand loyalty, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.405) or Pike and Bianchi (2013, p.5-6) refer and make use of the research made by Opperman (2000) in tourism destination loyalty. Opperman (2000, p.78) comments on the fact that even though brand loyalty has been researched and used for many years in marketing literature, there is very little research made in a destination context. Brand loyalty indicates a positive attitude towards the brand, which in turn brings a positive word-of-mouth effect (Ibid.). Taking into consideration the importance of word-of-mouth in tourist decision-making process, as tourists look for, and rely heavily on recommendations when choosing a destination, it becomes paramount to incorporate destination brand loyalty as a variable in building destination brand equity (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.406).

Destination brand loyalty is being argued to be constructed upon two concepts: attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Oppermann, 2000, p.79). *Attitudinal loyalty* refers to the attitude a tourist has towards a destination which is reflected in the intent to visit or in positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Pike & Bianchi, 2013, p.6). *Behavioral loyalty* in a destination context is being defined as the repeat visitation of a destination (Oppermann, 2000, p.80; Pike et al.,

2010, p.439) due to previous experiential familiarity with the destination, which in turn should influence future destination choices made by tourists (Konecnik and Gartner , 2007, p.406). Despite the fact that much of the tourism industry is focused on developing repeat visitation from tourists, little research has been made in this area, especially on a longitudinal scale so that patterns of behavior can be observed (Oppermann, 2000, p.80-81).

Oppermann (2000, p.80) underlines the importance of researching and measuring destination loyalty using both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty measurements so that a robust measurement could be developed (Ibid.). Even though it does not study destination loyalty on a longitudinal perspective as Oppermann (2000) suggests, the research made by Chen and Phou (2013) sheds some light in what may be the factors defining and influencing destination loyalty. Thus their research suggests that destination image, destination satisfaction, trust and attachment have a direct and sequential influence on destination loyalty (Chen & Phou, 2013, p.275), but nevertheless a longitudinal perspective applied to this research should bring more accurate findings in terms of destination loyalty.

### **3.7. Brand equity in the service industry**

Many of the researchers mentioned above, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007) or Boo et al. (2009) do question the integrity of transferring theories and concepts from branding tangible goods to branding intangible goods such as tourism destinations. This is due to the complexity of decision making process in tourism compared with the decision making process of tangible goods (Cai, 2002, p.721). As a tourism destination is a bundle of goods and services, the risk and uncertainty of making a destination choice is significantly higher than purchasing a tangible good (Ibid.).

Branding is even more important in the service industry, as a strong brand should increase customer's trust in the intangibility of the service and aids customers to better visualize and understand intangible products (Berry, 2000, p.128). These points of view are supported also by So and King (2009, p.590) as they argue that the application of traditional branding theories to intangible products, i.e. services, may result in neglecting important areas such as the experiential aspects of building a successful service brand (Ibid.). As such, So and King (2009, p.593) mention Berry's (2000) model of service branding as a model of brand equity which is

not only transferring theories from tangible goods to services, but it takes into consideration the specific characteristics of services, i.e. tangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability (So & King, 2009, p.591; 593) and thus is a relevant model for a holistic understanding of what destination brand equity may be defined by.

According to Berry (2000, p.130) brand equity for services is constructed of five factors: company's presented brand, external brand communications, customer's experience with company, brand awareness and brand meaning.

*Company's presented brand* is being defined as the controlled communication and identity building through advertising, service facilities and the appearance of service providers (Berry, 2000, p.129) while *external brand communications* refers to the information customers absorb about the company but it is not controlled by it, e.g. word-of mouth (Ibid.).

Berry (Ibid.) argues that both presented brand and external brand communications have a direct influence on *brand awareness*, which represents the ability of a customer to recognize and recall the brand, which in turn has an indirect influence on brand equity. Brand awareness has an indirect influence on brand equity because a customer may be aware of the brand but in the end it is the brand meaning that makes the customer choose one brand from another (ibid.)

*Brand meaning* represents the customer's dominant perception of the brand (Ibid.). Brand meaning is directly influenced by *customer's experience with the company*, which represents the sum of the encounters a customer had with the company, and indirectly by the present brand and external brand communications. Customer's experience with the company is considered a crucial factor of service-branding, as customers will believe the experience they had with the company rather than the advertising or external brand communications (Berry, 2000, p.130). This will in turn have a direct impact on decision-making process as even though a customer is aware of the brand, the attitude towards the brand will be decisive when choosing a brand from another (Ibid.).

Berry's model (2000) of service branding is based on a research conducted with service companies, more specifically marketing practitioners and their vision of what a service-brand is from a customer perspective (Berry, 2000, p.137) and as such it may not portray the reality of what a service-brand is from a customer perspective. Nevertheless this model is worth noting as

it is one of the few models which takes into consideration the inherent characteristics of services, as mentioned above, and does not only transfer marketing theories from tangible goods, which is a recurrent theme in destination brand equity research.

#### **4. Analysis of the qualitative interviews**

This section of the paper is structured according to the themes and constructs identified through using repertory grid technique in the qualitative research phase of this research paper. Each construct will first be described and accounted for and it will then be compared with the current research in destination brand equity discussed in the literature review section of the paper.

##### **4.1. History and Heritage**

One of the themes that have emerged from the qualitative interviews is history and heritage and it is comprised of constructs that mention aspects of the history and culture of the European city destination.

It has been mentioned by the interviewees that if the city is mentioned or had a significant importance in history it is a positive factor in assessing a European city destination. This can be seen from the following quotes from the interviews, especially when comparing with a not so good European city destination: “[...] *Malmö from my knowledge and from what I have seen in the city has no heritage, no old buildings with architecture that has a story behind it, which represents a moment in the human history*” (Appendix A, p.2) or “*Well London was better than Malmö because again if any city around the world that trumps Paris in history as is more famous then it is London. London of all has been the main city of the whole world for centuries [...]*” (Appendix H, p.2) or “*[...]Berlin is a very historical place, just thinking of World War II so it is exciting to be there and think about all the history that has taken place here...*” (Appendix G, p.3).

If we are to compare this factor with the current research in destination brand equity it may be said that this construct, i.e. the historical significance of the city, can be part of both brand awareness and brand image. The historical significance of the destination city can be said to be part of brand awareness as it represents the strength of the destination’s presence in the

minds of the tourists (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.404). Moreover it appears to be an unaided awareness of the destination, which has been theorized as a source of competitive advantage for a destination (Pike & Bianchi, 2011, p.9). The historical significance of the city may also be seen as part of brand image as it appears to be a cognitive evaluation of destination brand image, as it has to do with the beliefs and knowledge the tourist has about the destination's attributes (Chen & Phou, 2013, p.270), i.e. culture, history and art (Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.659).

Furthermore this factor, used in assessing destination brand equity, may be said to have an influence on destination brand loyalty as discussed in literature review, both in attitudinal loyalty, i.e. positive word of mouth, and behavioral loyalty, i.e. repeat visitation of the destination (Oppermann, 2000, p.79). This can very well be seen from the following quote from the interviews:

*"[...] as I said, Oslo was very poor in culture and history compared with Rome and affected the way I have enjoyed visiting Oslo in a negative way [...] they (Oslo and Malmö) are not cities that people discuss about, I have not heard anyone saying that these cities are nice and once I visited them and saw what they had to offer I understand why people do not talk about them"* (Appendix A, p.1, 2).

From the above quotes from the qualitative interviews, if we are to follow the current theories in destination brand equity, it can be seen that the historical significance of the city destination should be considered a factor defining destination brand equity from a tourist perspective, since it may be seen as part of both brand awareness and brand image and it might have a direct influence on destination brand loyalty.

Nevertheless, it can be seen that the current research, e.g. Konecnik & Gartner (2007); Pike & Bianchi (2013), in destination brand equity does not use the historical significance of the city as a factor of destination brand equity from a customer perspective and thus it seems relevant to quantitatively test the importance of this factor in defining destination brand equity.

Another construct mentioned by the interviewees as being an important aspect when assessing a European city destination is the customs and traditions of the locals. This construct was described in terms of if the customs and traditions of the locals were different from the

interviewee's own customs and traditions and secondly in terms of if the interviewee is familiar with the customs and traditions of the locals.

Looking at the customs and traditions of the locals as being different from the interviewee's own customs and traditions, it has been mentioned as having both a positive and negative influence in assessing a good European city destination, as it can be seen from the following quotes: “[...] *I also like these cultural shocks, places which are very different from Denmark or have a very different culture from the Danish and Greek culture*” (Appendix B, p.2) and “[...] *On the other hand the culture was completely new to me and very different from my own so I was not completely comfortable with, like you cannot come into a restaurant and just order a meal, because you have to check the bill in details after because you are very suspicious about what they are charging you for and if they cheat you...*” (Appendix H, p.3). It is worth pointing out that the reason why there are two completely different perceptions of this construct is that the level of knowledge of the customs and traditions of the locals is different between the interviewees. That is why the interviewee who knew that the customs and traditions of the locals are different from his own (Appendix B, p.2) deemed this construct as having a positive influence on destination brand equity as it can be seen from the quote above. On the other hand, the interviewee that did not have sufficient knowledge about the customs and traditions of the locals: “[...] *Well I have not heard that many stories about Madrid and before going there I had to ask someone from Madrid where I should go and what I should see but I really did not get an answer from him either.*” (Appendix H, p.3) did not perceive the differences in customs and traditions as a positive aspect of destination's brand equity as it can be seen from the quote above. The second construct connected to the customs and the traditions of the locals mentioned by the interviewees is if the interviewee is familiar with the customs and traditions of the locals as it can be seen from the following quote: “*I have never been to Portugal and in my thinking it has kind of the same latin, music and food culture that Spain also have [...] I believe Lisbon will be fun as well since they (Spain and Portugal) are so close to each other from a culture and food point of view.*” (Appendix E, p.3).

From these quotes it may be concluded that the construct of customs and traditions of the locals, them being different from the traveler's own customs and traditions, can influence positively a destination's brand equity in both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty, if we are to

follow the current theories in destination brand equity. Nevertheless the current research does not mention the customs and tradition of the locals as a factor of destination brand equity even though it seems to be a relevant factor in assessing a destination and as such it is worth looking further into this factor.

The final construct elicited from the qualitative interviews and which was categorized under the history and heritage theme is the variety of museums, as it can be seen from the following: “ *Well it has lots of museums, and then it is one of the major cities in the world, like it represents the beginning of civilization [...] Well Zurich, I have never been to Switzerland but I think... it also has some very nice and interesting museums[...]*” (Appendix A, p.1,3) or “ *[...] there are also plenty of things to do in Stockholm when it comes to visiting museums...*” (Appendix G, p.2). This factor is congruent with the current research in destination brand equity from a customer perspective, as museums are being theorized to be part of the attributes defining destination brand image (Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.659). Nevertheless it would be worth looking at and testing this factor further to see, if it should be seen as a standalone construct of destination brand equity or as part of another defined construct.

## **4.2. Attractions**

Attractions is another theme resulted from using the repertory grid technique when conducting qualitative interviews. As such the interviewees have mentioned that the iconicity of the attractions is an important factor when assessing a European city destination and this can be seen from the following quotes: “*Also there are many more things to see and visit in Berlin than in Geneva, like monuments and old and well kept buildings, historical buildings, like the Berlin wall and so on. It is nice to know that you have seen by yourself some famous places that you have read or seen on TV and to brag a bit to your friends.*” (Appendix D, p.2) or “*There are not a lot of historical monuments (Madrid), or maybe they are but I have not heard anything about them [...]*” (Appendix H, p.3). Additionally one interviewee has mentioned that if the city has UNESCO listed attractions it affected positively a destination assessment as it can be seen from the following quote: “*Well Bergen is not a metropolitan city like Paris [...] I have to admit I have not been there but the pictures I have seen with the place really impressed me, especially the fjords, everyone has heard of the Norwegian Fjords...*” (Appendix E, p.3).

Attractions have been theorized in the current research of destination brand equity as part of destination image, e.g. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) or Konecnik and Gartner (2007), but not in terms of the iconicity or UNESCO listed attractions, but in terms of interesting cultural and historical attractions (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.412). Nevertheless the iconicity of attractions should be considered carefully as part of destination brand equity for a European city destination, as the interviewees have mentioned this construct, when talking about well known European city destinations, e.g. Berlin or Paris. As such further research should be made before generalizing this construct as part of destination brand equity for any European city destination. Nevertheless from the above interview quote with the UNESCO listed attractions, it may be concluded that the European cities, which are not considered to be metropolitan cities, may combat this with having attractions recognized by international institutions, such as UNESCO, as being unique or important for human heritage.

Another construct connected to attractions elicited by the interviewees is variety of attractions as it can be seen from the following: *“Also there are many more things to see and visit in Berlin than in Geneva, like monuments and old and well kept buildings, historical buildings [...]”* (Appendix D, p.2), or *“[...] you can walk through the whole of Stockholm and there is always something to see...it is just a nice and pleasant city.”* (Appendix F, p.2). Furthermore from another interview quote it can be seen the negative impact the variety of attractions may have on the assessment of a destination when the interviewee described why Madrid was not a good city destination: *“I just had an idea that there would be more things to see but once I got there and traveled around there was one decent monument or historical thing to see and the rest was just walking around the city”* (Appendix H, p.3). Even though variety of attractions has not been theorized in the current research as part of destination brand equity, it may be said that this factor can be part of destinations perceived quality (Buhalis, 2000) and it may also be said that it has an influence on attitudinal loyalty as defined in the literature review section of this paper.

The last construct under the attractions theme, which was revealed during the interviews, is if the attractions meet the traveler’s expectations and the following quote illustrates this: *“ I mean they have sites that everyone in the world have heard and know about, like Rome has Coliseum and other attractions here in London you have the parliament and Big Ben and other*



*such attractions, that is why when you plan to visit these places you set your expectations quite high and you go there and you definitely do not get disappointed.”* (Appendix A, p.2)

It may be said that meeting the traveler’s expectations in terms of its attractions, is a factor which affects a destination assessment in a positive manner, since it was mentioned as a construct describing the destinations considered to be good European city destinations. Even though this may be said to be another important factor of destination brand equity, it has not been mentioned in the current research. Given that it has been discussed in the literature review, that destination perceived quality is currently lacking knowledge in how tourists use to define and evaluate quality of a destination (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, p.412), it may be argued that this construct is an element of destination perceived quality from a traveler’s perspective.

#### **4.3. Activities**

An additional theme brought forth by the qualitative interviews is activities. This theme is defined in terms of variety of activities and the opportunity of learning something new through activities. It is also defined in terms of the novelty and innovativeness of the experiences the city is offering and finally in terms of shopping opportunities and availability of trying local food and specialties.

Variety of attractions was mentioned during the interviews as an important factor in assessing a good city destination: *“Paris is the city of the cities and they have everything [...] it is also a city that invites you to walk around and you find small nice restaurants and cafes and you really have a choice in what you want to do there...”* (Appendix G, p.2). Variety of activities may be said to be similar with variety of activities as it might have an influence on attitudinal loyalty as it can be seen from the quote above. Looking at the current research in destination brand equity, Pike (2009, p.863) uses both variety of activities and attractions as one factor when defining destination brand associations, thus these findings are congruent with the current research in destination brand equity. Nevertheless, it seems relevant to research these factors of variety of attractions and activities separately as it was only in the case of lack of variety of attractions that a negative assessment was made for the destination while none of the interviewees mentioned the lack of variety in activities with such a high importance in assessing a destination.

The possibility of trying local food and specialties was mentioned during the interviews as a significant factor in assessing destinations, especially if it represents a novel experience for the traveler or an opportunity to learn something new: “*Well from top of my mind in Paris everything was new for me since it was my first trip outside Denmark so in Paris everything I did and saw was a highlight and the food was so nice, I learned to eat cheese in Paris*” (Appendix F, p.1) or “*I really like the French cuisine and I try to speak French whenever I am there so it is also educational for me [...] I like their food a lot, it is so sophisticated again French cuisine is known to be high quality and innovative*” (Appendix E, p.2). Furthermore it has been mentioned that innovative experiences is another factor influencing the assessment of a destination and the intent to visit a destination, and this can be seen from the following quote: “*Well Amsterdam I want to visit because here you have the opportunity to have a different kind of accommodation, I don’t know about Prague but in Amsterdam you can stay in a houseboat and I definitely want to go there and try that because it is a different kind of experience to stay in such type of accommodation...*” (Appendix F, p.2).

The factors discussed above are congruent with the research made by Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412) in which the local food and specialties was used as a variable defining destination perceived quality, while the novelty of the experiences offered by the city was used as a variable defining destination brand image together with good shopping opportunities which was also mentioned during the interviews: “*There were also nice shops, clean and tidy and they looked very nice and organized*” (Appendix C, p.2) or “*Malmö is great for shopping [...] they had different kind of stores than the ones you can find in Copenhagen and the layout and the services are still the same as in Denmark but the brands where different.*” (Appendix H, p.2).

#### **4.4. Locals**

The issue of the locals was a recurrent theme occurring in the qualitative interviews as being an important construct of destination brand equity. It was mentioned that meeting different nationalities and cultures at the destination affects positively a destination’s assessment, e.g. “*London is much more, I mean this is a multicultural city with a lot of different nationalities*” (Appendix B, p.1) or “*I like a place there is a good mix of all kinds of people*” (Appendix G, p.4). The multicultural factor has not been theorized in the current research as a factor of

destination brand equity and thus it seems relevant to further research this area since it has been mentioned by the interviewees as important when assessing a destination.

Some of the interviewees have mentioned that the ability of the locals to speak English has had a significant impact on their evaluation of the destination: “[...] Anyway there were good things about London, like everyone spoke English so I did not feel uncomfortable about ordering food or talking with people” (Appendix H, p.2) or “[...] Another issue was how much the locals were speaking English because in Paris this was a big issue for me as it was very difficult to interact with the locals. It was so much easier to speak English with the locals in Puerto de la Cruz than in Paris.” (Appendix D, p.1). Thus it may be concluded that the ability of the locals to speak English should be considered as a variable of destination brand equity and this finding is congruent with Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412) who use this variable as part of destination perceived quality.

The issue of the locals being friendly and willing to interact with tourists was a frequent construct mentioned by the interviewees when comparing good and not so good European city destinations as it can be seen from the following: “ Helsinki is cold and closed city [...] because of the people, not very friendly” (Appendix C, p.1) or

*“Well it seemed cozier in Dublin I think I also like the... I think the people there were friendlier and talking to strangers they met in the bar or on the streets, I believe Dublin has this pub culture which Brussels also have but it is more cozy in Dublin because in Brussels they have the food and the beers but it’s...but I never felt that I could talk with strangers or mingle with the locals in the same way I did in Dublin and that is why I say Dublin is cozy.”* (Appendix E, p.1).

The friendliness of the locals has been a factor used in the current research of destination brand equity as part of destination image, e.g. Pike (2009, p.862) or Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412), and thus it may be concluded that it is a defining variable of destination brand equity.

Moreover it has been mentioned that knowing personally a local of the city destination has influenced positively the overall assessment of the destination: “Oh, well I think Dublin was a better experience than Brussels was because I knew somebody in Dublin and we went to the good places” (Ibid.) Since this variable has not been mentioned in the current research as part of destination brand equity and since it was one interviewee who has mentioned this as significant,

future research should be made before generalizing this finding. Another factor that has been mentioned by only one interviewee, but had a significant impact on the evaluation of the destination, is the tolerance the locals have towards different kinds of lifestyles:

*“Well these destinations (London and Madrid) are more opened, they are also more Western countries... what I mean about opened is the way of accepting other cultures and other lifestyles and I mean here about gay lifestyle since I am gay and this issue matters to me, they are more free countries while the other ones, I mean Helsinki is getting there but Warsaw is not welcoming new lifestyle forms”* (Appendix B, p.2)

Nevertheless, as with knowing personally a local, more research should be made before concluding that this factor is part of destination brand equity.

#### **4.5. Services**

It has been mentioned by the interviewees that reliable, helpful and willing to receive feedback employees in restaurants, hotels or when visiting attractions are factors with high importance when assessing a destination, as it can be seen from the following: *“I complained about some small issues regarding the room and I pointed them out so they could fix them for the future guests because it might bother other people as well and I felt like the receptionist did not take my complain seriously, maybe they thought I was kidding or something like that...so that was one reason I do not consider Budapest as a good destination compared with Maastricht.”*(Appendix C, p.2) or *“[...] and they were not very service minded, in the sense that in restaurants or hotels the people there would not smile or be nice to you or offer a nice service in the restaurant.”* (Appendix B, p.1). Additionally the waiting time in restaurants, hotels or when visiting attractions was deemed as significant for a positive evaluation of a destination: *“I think the waiting time when we bought some food in Brussels was too long, and that was not a good experience either.”* (Appendix C, p.1).

The standard of the facilities in restaurants and hotels matching their ratings was another construct which was revealed to have importance when appraising a destination: *“[...] I mean the city is nice, it has nice buildings with very nice architecture, bridges but because the place we were sleeping was so uncomfortable we could not actually enjoy being in the city [...] due to the bad conditions in Budapest we just chose to leave earlier than planned from Budapest.”*

(Appendix E, p.2) or “[...] *the hotel was not very good either, the service was bad and the rooms were dirty and small.*” (Appendix F, p.1). Thus it may be said that this construct has a high importance when defining destination brand equity as it can be seen from the quotes it can have a very negative impact on the traveler’s experience at the destination “*we just chose to leave earlier than planned from Budapest.*” (Appendix E, p.2) and also on attitudinal loyalty as “*I cannot even remember if the food was good or if the people were nice because of this bad experience with the hotel this is what is left of being there*” (Ibid.).

These constructs have been elicited during the interviews when describing a destination which was not perceived well by the interviewees thus it may be concluded that these factors are relevant factors of destination brand equity. Pike (2009), Boo et al. (2009) and again Konecnik and Gartner (2007) mention high quality of services and accommodation in their research as variables of destination perceived quality. It is worth mentioning that it is necessary to have a better understanding of what exactly high quality services and accommodations represent from a tourism perspective and thus the above discussed constructs may be used in defining high quality services and accommodations. Additionally, following the definition of destination brand image (Beerli & Martin, 2004, p.659) the above constructs may be said to be cognitive evaluations of destination attributes, more specifically cognitive evaluation criteria of tourist infrastructure (Chen & Phou, 2013, p.270). Since there is no clear delimitation of where these constructs belong to when defining destination brand equity, further research is necessary so that a better understanding of these factors can be achieved.

Interviewees have also mentioned that a variety of restaurants is important for a destination as it can be seen from the following: “*London is a city with a lot of variety in restaurants and places you can go out in the evening and have fun, it is just the perfect place.*” (Appendix B, p.1) or “[...] *there are lots of small very good food places like tapas restaurants which are very different, it’s not a too big of a place but it is very genuine*” (Appendix G, p.1). This finding is congruent with Pike’s research (2009, p.862) who defines good cafes and restaurants as cognitive attribute used to evaluate destination brand image and as such it may be concluded that variety of restaurants is a variable of destination brand equity.

The last construct emerged from the interviews and was categorized under the services theme is the easiness of using and understanding the transportation system at the destination: “*So*

*I think Paris offers lots of choices and if you need transportation you have the metro which works fine once you pass the limit of reading the map and finding out where you can buy a ticket and so on, but then it really works well”* (Appendix G, p.3) or *“Also it was very easy to understand and use their (Berlin) public transportation while I think that the public transportation in Paris is very complicated.”*(Appendix D, p.2). As mentioned in the literature review the quality of transportation has been used in defining destination perceived quality, but specific knowledge in how this quality is evaluated is lacking from the current research. It may be said, considering the findings from the qualitative interviews, that the quality of the transportation may be defined in terms of the ease of understanding and using public transportation, but further research of these variables is necessary before making such a conclusion.

#### **4.6. Image**

There are various constructs brought up during the interviews regarding the city destination as an entity and as such have been categorized under the image theme. It is important to point out that the name of this category is not connected to destination brand image discussed in the literature review section of this paper, it is merely a common word used by the interviewees to describe the constructs under this category.

Constructs such as the city and the food and specialties of the place are world renowned have been described as being a positive evaluation criterion for a destination as it can be seen from the following quotes from the interviews: *“Well when you asked me about good European city destinations of course it came in my head the major and well known cities, like I have also been to Paris and I can add it to the good destinations”* (Appendix A, p.3) and *“[...]I like their food a lot, it is so sophisticated again French cuisine is known to be high quality and innovative”* (Appendix E, p.2). There is a congruency between these findings and the research in destination brand equity as Pike and Bianchi (2013) and Boo et al. (2009), to mention a few, have operationalized the above constructs as variables defining destination brand awareness.

Nevertheless, these constructs of destination brand equity require more research as some of the destination choices made by the interviewees was based on top of the mind awareness, thus big metropolitan cities such as Paris and London were mentioned, as it can very well be

seen from the first quote from the interviews. Consequently without any further research it may not be concluded that these constructs are part of destination brand equity for any type of European city destination. This observation is also based on the fact that during the interviews the city not being known by tourists but still being a big city was mentioned as a positive evaluation attribute of a destination: *“San Sebastian is not very touristic place, it’s not overcrowded by tourists [...] San Sebastian is a hidden gem in my opinion”* (Appendix G, p.1, 3) and *“I love going places which are hardly seen by anyone else. What I mean is that I have been travelling a lot so now I am at that point where I want to discover places which tourists have not invaded yet”* (Appendix B, p.2).

Hearing or seeing images of the city from friends or media has been mentioned by the interviewees as having influence on the evaluation of a destination, especially if it is about a destination which will be visited in the near future: *“I have heard a lot of good things about it and I saw many pictures from there that I liked and apparently they are making a very good job with tourism and I heard they have very good services and the people I know that have been there they said that their experience was very good there, overall”* (Appendix C, p.4) and *“Because it is a very big city in Switzerland and I have heard of it at TV and from books and friends. I know it is not the capital but I have heard much more about Zurich and I am more interested in going there than the capital of Switzerland”* (Appendix A, p.3). Researchers such as Pike and Bianchi (2013) consider and test these constructs as part of destination brand awareness, while researchers such as Baloglu and McCleary (1999) consider these constructs as factors forming destination brand image which can also be seen from the above quotes from the interviews.

The last constructs mentioned by the interviewees when describing a good European city destination are the proximity of the city to the sea and if the city is known for warm and sunny weather: *“For me Cyprus is the perfect beach holiday destination as it is close to the sea [...]”* (Appendix B, p.2) and *“Puerto de la Cruz is on a tropical island [...] it was warm and sunny weather all the time”* (Appendix D, p.1). Both these constructs are mentioned in research of destination brand equity, e.g. pleasant climate in Pike (2009, p.862) as a cognitive factor of destination brand equity, and good beaches in Konecnik and Gartner (2007, p.412) as part of destination brand image. However it may be said that these constructs are specific for beach

holiday brand equity destination and as such more research is necessary to conclude if these constructs are part of destination brand equity for a European city destination.

#### **4.7. Atmosphere**

This section of the interview findings analysis focuses in discussing aspects of the destination such as uncrowdness and traffic, the feeling of being taken advantage of as a tourist, the feeling of a wealthy and vibrant city and the feeling that the city is build for tourists.

It has been mentioned by the interviewees that the ability of the city of absorbing big amounts of people and tourists in a way that you do not feel the city to be crowded is a very important attribute of a good city destination. Furthermore the amount of traffic on the streets was deemed as having a negative impact on the evaluation of a destination and these constructs can very well be seen from the following quotes: “*Nice was overcrowded, perfume all over the place, stuffed with tourists [...]*” (Appendix G, p.1) or “*There were a lot of people everywhere, you could barely move left or right*” (Appendix C, p.1) and “*[...]then there is the traffic, the chaos that it was on the main streets in Madrid*” (Appendix H, p.3). Even though it seems that the issue of the city being crowded by tourists and too much traffic are affecting negatively a destination’s brand equity, it is only Pike (2009) that uses uncrowded as a cognitive attribute of destination perceived quality, thus more research is needed as to conclude that these constructs are part of destination brand equity.

The feeling of being taken advantage of as a tourist is yet another construct which was elicited during the interviews as having a influence on assessing a destination: “*And there are many restaurants in the city and while we were walking around the city it looked like the employees of the restaurants were hunting for clients and that did not feel welcoming.*” (Appendix C, p.1) and “*I was not completely comfortable with, like you cannot come into a restaurant and just order a meal, because you have to check the bill in details after because you are very suspicious about what they are charging you for and if they cheat you*” (Appendix H, p.3). This construct has not been mentioned before in destination brand equity research, it may still be said that this construct can be a factor of destination perceived quality from a tourism perspective as it has been mentioned in the literature review section.



The feeling of a wealthy, vibrant and energetic city which is not build for tourists are other constructs which have emerged from the repertory grid technique research phase and have been categorized under atmosphere. These constructs have been considered by the interviewees to be important for a good European city destination as it can be seen from the following: *“Well everything is better in Frankfurt than in Budapest, starting from the cars, I mean every second car was a Porche, well I am exaggerating now but the reason behind it is that it felt like a wealthy place and extremely organized and it is a very energetic city...”* (Appendix C, p.2) and *“Nice was [...] not very genuine, kind of Las Vegas, of course there is no gambling in Las Vegas but it felt very artificial and so this atmosphere and also very crowded with cars it was really not as charming [...]”* (Appendix G, p.1). It may be said that these findings are similar to the constructs of trendy atmosphere and not touristy used by Pike (2009, p.862) in defining destination perceived quality, but on the other hand there is no other research in destination brand equity which mentions these constructs.

#### **4.8. Esthetics**

The esthetics category of the interview findings is about the preservation of historical buildings and sites, the cleanliness of the city and finally the harmonious combination of old and new buildings. The preservation of historical buildings and sites has been mentioned by several interviewees as relevant for evaluating a destination, but the following quote is suggesting that this construct does not only have a influence on the perceived quality of the destination but also on both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty as discussed in literature review: *“I see it as a gray city, I like color and atmosphere and I miss that in Prague [...] I think Prague does not have anything else to offer besides old gray buildings that do not look like they are been taken care of and some bridges.”* (Appendix F, p.3). It may therefore be said that the preservation of historical buildings and sites is another factor defining destination perceived quality. This construct has not been used in the current research regarding destination brand image or destination perceived quality for that matter, thus this finding may be considered significant when defining destination brand equity.

Harmonious combination of old and new buildings and cleanliness of the city were brought up by the interviewees when assessing good European city destinations: *“[...] the first days of my visit there Madrid looked like a garbage bin because the cleaning people were on*

*strike for 3 days and every time you were taking one step you had to push some garbage aside to do so. Not that I blame the city because it could happen anywhere but it did not help with the impression.”* (Appendix H, p.3) and:

*“[...] also the buildings in Frankfurt, I mean Frankfurt has a combination of old and new but the new additions to the city have style and they don’t stick out in a bad way, I think the city has a very nice balance of old and new. In Brussels I remember they had a new building which did not fit with the surroundings, it looked weird and that it was not supposed to be there, it seemed like it was disrupting the flow of the city.”* (Appendix C, p.3).

The cleanliness of the city has been used by Konecnik and Gartner (2007) as a factor of destination perceived quality, thus making the findings of the interviews congruent with current research. On the other hand the harmonious combination of old and new buildings may be said to be similar to “Lovely town and cities” present in Konecnik and Gartner’s (2007) research as part of destination brand image and it might be added that this construct may represent a cognitive evaluation attribute of destination brand image as defined by Chen & Phou (2013, p.270).

#### **4.9. Safety**

The final category emerged through the repertory grid technique used for this paper is safety. Safety is being described in terms of feeling safe to walk around the street with your belongings and with no fear of pickpocketing, in terms of feeling safe enough to not be cheated in restaurants or bars and finally in terms of not encountering too much police force on the city streets. These aspects of the safety construct can be seen from the following quotes: *“[...] you do not feel that people will rob you so you can go in the subway without needing to hold on to your bag like your life depends on it.”* (Appendix F, p.2), or *“[...] it is also not very comfortable to see so much police and police cars on the streets, they were passing by every minute and it made me feel uncomfortable when seeing so many police cars.”* (Appendix H, p.3) and *“I was not completely comfortable [...] because you have to check the bill in details after because you are very suspicious about what they are charging you for and if they cheat you”* (Ibid.)

Looking at current research, safety has been studied in the context of destination brand equity, more specifically as a variable of destination perceived quality, e.g. a safe destination in

Pike (2009), or high level of personal safety in Konecnik and Gartner (2007). It may also be said that this construct of safety destination brand image, more specifically as an affective evaluation criterion as defined by Baloglu and McCleary (1999, p.870) and thus it seems relevant to consider safety as part of destination brand equity.

## **5. Online survey findings and analysis**

This section of the paper will start with explaining how exploratory factor analysis has been applied to the findings of the online survey. It will then continue with presenting the model of destination brand equity from a customer perspective as resulted from the exploratory factor analysis.

### **5.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis**

The online survey (Appendix 1) has resulted in a total of 121 answers which, according to Hair et al. (2006, p.112) is a desired number for this type of research. Nevertheless, the author of the paper is aware that for increasing the viability and validity of the findings, more data should be obtained. The majority of respondents, 60% of the total respondents, were between the age of 25 and 34 and predominantly male, 68% (Appendix 2). The most predominant marital status was single, 38%, closely followed by “in a relationship”, 36%.

The data yielded from the online interviews has been transferred to SPSS so that an exploratory factor analysis could be applied to the data. The first step of the exploratory factor analysis was the execution of an unrestricted exploratory analysis so that factor solutions could emerge (Appendix 3). From the KMO and Bartlett's Table it can be said that the 15 factors solution emerged from the unrestricted exploratory factor analysis is mathematically acceptable. This is based on the coefficient of the Kaiser test, which is 0.757, Bartlett's significance is zero and looking at the communalities table, none of the variables have their communality under 0.5.

Even though the 15 factors solution emerged from this first step of exploratory factor analysis is mathematically viable, from a theoretical perspective, defining destination brand equity from a customer perspective as formed of 15 factors does not make much theoretical sense. Since the majority of destination brand equity models are said to be containing four factors, as discussed in the literature review section of this paper, the next iteration of the data

has been restricted to five factor solution. According to Hair et al. (2006, p.122), limiting the iteration according to previous research is acceptable in these types of studies. The five factor solution limitation is based on a combination of Aaker's (1996) and Keller's (1993) models of customer-based brand equity as discussed in literature review, thus a robust and theoretically solution could emerge.

The next exploratory factor analysis of the data had, as discussed above, a five factor limitation and used maximum likelihood as an extraction method, as it is a method more rooted in theory (Hair et al., 2006, p.119). Additionally, factor rotation with VARIMAX as rotation method has been applied to the data. The factor rotation should result in a simpler and theoretically meaningful solution (Hair et al., 2006, p.123), while the VARIMAX as a method of rotation should give a clearer separation of the factors than other rotation methods (Hair et al., 2006, p.126). The results of this iteration can be seen in Appendix 4 and from the KMO and Bartlett's Table, i.e. Kaiser test of 0.663 and Bartlett's significance of zero value, the 5 factors solution is mathematically acceptable.

Looking at the Total Variance Table (Appendix 4, p.1) the five factors account for 84.25% and thus the solution may be said to be satisfactory (Hair et al., 2006, p.120). Nevertheless by looking at the Rotated Factor Matrix (Appendix 4, p.2), it can be seen that Factor 3 does not have a loading above 0.55 which according to Hair et al. (2006, p.128) is the limit for a factor to be significant in an exploratory factor analysis. Even if factor 3 is eliminated, the remaining factors add up to approximately 78% of the total variance which is above the 60% limit of a satisfactory solution (Hair et al., 2006, p.120).

All things considered the final solution is composed of four factors as following:



## 5.2. Factor 1: Uncrowdedness

One factor emerged from the exploratory factor analysis is uncrowdedness which is comprised of uncrowded streets, bars or restaurants and uncrowded traffic, as these variables had the highest factor loadings (Appendix 4, p.2).

If we are to compare these findings with current research in destination brand equity it can be said to be part of destination perceived quality, as it is being theorized by Pike (2009). It may also be said that this factor of uncrowdedness is a cognitive evaluation criteria of destination brand image as discussed in the literature review. Furthermore if we are to look at the interview findings under the “Atmosphere” category, it may be concluded that the uncrowdedness factor has an influence on both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty.

On the other hand, the main difference between current research and the findings of the exploratory factor analysis used in this paper is in how these variables defining uncrowdedness have been operationalized. If Pike (2009) has used this factor as part of destination brand equity, the current research suggests that this factor should be considered as an independent factor of destination brand equity, since high level of importance have been attached to it when assessing a destination brand equity and this can very well be seen in the interview analysis section.

### 5.3. Factor 2: Safety

A second factor of destination brand equity which has emerged after the exploratory factor analysis is safety which is composed of three factors: the risk of pickpocketing, personal safety in terms of being able to walk safely on the streets with your belongings and the trustworthiness of the locals, in terms of not being cheated as a tourists in bars or restaurants. It is not surprising that these factors have emerged from the exploratory factor analysis considering the impact these factors have not only on destination image but also on behavioral loyalty as it was discussed when analyzing the interview findings and from the following quote: *“I was not completely comfortable [...] because you have to check the bill in details after because you are very suspicious about what they are charging you for and if they cheat you”* (Appendix H, p.3).

Safety as part of destination brand equity has been used by both Pike (2009), i.e. safe destination and by Konecnik and Gartner (2007), i.e. high level of personal security, as defining destination perceived quality. What is important to point out is that both researchers use very generic terms when talking about safety, while according to the findings of this research paper, it may be said that a safe destination is being defined in terms of the risk of pickpocketing, personal safety in terms of being able to walk safely on the streets with your belongings and the trustworthiness of the locals, in terms of not being cheated as a tourists in bars or restaurants. Furthermore, the findings of the factor analysis and the interviews suggest that safety should be viewed as an independent factor of destination brand equity from a customer perspective.

### 5.4. Factor 3: Destination Attributes

The third factor of destination brand equity according to the exploratory factor analysis is destination attributes in terms of the closeness to the sea and pleasant climate. Both constructs have been discussed when analyzing the qualitative interviews as important when assessing a destination as it can be seen again from the following quote: *“For me Cyprus is the perfect beach holiday destination as it is close to the sea [...]”* (Appendix B, p.2).

Both closeness to the sea and pleasant climate have been mentioned in current research either as part of destination perceived quality, e.g. Pike (2009) or as part of destination brand image, e.g. Konecnik and Gartner (2007), but have not been used as a standalone factor of destination brand equity. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the analysis of the qualitative interviews

under the “Image” theme, some caution should be taken before generalizing this factor of destination attributes for any European city destination. Since these attributes are very specific for beach holiday destinations, more research should be made, as with the current results of the survey a definitive conclusion cannot be made.

### **5.5. Factor 4: Destination Awareness**

The last factor resulted from exploratory factor analysis is destination awareness which is composed of three variables, as it can be seen above. The first construct of destination awareness is a world renowned city, which is not only congruent with current research in destination brand awareness, e.g. Pike and Bianchi (2013), but was also pointed out by the interviewees as a very important part of destination brand equity, e.g. *“Well when you asked me about good European city destinations of course it came in my head the major and well known cities, like I have also been to Paris and I can add it to the good destinations”* (Appendix A, p.3). Nevertheless, before generalizing this finding it is important to point out the majority of respondents were between the age of 25-34 (Appendix 2) and it may be said that this is a factor which may have influenced the importance of the iconicity of the city. This assumption is based on the fact that the interviewees which were part of this age category mentioned iconic European city destinations as good destinations, while some of the interviewees above the age of 35 have mentioned destinations as Kiev or San Sebastian as being good, and thus not iconic destinations (see Appendix B and G).

The next variables of destination awareness are the importance of the city in history and awareness of the city destinations from friends or media. Both of these constructs, according to the interview findings are factors with a significant influence on destination brand loyalty, both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

What is different from the current research is that these factors of destination awareness, i.e. historical significance, awareness of the destination and world renowned city, have been theorized as being both part of destination brand image and destination brand awareness, e.g. Pike and Bianchi (2013) or Baloglu and McCleary (1999). Nevertheless if we are to follow Aaker’s definition (1996) of brand awareness as the strength of brand presence in the mind of the consumer, then it may be said that the above mentioned variables describe and define destination brand awareness.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The current situation in the tourism industry, i.e. the increased competitiveness between destinations, points to the need of developing suitable and effective strategies for the measurement and conceptualization of destination brand equity. Since the traveler of today has a vast range of destinations to choose from, it becomes even more relevant for destinations to develop strong brands to gain the competitive advantage necessary to differentiate from other destinations. However, looking at the current research in destination brand equity, it is evident that more research is necessary for the conceptualization of destination brand equity from a customer perspective.

The majority of the research under the topic of destination brand equity is based on theories which do not take into consideration the complexities and characteristics of destination branding and it appears that current research has neglected to incorporate a customer-perspective in defining destination brand equity. Thus, considering these limitations of current research in destination brand equity, the purpose of this paper was to firstly define destination brand equity for European cities from a traveler's perspective and secondly to operationalize a multi-attribute model of destination brand equity.

The first purpose of this paper of defining destination brand equity from a traveler's perspective has been explored using an inductive qualitative method known as repertory grid technique. The qualitative interviews have elicited different constructs which were considered by the interviewees as conceptualizing destination brand equity.

One of the constructs is history and heritage which was considered an influential factor of destination brand equity. Another construct deemed as having a influence on brand equity is attractions, in terms of variety, iconicity and meeting expectations. Furthermore activities was another element considered highly influential when assessing a destination and it has been discussed in terms of variety and the innovativeness of the activities. The locals of the European city destination was found to be an important aspect of the destination, as it has been mentioned to have a high influence in deeming a destination as being good. The quality of services at destination, both in hotels and restaurants, is another factor considered important by the interviewees for destination brand equity. Additionally the atmosphere and the esthetics of the



city had a considerable influence in assessing a destination and as such it was concluded to have an influence on destination brand equity. The image of the destination, in terms of iconicity, proximity to the sea and pleasant climate, and hearing or seeing images from friends or family, was another construct relevant in defining destination brand equity. The last construct is safety and high level of personal safety and trustworthy locals are variables used in describing good destinations.

The next step of this paper was the operationalization of a multi-attribute model of destination brand equity. To achieve this objective a quantitative confirmatory study was employed to the data gathered from an online survey. The online survey was structured and based upon the findings of the qualitative interviews. The quantitative data was then analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis, from which four significant factors emerged. One of the factors is the uncrowdness of the city in terms of streets, restaurants and bars. This finding is in some way interesting, compared with current research, as no other conceptual model of destination brand equity sees uncrowdness as a standalone factor.

The next factor identified in the factor analysis is safety, in terms of personal safety, pickpocketing and trustworthy locals, which has not been theorized before as an independent factor of destination brand equity. Destination awareness is the third factor which emerged from the factor analysis and it is different from the current research as it encompasses elements which have before used in defining both destination brand image and awareness. It may be said that the findings for this factor, e.g. iconicity of destination, being mentioned in history and being seen in media or heard of from friends, makes a distinction in what should be included under destination brand awareness when talking about destination brand equity.

The last factor is destination attributes in terms of proximity to the sea and pleasant climate, attributes which have been used in current research but not as a separate factor of destination brand equity. Nevertheless caution must be taken before generalizing this finding to any European city destination, as it may be said that the materialization of this after exploratory factor analysis has to do with the predominant age of the respondents, which is between 25 and 34 years old.

## **7. Implications**

The findings of this research paper have implications for both researchers and practitioners. On one hand this research paper had the purpose of closing a current gap in the literature of destination brand equity from a customer perspective. This has been tried to do by conceptualizing a destination brand equity model based on exploratory research and with focus on how travelers define destination brand equity. Nevertheless the findings of this paper suggest that conceptualizing a general model for a European city destination is very much dependent on not only the type of destination but also on the choices a researcher is making in terms of the research methodology.

The findings of this paper also have implications for practitioners, in areas such as what measurements to be used when talking about the performance of the destination's brand but also in gaining an understanding that building a strong brand is contextualized to the type of the destination. Furthermore, the findings of this paper may help practitioners, e.g. safety or awareness, should be taken into consideration when developing strategies of enhancing the equity of a European city destination brand.

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## **9. Appendixes**



## **Interview A**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in front of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* So I consider Rome and London to be good destinations, Oslo and Malmö to be the bad ones and I would like to visit Lisbon and Zurich in the near future, soon I hope.

*Interviewer:* What makes Rome better than Oslo?

*Interviewee:* Rome for example has lots of culture...

*Interviewer:* Could you explain what lots of culture means to you?

*Interviewee:* Well it has lots of museums, and then it is one of the major cities in the world, like it represents the beginning of civilization, is the city which existed for thousands of years so whenever you think of ancient times, you can see that in Rome, if you think of medieval times again you can see evidence of that period when visiting the city. On the other hand Oslo in my mind does not have anything to offer in terms of history... This is a city which started developing recently and then the architecture of the buildings does not have history behind it... the buildings are pretty new and in my opinion do not have a story behind like the buildings in Rome. Also the history and culture of Oslo is very poor compared with Rome.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of when comparing Oslo with Rome?

*Interviewee:* Not really, as I said Oslo was very poor in culture and history compared with Rome and affected the way I have enjoyed visiting Oslo in a negative way. I felt like I have not learned or seen anything new and that there is not a lot of interesting things to see there, in terms of museums and historical buildings.

*Interviewer:* If you cannot think of anything else when comparing Rome to Oslo, I would like you know to tell me why Rome was better than Malmö?

*Interviewee:* Well the answer will be very much the same as with Oslo, Malmö from my knowledge and from what I have seen in the city has no heritage, no old buildings with architecture that has a story behind it, which represents a moment in the human history. Okay they have the spinning tour but you cannot even enter it so all this city offered me what its proximity to Copenhagen and that you have to cross the pretty renowned bridge between Copenhagen and Malmö. For me Malmö is a very boring city with not much to see and very little history behind it.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add that you have not said until now?

*Interviewee:* No, not really.

*Interviewer:* Now I would like you to tell me why London was better than Oslo?

*Interviewee:* Well London was better more or less of the same reasons as Rome, it is an old city and it is one of the major capitals of Europe, it has amazing museums which I like a lot and it is a beautiful city.

*Interviewer:* Could you explain in more details what beautiful means?

*Interviewee:* Well the architecture of the buildings, I mean the city was burned and there are not too many old buildings left, but from what is left you can see that is a wealthy state and old and the buildings are very impressive... I mean they have sites that everyone in the world have heard and know about, like Rome has Coliseum and other attractions here in London you have the parliament and Big Ben and other such attractions, that is why when you plan to visit these places you set your expectations quite high and you go there and you definitely do not get disappointed. When it comes to Oslo and Malmö I didn't have any expectations and still I feel that trip there was even worse than I expected.

*Interviewer:* Why did you not have any expectations for Oslo and Malmö?

*Interviewee:* Because they are not cities that people discuss about, I have not heard anyone saying that these cities are nice and once I visited them and saw what they had to offer I understand why people do not talk about them.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of? Anything else you would like to add?

*Interviewee:* Well when you asked me about good European city destinations of course it came in my head the major and well known cities, like I have also been to Paris and I can add it to the good destinations list because it also has a lot of history to offer...I cannot think of anything else to say right now.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me how is Zurich different from Oslo and Rome?

*Interviewee:* Well Zurich, I have never been to Switzerland but I think...I mean Zurich is also kind of an old city, not like Rome but I believe that the architecture of the buildings in Zurich are nice and I think it also has some very nice and interesting museums. Switzerland is one of the few countries in Europe I have never been to before and I really want to go there in the future. When I think of Switzerland I immediately think of Zurich.

*Interviewer:* And why is that?

*Interviewee:* Because it is a very big city in Switzerland and I have heard of it at TV and from books and friends. I know it is not the capital but I have heard much more about Zurich and I am more interested in going there than the capital of Switzerland.

*Interviewer:* In what important way is Lisbon different from Oslo and Rome?

*Interviewee:* Well it is the same as with Zurich, I have never been to Lisbon but I believe that this city it is also an ancient city, it also has.... I mean I saw some pictures and the architecture of the buildings is very nice and impressive and from that I believe that they also have some very nice museums. And I look at it as why not trip, I do not plan to spend as much time as in Rome and London but it is because my friends recommended it as being a nice and interesting city. I know I talk a lot about history but it is my passion and I like to walk some streets or see buildings that I have read about in the history books and that make my trip good or bad. When I think of Zurich of Lisbon it is more about novelty, doing something different because they did not have such historical importance as the other cities, seeing them is more about doing something else but still being able to see nice architecture and museums.

*Interviewer:* Anything else? What was good or bad about these destinations?

*Interviewee:* Well I had my expectations met when I went to London and Rome, as I said they are major cities with a lot of history and I could definitely see that from the buildings, their museums while Oslo and Malmö had no significant role in the human history and you don't expect so much from visiting them. Of course on the other hand I am not expecting as much from visiting Zurich or Lisbon as I expected from visiting Rome or London, but I still believe they are worth visiting, I believe that the experience will be nice, and it is kind of why not go there? I also assume that these cities (Zurich and Lisbon) will be more interesting than these ones (Oslo and Malmö) just because Portugal has more interesting history and Norway. Also on the other hand Switzerland does not have that much history but it is a wealthy state and I imagine that I will see nice medieval cities and also the images I have seen from my friends who have been there with the mountains and lakes, that I am eager to see and experience myself. I do not believe that visiting Zurich will be as impressive as seeing Rome or London but I think it will be a nice and pleasant experience. So it all depends pretty much on the expectations I have for the different cities, how I prepare myself, in the sense that if I believe Rome is nice and I go there and in the beginning you think, oh there is rubbish everywhere and you have to be careful with your money because of the thieves, but after you see the beauty of the city and the building and the end of the journey you believe that it was worth your time. Malmö and Oslo are actually clean and safe cities but they do not offer anything else besides them being clean, they do not have old beautiful buildings.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* Well when visiting Malmö or Oslo in pretty much two-three hours you are done, there is nothing else new that you can see, while if you go to London for several days you still discover every day a new place and you have so many museums to go to that fills your holiday with nice memories, the same goes to Rome. I cannot think of anything else to add.

## **Interview B**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* Okay, I believe that Cyprus and Madrid will be the good destinations, definitely Helsinki and Warsaw as the not so good destinations. And when it comes to where I would like to go in the future I would choose Cyprus and Kiev.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why London was better than Helsinki?

*Interviewee:* London is much more, I mean this is a multicultural city with a lot of different nationalities and a lot of entertainment places and also a lot of variety in restaurants and places you can go out in the evening and have fun, it is just the perfect place. And Helsinki is cold and closed city, I had big issues with the food, I didn't like it that much and also the variety of restaurants was not that big.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by closed city?

*Interviewee:* Well closed because of the people, not very friendly and the buildings are not that charming and all in all it did not feel like a place you want to be in. Also people did not speak English that well so it was hard to get around and relax when you could not communicate with the people around you and they were not very service minded, in the sense that in restaurants or hotels the people there would not smile or be nice to you or offer a nice service in the restaurant.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* What if we compare London with Warsaw?

*Interviewee:* Well this city is even worse than Helsinki, the people there are even colder and distant, very Russian like and this is definitely not for me, it is not a charming place and again the food is not that impressive. I like experimenting and trying different kind of food but I must say the food in Warsaw, I did not like it at all. There was nothing special or unique about it was just some ordinary food.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why Madrid was better than Helsinki?

*Interviewee:* Well this city is just lovely, great people, very friendly locals and great food and restaurants with really good service. The nightlife there is very good and you have a variety of

places to choose from in terms of food and having fun, just a great city. The only thing missing from this city is the sea, otherwise it is actually the perfect city for me. Madrid is just much more warm and friendlier than the other destinations.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me how Cyprus and the other destinations are different from each other?

*Interviewee:* For me Cyprus is the perfect beach holiday destination as it is close to the sea and because I am part Greek this place is very close to my heart and has some personal importance for me since it is part of who I am. Helsinki and Warsaw they are very alike, they remind me of each other and I did not like either of them because the people there are not welcoming. They both remind of cold weather and gray building and an overall gray atmosphere.

*Interviewer:* How would Kiev and the other destinations be different from each other?

*Interviewee:* I believe that the city will be still a closed one like Warsaw but I still...it has this Russian spirit but it is a very interesting place for me because I love going places which are hardly seen by anyone else. What I mean is that I have been travelling a lot so now I am at that point where I want to discover places which tourists have not invaded yet. I also like these cultural shocks, places which are very different from Denmark or have a very different culture from the Danish and Greek culture. I might not like the city once I have been there but I still like the idea of going there to get an impression of such a city. I think of Cyprus as being the icon of beach holiday destination, with warm weather and good food and welcoming and nice locals that easily make you feel as part of their community.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* Well these destinations (London and Madrid) are more opened, they are also more Western countries... what I mean about opened is the way of accepting other cultures and other lifestyles and I mean here about gay lifestyle since I am gay and this issue matters to me, they are more free countries while the other ones, I mean Helsinki is getting there but Warsaw is not welcoming new lifestyle forms. Kiev I believe that it has the same culture as Warsaw but I am still planning to go there because it is such a new place and not spoiled by tourism.

## **Interview C**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in front of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* I definitely choose Frankfurt and Maastricht for the good destinations, Brussels and Budapest for the not so good destinations and I am planning to visit Lisbon and Barcelona.

*Interviewer:* I would like you to tell me why Maastricht was better than Brussels?

*Interviewee:* Well Brussels was very crowded and...

*Interviewer:* Could you explain in more details what crowded means?

*Interviewee:* There were a lot of people everywhere, you could barely move left or right and actually the same day we left Brussels to go to Maastricht and in Maastricht there was a carnival so it was also crowded but the people were nice and happy while in Brussels people did not seem that happy and when I say happy I mean...well during the carnival in Maastricht I could feel joy and a nice flow of the events even if people were running around to move from one attraction to another or to buy something here and there...I mean it was still chaotic like in Brussels but in Brussels it felt like there was no flow, people were staying in one spot for very long time when they were looking at an attraction and it was difficult to move especially in the centre of the city. This is basically the main reason why Brussels was worse than Maastricht.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of?

*Interviewee:* I think the waiting time when we bought some food in Brussels was too long, and that was not a good experience either. And there are many restaurants in the city and while we were walking around the city it looked like the employees of the restaurants were hunting for clients and that did not feel welcoming. And we did the same in Maastricht in the sense that we were walking around on the streets without a specific target, like we went to see the city centre and there were many people in the pubs and restaurants but the atmosphere was more relaxed, no one was hunting for clients on the streets. Maybe it is a matter of privacy and being able to take my time in choosing a restaurant because it looks nice or because they have a good menu or whatever the reason is, like prices. This was not possible in Brussels since they were hunting you so you could pick their restaurant and that made me feel very uncomfortable. That was another reason why I didn't like Brussels.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of?

*Interviewee:* Well yes that is pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Okay what if you compare Maastricht with Budapest, why was Maastricht better?

*Interviewee:* First of all in Budapest I did not like the hotel where we stayed, the service in the hotel and the way they handled some issues I complained about.

*Interviewer:* Could you be more specific?

*Interviewee:* I complained about some small issues regarding the room and I pointed them out so they could fix them for the future guests because it might bother other people as well and I felt like the receptionist did not take my complain seriously, maybe they thought I was kidding or something like that...so that was one reason I do not consider Budapest as a good destination compared with Maastricht. Otherwise the cities were enjoyable, Maastricht was a bit better, cleaner, the buildings were very nice there.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by nice?

*Interviewee:* It felt cozy, I mean the buildings are small, they do not have tall buildings in the area where we were and I think they were smaller than the buildings in Budapest and I am talking here about city centers with nice, stylish old buildings, so overall Maastricht was more cozy, with little cobbled streets and nice, small and well kept old buildings. There were also nice shops, clean and tidy and they looked very nice and organized and there was also surveillance everywhere in Maastricht and that made me feel very safe. I also ate at restaurants in both places and there was a better experience in Maastricht than in Budapest. Eating in Maastricht felt more personal, more relaxed compared with Budapest where in Budapest the waiter was not nice, in Maastricht we asked for local food and drinks and the waiter did not disappoint, he was able to recommend us really good food and drinks which were local and I like to try something local when I visit places than having or experiencing something which I can do anywhere.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of?

*Interviewee:* No, I think I said pretty much everything I had to say.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why Frankfurt was better than Budapest?

*Interviewee:* Well everything is better in Frankfurt than in Budapest, starting from the cars, I mean every second car was a Porche, well I am exaggerating now but the reason behind it is that it felt like a wealthy place and extremely organized and it is a very energetic city...well Budapest had a lot of people on the streets too but it did not feel energetic like in Frankfurt. In Frankfurt people were nicely dressed also in the public transportation, in the trains for example and everybody looked like very self confident, okay maybe that is not the word for it...okay it is actually the word for it when I compare with the people I saw in Budapest walking on the streets and I think this self confidence made the city more energetic and the atmosphere was very good...we actually stopped several times in Frankfurt just to look around and observe the people and the impression was very nice and even in front of the central train station where there were a



lot of people walking around and there was intense traffic as well, but there were no complains for other people or drivers as to the amount of people and cars moving and it was a great experience to watch the interaction between them and how well managed and organized everyone was. I think Frankfurt was a great experience especially due to this.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* Well I will just repeat what I said before so no nothing else to add.

*Interviewer:* Could you compare Frankfurt with Brussels?

*Interviewee:* Oh, this energy I felt in Frankfurt I couldn't feel in Brussels even if the amount of people on the streets was actually higher in Brussels and there were many tourists from different parts of the world but still there was no energy, the people's attitude was different...and the traffic in Brussels was congested all the time, it looked like no one was moving anywhere while in Frankfurt it felt more energetic...and the buildings were nice both in Brussels and Frankfurt.

*Interviewer:* How were they nice?

*Interviewee:* Well in Frankfurt there are tall buildings like skyscrapers but they were surrounded by old and well kept buildings as well, nice bridges as well...in Brussels as well, I believe it is a beautiful city but because I did not like the atmosphere there I cannot say that the experience in Brussels was good. I am actually considering going to visit it again and give the city a second chance because I know many people that have visited Brussels and they all talk very nicely about it and were very happy with the experience there. So I think the atmosphere made Frankfurt made better than Brussels and also the buildings in Frankfurt, I mean Frankfurt has a combination of old and new but the new additions to the city have style and they don't stick out in a bad way, I think the city has a very nice balance of old and new. In Brussels I remember they had a new building which did not fit with the surroundings, it looked weird and that it was not supposed to be there, it seemed like it was disrupting the flow of the city. I also think of Frankfurt as being more civilized in the way people on the streets treated each other and from the way the city was kept and taken care of, with nice clean streets and parks taken care of... Yes that is all I can come up right now.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you wish to add?

*Interviewee:* No, not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay could you tell me in what important way is Rome and the other destinations you have visited different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Well first of all I have never been to Rome, but I have heard very good things about it.

*Interviewer:* What kind of good things?

*Interviewee:* Like it is a lovely city, that is the basic idea what I heard from friends that have been there and it was not only female friends that were saying that it was also some of my male friends who said the same thing about Rome that it is a very beautiful city and it is a must see. And the same goes for Barcelona, as I would like to see it in the future...

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why?

*Interviewee:* Well again I have heard a lot of good things about it and I saw many pictures from there that I liked and apparently they are making a very good job with tourism and I heard they have very good services and the people I know that have been there they said that their experience was very good there, overall. I heard the food and the atmosphere is very good as well and these things have influenced me and now I want to go there. Also I have heard the good reviews about these two cities from both single friends but also couples and this was another reason why I would like to see these cities in the future since they are not meant to be enjoyed only by couples or by single people, there are activities for any type of person and that is very important to me.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add when thinking of these destinations?

*Interviewee:* Well....no...I don't believe I have anything extra to say.

## **Interview D**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* I will choose Puerto de la Cruz in Tenerife as one of the good destinations, Paris and Geneva as not very good destinations...what else? Berlin as another good destination and I would definitely want to see Lisbon and Dublin.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why was Puerto de la Cruz better than Paris?

*Interviewee:* Well first of all because of the location, in the sense that Puerto de la Cruz is on a tropical island and it was the first time I went to a tropical island so that experience was very new and amazing.

*Interviewer:* Could you explain why?

*Interviewee:* Well everything there was like nothing I have experienced before, everything was new and wow in a way and the fact that it was warm and sunny weather all the time.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me what was wow about the place?

*Interviewee:* Well from when I landed there the geography of the place is very impressive as it is a volcano island and there is a huge volcano dividing the island into two parts. Another issue was how much the locals were speaking English because in Paris this was a big issue for me as it was very difficult to interact with the locals. It was so much easier to speak English with the locals in Puerto de la Cruz than in Paris. I remember that the not so good impression of Paris started right at the airport when I was trying to find someone who could speak English and direct me towards the public transportation and I couldn't find anyone. Also Paris was much more expensive than Puerto de la Cruz, I can say that the amount of money I have spent in one day in Paris was enough for two-three days in Puerto de la Cruz.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of?

*Interviewee:* Well as I said Puerto de la Cruz was better because of the novelty of the place compared with the places I have been before and how easy it was to interact with the locals and being able to get around places easily...that is all I can think of right now.

*Interviewer:* Okay what about Puerto de la Cruz and Geneva? Why was one better than the other?

*Interviewee:* It was the same issue as with Paris, in the sense that people did not speak English and it was very very expensive.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* To be honest when I compare these two cities (Geneva and Paris) with Puerto de la Cruz these are the issues which are stuck in my mind, people not speaking English and how expensive it was to be there.

*Interviewer:* Okay what if you compare Berlin with Paris?

*Interviewee:* Well Berlin has sentimental value it my first ever trip and it was also on a special occasion in my life so it adds to the sentimental value of this trip. Furthermore it was much cheaper than Paris and I was able to talk with the locals in English. Also it was very easy to understand and use their public transportation while I think that the public transportation in Paris is very complicated. And another thing that did not impress me about Paris was the filth in the metro stations and how old their trains and metros are, while in Berlin, even though they had like two or three underground levels of metro lines, which by the way adds to why Berlin was better because I think it is very impressive, it was very easy to understand the system and the metro stations looked much more better than in Paris. Overall Paris was a big disappointment because of these issues and also the big difference between Paris at night and Paris during the day. I must admit that Paris during the night with all the lights is very impressive but during the day everything looks so gray and depressing and even the Eiffel Tower during the day to me looked like a pile of rust.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you have to add?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* Then could you tell me why was Berlin better than Geneva?

*Interviewee:* Well first of all again the language barrier in Geneva and also how expensive the city is. Also there are many more things to see and visit in Berlin than in Geneva, like monuments and old and well kept buildings, historical buildings, like the Berlin wall and so on. It is nice to know that you have seen by yourself some famous places that you have read or seen on TV and to brag a bit to your friends. Geneva does not have that compared with Berlin, there are no places that are known by others in Geneva. That is pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me in what important way are these destinations (Lisbon, Paris and Berlin) different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Well I haven't been in Lisbon and all I know it is in Portugal and near the coast and that there is good weather there and that is pretty much all the information I have for Lisbon.

*Interviewer:* Could you try and elaborate a bit more of the differences?

*Interviewee:* Well I can say a similarity because the same motive that I had for going to Paris and Berlin applies to Lisbon and that is curiosity. I want to see the city and walk on the streets of the capital of Portugal. I think I have a tendency to visit the big cities, mostly the capitals of the different countries, so it is a main reason for why I want to see Lisbon.

*Interviewer:* What if we replace Lisbon with Dublin, could you talk about the differences between the destinations?

*Interviewee:* Well I was always fascinated by the Irish culture and that is the main reason I want to see Dublin or any city from Ireland for that matter, the culture makes me want to go there.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me more specifically what aspects of the culture you are talking about?

*Interviewee:* Well the fact that it is different from my own and it is very old and with historical value and also I find so interesting the way they speak, their accent which I mostly heard from TV. Also I want to try a real Irish pub and also see the historical parts of the city and also the parts I have read from books about Celtic history, they are the main reason for being curious and wanting to visit Dublin.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No.

## **Interview E**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* Well I would definitely say that Paris and Dublin are the best destinations in my opinion, now not so good destinations it is a bit harder to say but I will write down Brussels and Budapest.

*Interviewer:* And two destinations you want to visit in the near future?

*Interviewee:* Well I have in plan to go to Lisbon and I would definitely want to go to Bergen.

*Interviewer:* Could you now tell me why Dublin was better than Brussels?

*Interviewee:* Oh, well I think Dublin was a better experience than Brussels was because I knew somebody in Dublin and we went to the good places and it seemed smaller than Brussels but more central. Brussels was with much more cars and being about...well we were a lot in the Parliament area and they had really big roads and traffic and it seemed like Brussels was all about traffic and being crowded by cars...

*Interviewer:* Any other reason why Dublin was better?

*Interviewee:* Well I liked the beer and food in both places so yeah I cannot think of anything else.

*Interviewer:* What about the way the cities looked, or the people there, anything you want to comment upon?

*Interviewee:* Well it seemed cozier in Dublin I think I also like the... I think the people there were friendlier and talking to strangers they met in the bar or on the streets, I believe Dublin has this pub culture which Brussels also have but it is more cozy in Dublin because in Brussels they have the food and the beers but it's...but I never felt that I could talk with strangers or mingle with the locals in the same way I did in Dublin and that is why I say Dublin is cozy.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you can think of?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* What about now, can you tell me in what ways was Dublin better than Budapest?

*Interviewee:* My biggest problem with Budapest was that we came there when it was really warm and the places that we could afford were without air-conditioning, so it was 40 degrees and it was pretty horrible. At that point we were traveling through Europe with the train and due to the bad conditions in Budapest we just chose to leave earlier than planned from Budapest. Otherwise it seemed like a nice city but their infrastructure for low budget hotels was very bad and that made us leave the city. I mean the city is nice, it has nice buildings with very nice architecture, bridges but because the place we were sleeping was so uncomfortable we could not actually enjoy being in the city. I cannot even remember if the food was good or if the people were nice because of this bad experience with the hotel this is what is left of being there.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you would like to add?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Please tell me now why Paris was better than Budapest?

*Interviewee:* Paris is one of my favorite cities, it is...I really like the French cuisine and I try to speak French whenever I am there so it is also educational for me and there is very high quality food and I always go there with my wife because we consider it to be a romantic city, I mean everybody known that Paris is for couples. It also has very nice big streets and beautiful buildings and there are so many things you can like about Paris.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why there are so many things you can like about Paris?

*Interviewee:* Well of course the world known attractions that you have to see and experience especially with a loved one, and I like their food a lot, it is so sophisticated again French cuisine is known to be high quality and innovative and I also like the small cafes on tiny streets from where you can enjoy some coffee and look at the Eiffel Tower or the river and so on.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* Why was Paris better than Brussels?

*Interviewee:* Oh this is tricky because in Brussels you also have the French language so... I would say still that the traffic, Paris is also a big city like Brussels but for me Paris even though is big is very interconnected with the metros it is more, it seems easier to get around and we got, I think it also has nicer places to see.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by that?

*Interviewee:* Well the buildings in Paris are all white..no what I mean it seems they have more monuments and they are being taken care of and also walking the small streets... one thing about Paris, I don't know if Brussels has it in the same way but the markets with vegetables and

different kind of foods it is such an experience to go to such kind of market in Paris, you should go there because you can taste and smell different kinds of food and also interact with the locals in a more direct way, I really enjoy that.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you would like to add?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* Okay could you tell me how Lisbon is different from Paris and Brussels?

*Interviewee:* Actually I don't know a lot about Lisbon I know about fado I think is pronounced some singing and dancing tradition of theirs, it is a place I am a bit curious about.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Interviewee:* Because I have never been to Portugal and in my thinking it has kind of the same latin, music and food culture that Spain also have but I also think Portugal can be different especially because Lisbon is the capital.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever been to Spain before?

*Interviewee:* Yes I was there and I enjoyed it so I believe Lisbon will be fun as well since they are so close to each other from a culture and food point of view.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No.

*Interviewer:* What if we compare Bergen with the destinations you have visited, how are they different?

*Interviewee:* Well Bergen is not a metropolitan city like Paris but I consider Bergen a part of a journey through some Norwegian nature experience and Bergen... I want to see some Nordic culture and the fjords of course and the water and mountains. I mean we do work with this destination as part of our job and I have to admit I have not been there but the pictures I have seen with the place really impressed me, especially the fjords, everyone has heard of the Norwegian Fjords and I believe Bergen it is the place where you can still enjoy the buzz of a city with cafes and restaurants and museums but you also enjoy nature with the mountains and water and the fjords.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you wish to say?

*Interviewee:* No, I know I have not said too much but that is all I can think of.



## **Interview F**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* I can start with the not so good ones and say that Rome and Prague are on my list as places that I do not consider good destinations, I would like to see Paris and Amsterdam in the future and very near future actually, I would like to go in both places this year. And now about the good ones I would put Paris again because I have been there many years ago and that is why I want to go there again and Stockholm, I really like this city.

*Interviewer:* Could you now please tell me why was Paris better than Prague?

*Interviewee:* Paris because it was my first destination I ever went to, I was 14 and I have such nice memories from there. Prague was bad because we stayed outside it was also one of my first trips but it was just a very weird place where we stayed in a hostel.

*Interviewer:* How was it weird?

*Interviewee:* Well it was I cannot remember exactly but it was a place where the food was not good, and the hotel was not very good either, the service was bad and the rooms were dirty and small.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* Well from top of my mind in Paris everything was new for me since it was my first trip outside Denmark so in Paris everything I did and saw was a highlight and the food was so nice, I learned to eat cheese in Paris.

*Interviewer:* What about Rome, why wasn't it as good as Paris?

*Interviewee:* Well Rome I liked but we had a lot of trouble with theft especially on the public transportation and the taxi drivers, well it was hard to get a taxi for 5 people when there were boys there the taxis would not stop but if it was just us the girls the taxis would stop so that was

very strange and it made the experience bad. I really liked Rome as a city with the buildings and the streets and the food as well but because of theft and the issue with cab drivers it ruined the trip.

*Interviewer:* What about if we compare Stockholm with Rome?

*Interviewee:* Stockholm is just close to Copenhagen and it has everything, good shopping and loppemarkets and it is just a beautiful city.

*Interviewer:* How is it beautiful?

*Interviewee:* Because of all the islands and you can walk through the whole of Stockholm and there is always something to see...it is just a nice and pleasant city. The city is clean, the food is good, the services are even better wherever you go. And also I like their streets, it is such a nice combination of old and new with the buildings and the cobbled narrow streets which will then take you to a main boulevard where you see tall and modern buildings. I love that about Stockholm.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* Well you could always get a cab and you do not feel that people will rob you so you can go in the subway without needing to hold on to your bag like your life depends on it.

*Interviewer:* What if we compare Stockholm with Prague?

*Interviewee:* Well it is pretty much the same reasons, well in Prague even though we stayed outside the city and you had to take a bus to get in the city I was not afraid that I will be robbed but on the other hand the services and the food in Prague cannot be compared with Stockholm, in Stockholm everything is so much better.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me how Amsterdam and Stockholm and Prague are different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Well Amsterdam I want to visit because here you have the opportunity to have a different kind of accommodation, I don't know about Prague but in Amsterdam you can stay in a houseboat and I definitely want to go there and try that because it is a different kind of experience to stay in such type of accommodation and there are many markets in Amsterdam that I want to see but the main reason is to experience staying in a houseboat in the city centre of Amsterdam.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No, I just want to go there.

*Interviewer:* How is Paris and the other destinations different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Well Paris is a big city with beautiful museums and Moulin Rouge and the Eiffel Tower and I want to go there for the art museums and to see the paintings because there is so much art in Paris.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No not really.

*Interviewer:* What if we look at all the destinations anything else you want to add?

*Interviewee:* As I said Rome was nice because we had a mobile home and we could go anywhere but inside I did not feel very good. And I think Stockholm I would like to go there again and try new things because now they have for example where you can go on top of the buildings in the old city so they keep coming with new ideas and actually you can go by hot air balloon across Stockholm at night but right now I cannot afford it. Prague I have been twice and it is boring, it is not for me.

*Interviewer:* Why is it boring?

*Interviewee:* I see it as a gray city, I like color and atmosphere and I miss that in Prague and I like the others, especially during the night with all the lights. I don't know, I think Prague does not have anything else to offer besides old gray buildings that do not look like they are been taken care of and some bridges. For me it is not impressive enough.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* No, that is all I can think of.

## **Interview G**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* Oh for sure I have to write Nice as a place that I did not enjoy so as not a good destination. Now for the good ones I would go with San Sebastian and Stockholm and the ones I plan to go in the future are Paris and Berlin, but I have visited these two cities before but I want to go there again.

*Interviewer:* What about another European city destination that was not good?

*Interviewee:* Well I cannot think of any other destination that was as bad as Nice or even close. Can I come back to that?

*Interviewer:* Okay, then we can start. I would like to ask you to tell me why San Sebastian was better than Nice?

*Interviewee:* San Sebastian is not very touristic place, it's not overcrowded and there are lots of small very good food places like tapas restaurants which are very different, it's not a too big of a place but it is very genuine and not... I also like when I can walk around in a place and see things without using too much transportation.

*Interviewer:* What else?

*Interviewee:* I should continue? Well I also think that, as I remember the prices were reasonable, I hardly remember if it is cheaper than it Nice but it does not stand out as a big difference but we spent some days in San Sebastian and we had a lot of means while in Nice we stayed for what was it, around five hours and we didn't eat too many times.

*Interviewer:* What was in Nice that made it less good than San Sebastian?

*Interviewee:* Nice was overcrowded, perfume all over the place, stuffed with tourists and not very genuine, kind of Las Vegas, of course there is no gambling in Las Vegas but it felt very artificial and so this atmosphere and also very crowded with cars it was really not as charming, of course there are areas where you can walk around but all in all it was a place too popular and people go there in big amounts so it is like walking on Strøget in Copenhagen which I prefer not to visit. Yes that is all I can think of right now.

*Interviewer:* But what if we compare Stockholm with Nice? What are the differences?

*Interviewee:* Stockholm is really beautiful, a fantastic place, scenery almost anywhere you walk, you have water all over and again here in Stockholm, if we talk about the centre part you can walk so again I like that. That does not mean I don't like taking a bus or a metro but I like when I can take a walk in the city centre, there are also plenty of things to do in Stockholm when it comes to visiting museums and sailing out to the archipelagoes and there are also here a big variety of restaurants and the prices are a little high compared with San Sebastian but the city is definitely cheaper than the rest of Scandinavia, in my opinion, it feels like it is cheaper in Stockholm than in Copenhagen.

*Interviewer:* You have mentioned that Stockholm is a beautiful city and you have mentioned the water surrounding the city. Can you tell me what else made this city beautiful?

*Interviewee:* Because it is placed on I could rocks, you can see the rocks many places and when you come from a flat place like in Copenhagen in Stockholm you have a different view over the city because it is hilly with rocks and you have some modern parts but also parts that date back to 17 hundred and up like the architecture, it is also good to walk there and there are small surprises here and there.

*Interviewer:* What kind of surprises?

*Interviewee:* Well like ice skating rings, I mean we were walking some narrow streets in Stockholm and then we met an ice skating ring in the middle of the city and I think that was, of course you can see that in Copenhagen too but I think that was a positive little surprise to meet.

*Interviewer:* Anything else?

*Interviewee:* That is positive about Stockholm?

*Interviewer:* When you compare it with Nice.

*Interviewee:* Well compared with Nice? The air, I have talked about the water, but it is also the air, I mean you feel like there is space and air around you so not so crowded and comfortable for me, I do not like to be in big crowds I prefer a place like Stockholm which is not so crowded. Yes that is all I can think of right now.

*Interviewer:* What if we compare Paris and these destinations, can you tell me how are they different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Paris is the city of the cities and they have everything. Of course there are a lot of tourists there but it seems like the city can absorb them compared with Nice that does not absorb all the visitors. Paris it is also, of course it has the metro, but it is also a city that invites you to walk around and you find small nice restaurants and cafes and you really have a choice in what you want to do there, I mean museums and whatever you want big or small. And of course you can also sail and you have the famous attractions like the Eiffel Tower and the Arch of Triumph

and you can visit all these places. So I think Paris offers lots of choices and if you need transportation you have the metro which works fine once you pass the limit of reading the map and finding out where you can buy a ticket and so on, but then it really works well. It is long time ago I have been there but I would like to go back and just enjoy the atmosphere and maybe go and see things but actually to enjoy the atmosphere of this perfect place, Paris, with their cuisine as well.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you wish to add?

*Interviewee:* Well I think I have said everything that was to be said.

*Interviewer:* What if we compare Berlin with these destinations?

*Interviewee:* Well Berlin is also a really big place and I could imagine that the other destinations are not as the same size as Berlin or Paris for that matter, but Berlin is again it is some years ago I have been there, but I consider it to be an exciting place and it is also a place that, okay maybe less and less but it still shows history when it was divided in East and West and I find it interesting, especially before, to observe the difference of in those days called West and East Berlin. Berlin is a very historical place, just thinking of World War II so it is exciting to be there and think about all the history that has taken place here and yeah, Berlin also has all the restaurants and stuff you can think about and probably there are many tourists in Berlin but I believe it can absorb them easily so it is nice to be there even though it is a semi popular destination I think, I mean compared with Paris. San Sebastian is a hidden gem in my opinion, because this is really one of the hidden gems of Europe because it is really a very nice place and you can easily spend four-five days in San Sebastian so in a way it is a mini Paris. Of course very different it is a city with a different culture and food compared with Paris and I do not think there is metro in San Sebastian but it has opening to the ocean and the closeness, I mean you can stay in a hotel in the city centre and you can walk a couple of meters to the beach and you can swim in the ocean together with the locals and that is very attractive for me. So you have a combination of both city and sea side place which you cannot find in many places so that is a plus if you come in the summer season in San Sebastian. Berlin is a little exciting, it has...you can feel that things are going on there, I talk about art and trendy people and inventive and I like that feeling as well, then it is also close to Copenhagen and you can go there very easily.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you wish to add?

*Interviewee:* Well I believe I have said pretty much everything.

*Interviewer:* Could you think of another destination that you did not consider good besides Nice?

*Interviewee:* Well it is really difficult...maybe I do not have other places like Nice...no there is not another place where I would say that I wouldn't go to this place again like Nice. But you can take all the positive things I have said about the other destinations and then you can take the

opposite points of view and then you can come to places that I am not so happy about and Nice is an example of this type of place. I am sure you can find places in Nice that are far away from the tourist crowds, it is not the first time I have been there I was there a couple of years ago and I was in Nice last year so it is not so long ago I have been there but I have been there before but I had the same feeling and I have a feeling like people are, and this I do not feel in many places, but I have a feeling that people are there to show off like nowhere else actually, I feel like people are too fancy and put too much perfume on, it is just not my style so I like, of course you can see that other places, but in Nice it is difficult to get away from. It is easy to avoid it in other places, you actually have to look for this kind of atmosphere, but in Nice it is everywhere, it is there.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you wish to add?

*Interviewee:* No I think that I have mentioned the different things that are important for me, not being crowded or polluted and I also like water and I like a variety of restaurants and have good food is important for me, I look for interesting restaurants, I like a place with atmosphere in the sense that it has history and beautiful architecture and I like a place there is a good mix of all kinds of people, poor or rich, trendy or not trendy, students, stock exchange people and you know this big variety. I like to see these kinds of places and places where I feel comfortable. I have not mentioned shopping at all because it does not interest me as much, it is not an important factor for me. But I think I have mentioned everything I believe and think of these destinations.

*Interviewer:* Okay then, thank you.



## **Interview H**

*Interviewer:* I would like to write down on the pieces of paper in from of you two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them to be good destinations, two European city destinations that you have visited and consider them not to be good destinations and two European city destinations which you would like to visit in the future.

*Interviewee:* Okay give me one moment to think which one to choose... Well Paris and London are definitely the good destinations, Malmö would go on the not so good list. I am planning to visit Moscow and Bucharest.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me one more destination which was not good?

*Interviewee:* Well I think that I will put Madrid on the list as not being so good.

*Interviewer:* Ok, now could you tell me why was Paris better than Malmö?

*Interviewee:* Well Paris was first of all with a big group I went with and it was one of my student travel and we had a lot of fun there because the trip was together with the best of my friends and we went out and had fun in the city and going and doing what we wanted to do.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me what you wanted to do in Paris?

*Interviewee:* Just going around with my friends and have a bit of fun and aside of that Paris is kind of a big city, not just in Europe but it is kind of city of cities, it has history and a lot of monuments and stuff that I always wanted to see.

*Interviewer:* Why is that?

*Interviewee:* Well once you hear about stuff long enough it is nice to go there and get a picture and put some stories in like the buildings and see if Eiffel Tower really that great since it is the most famous monument, is it that impressive? It was also one of the first trips I had and probably one of the first times a got a glimpse of a new culture and it had a big impression. I am not sure that I will like it as much the second time I go there.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why?

*Interviewee:* Because I know what I am getting into and I know what to expect and I travel a lot more since then and I know how people behave there and I have already seen pretty much everything, I mean we pretty much seen everything that we had to see when we were there, like the cultural sights and we had a trip out to the new city, kind of New York style with big skyscrapers and it was very impressive to see it but again once you have seen it, I mean now I have a clear picture of how Paris is because it had such a positive impact on me the first time I

do not think that a second visit would be as impressive, of course if the second time I go there to think of the memories I have from the first trip.

*Interviewer:* Anything else you would like to add about Paris compared with Malmö?

*Interviewee:* Well even today after I traveled to other cities I still think that some of the most memorable buildings and sightseeings are in Paris because you have some astonishing buildings like their royal castles which are...well you get the feeling from seeing of how it was to be the king of the world and how everything else was build around this castles, the Eiffel Tower of course, the way the big street is pointing through the entire town and how it links the Arch of Triumph and down the main street and all the public places, it is impressive that you can see everything from once street....and I think that is Paris.

*Interviewer:* What if you compare London with Malmö? What can you tell me about them?

*Interviewee:* Well London was better than Malmö because again if any city around the world that trumps Paris in history as is more famous then it is London. London of all has been the main city of the whole world for centuries and it is ... I mean you know so many places by name but I got to say it was a bit more disappointed to see...I mean it was still magnificent but it was not what it was build for.

*Interviewer:* What disappointed you more precisely?

*Interviewee:* Well you can see the old style on the buildings compared with most of the places which usually is good for seeing the history of the city but it is pretty closed up in the city and it is mixed with normal buildings as well and it does not give the impression like in this spot this important event happened, not like in Paris where you have the whole area was build towards this centre point in the city. Anyway there were good things about London, like everyone spoke English so I did not feel uncomfortable about ordering food or talking with people and then it was close enough to my own culture that it was still comfortable but still new. I know culture it is a lot of things but I feel it was close enough to mine but still had a lot of things that were new to me. On the other hand going to Malmö was pretty much like visiting any other Danish city, they of course have different signs and prices and people speak sort of different language but everyone behaves the same as Danes and I could expect the same think as here in Denmark and it was like visiting some parts of Copenhagen that you have not visited before and you go there and just be there, so Malmö did not feel like travelling from home, it is too close to my culture, it is great for shopping but not for seeing different monuments or buildings.

*Interviewer:* Why was great for shopping?

*Interviewee:* Because they had different kind of stores than the ones you can find in Copenhagen and the layout and the services are still the same as in Denmark but the brands where different. That is pretty much it.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me why Paris was better than Madrid?

*Interviewee:* Well Madrid has slightly the major city of south Eastern Europe... Well I have not heard that many stories about Madrid and before going there I had to ask someone from Madrid where I should go and what I should see but I really did not get an answer from him either. But still I just had an idea that there would be more things to see but once I got there and traveled around there was one decent monument or historical thing to see and the rest was just walking around the city. The culture of course was a new experience, that was kind of a plus. On the other hand the culture was completely new to me and very different from my own so I was not completely comfortable with, like you cannot come into a restaurant and just order a meal, because you have to check the bill in details after because you are very suspicious about what they are charging you for and if they cheat you, and then there is the traffic, the chaos that it was on the main streets in Madrid.

*Interviewer:* Why was then London better than Madrid?

*Interviewee:* Well Madrid for me is more of a hang out town but there is nothing else really that you would go there besides good weather and to relax. There are not a lot of historical monuments, or maybe they are but I have not heard anything about them, the people there are not that nice, especially in the restaurants when they try to charge you extra for nothing or if the culture is welcoming, I mean the people there were not welcoming.

*Interviewer:* What made you feel unwelcomed in Madrid?

*Interviewee:* Well it is also that people did not speak that much English and it is also not very comfortable to see so much police and police cars on the streets, they were passing by every minute and it made me feel uncomfortable when seeing so many police cars. And also I the first days of my visit there Madrid looked like a garbage bin because the cleaning people were on strike for 3 days and every time you were taking one step you had to push some garbage aside to do so. Not that I blame the city because it could happen anywhere but it did not help with the impression. But on the other hand Madrid had some really majestic style buildings in the centre that I did not expect or heard about before, so that was a pleasant surprise. It was nice to walk around and to switch from normal looking buildings to really tall and old style buildings, with columns and carved figures on the side which made them a bit royal and that was a nice surprise.

*Interviewer:* Could you now tell me how Moscow and the other destinations are different from each other?

*Interviewee:* Well Moscow is a completely different territory or location and it is been... so the culture should be very different from the other places I have been to, but on the other hand I have not visited Eastern Europe before. And when I think of Eastern Europe, Moscow is the city which comes first into my mind and I believe that there are interesting things to see there.

*Interviewer:* Why do you believe that?

*Interviewee:* Because Russia has been one of the greater empires for so many years and of course it has a lot of monuments with the Soviet Union as well, it would be fun to go there and see Kremlin and...oh I cannot remember the name of the palace but apparently it is supposed to be very big. Also I would like to see the metro as it is supposed to be built for bomb shelters back in the nuclear war, and these things I have been reading about so I am very eager to see them in real life.

*Interviewer:* What about Bucharest and the rest of the destinations?

*Interviewee:* Well Bucharest I expect a mix of Moscow and the southern European countries I have been to so I expect a bit of mix there. Historic wise there are no buildings or landmarks that are really that I heard of, the only thing I know about Romania is the mountains and the fortresses in Transylvania but that is not really related to Bucharest at all. So Bucharest would be more about getting to know my girlfriend's culture and what is home for her and how are things done there, and that is kind of it.

*Interviewer:* If you do not have anything else to add then I would like to say thank you for your time.

## **Appendix 1**

Dear respondents,

This survey is for my master thesis and it is about assessing a good european city destination. So think of a good european city destination and answer the following questions. The survey should not take more than 5 minutes and the answers are anonymous.

Thank you for your help and enjoy the survey.

# History and Heritage

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. the city is mentioned and had an important part in history	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the customs and traditions of the locals are different from your own	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. you are familiar with the culture (e.g. customs and traditions) of the place	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. variety of museums	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Attractions

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. the attractions of the city are iconic	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the city offers a variety of attractions	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. the city has UNESCO listed attractions	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. the attractions meet your expectations	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Activities

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. the city offers a variety of activities for any type of person	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the activities the city offers help you learn something new about the city	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. the activities are new experiences for you	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. the city has new and innovative touristic experiences	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
5. variety of shopping opportunities	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
6. you have the possibility to try the local food and specialities	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>



# Locals

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. you can meet different nationalities and cultures at the destination	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the locals are friendly	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. the locals can speak English	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. the locals are welcoming and willing to interact with tourists in their habitual surroundings	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
5. the locals are tolerant towards different kinds of lifestyles	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
6. the locals respect and take care of the city	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
7. the locals respect each other	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
8. you personally know some of the locals	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Services

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. the employees of restaurants/hotels/attractions are reliable and helpful	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the employees of restaurants/hotels/attractions receive your feedback in a positive manner	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. there is a short waiting time in restaurants/hotels/attractions	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. the city offers a variety of restaurants	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
5. the standard of facilities in restaurants/hotels match their ratings	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
6. services are not more expensive than services in your hometown	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
7. it is easy to understand and use the transportation system	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

## Image

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. the city is world renowned	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. you have heard or seen images of the city from friends or media	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. the city is not very known by tourists but is still a big city	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. the food and specialities of the place are world renowned	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
5. the city is close to the sea	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
6. the city is known for warm and sunny weather	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Atmosphere

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. you do not feel that there are too many people on the streets/restaurants/bars	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. there is not too much traffic on the streets	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. you do not feel taken advantage of as a tourist	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. having the feeling of a wealthy city	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
5. having the feeling of a vibrant and energetic city	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
6. you do not feel that the city is build for tourists	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Esthetics

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. there is a harmonius combination of old and new buildings	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. the city has clean streets and public transportation area	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. the historical sites and attractions are well preserved	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

# Safety

How important are the following factors in assessing a destination as being good ?

	1-not important	2	3	4	5-very important
1. there is no risk of pickpocketing	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
2. you feel safe to walk around the city with your belongings	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
3. you feel safe enough to not be cheated in restaurants/bars	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>
4. you do not encounter too much police force on the city streets	(1) <input type="checkbox"/>	(2) <input type="checkbox"/>	(3) <input type="checkbox"/>	(4) <input type="checkbox"/>	(5) <input type="checkbox"/>

And now I would like to know something about  
yourself:

**Please indicate your age:**

- (1) ☐ 15-24 years old
- (2) ☐ 25-34 year old
- (3) ☐ 35-44 year old
- (4) ☐ Over 45 year old

**Please indicate your gender:**

- (1) ☐ Male
- (2) ☐ Female

**Please state your marital status (you can choose more than one answer):**

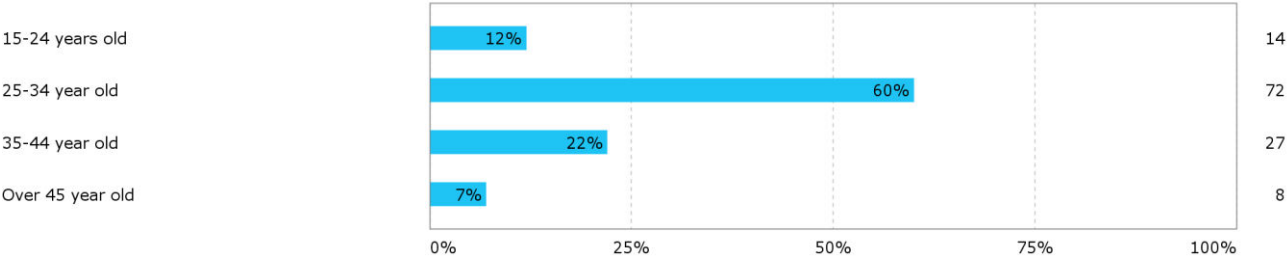
- (1) ☐ married
- (2) ☐ in a relationship
- (5) ☐ single
- (3) ☐ with children
- (4) ☐ without children

You are all done!

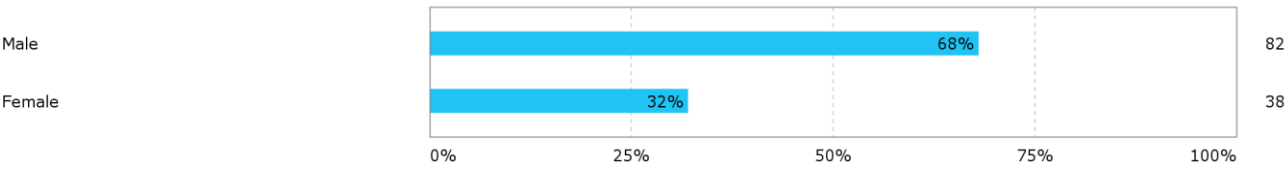
Thank you for answering the questionnaire!

Appendix 2

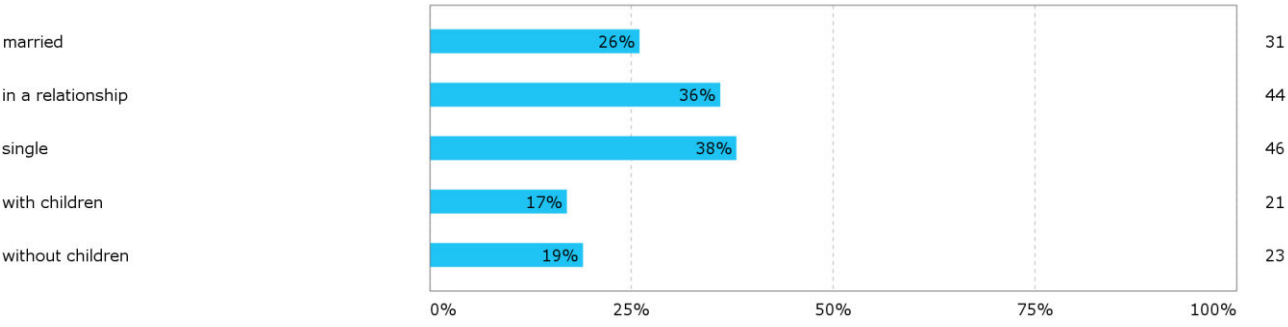
Please indicate your age:



Please indicate your gender:



Please state your marital status (you can choose more than one answer):





## Appendix 3

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,757
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3012,726
	df	1128
	Sig.	,000

### Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
s_1	1,000	,777
s_2_2	1,000	,761
s_3_3	1,000	,590
s_5_4	1,000	,636
s_4_5	1,000	,660
s_4_6	1,000	,838
s_4_7	1,000	,621
s_4_8	1,000	,750
s_4_11	1,000	,735
s_4_12	1,000	,777
s_4_13	1,000	,706
s_4_14	1,000	,751
s_4_15	1,000	,647
s_4_16	1,000	,766
s_6_10	1,000	,692
s_6_11	1,000	,743
s_6_12	1,000	,766
s_6_13	1,000	,710
s_6_15	1,000	,742
s_6_16	1,000	,793
s_6_17	1,000	,633
s_6_18	1,000	,673
s_7_8	1,000	,702
s_7_9	1,000	,804

s_7_10	1,000	,780
s_7_11	1,000	,722
s_7_12	1,000	,662
s_7_13	1,000	,715
s_7_14	1,000	,609
s_8_8	1,000	,801
s_8_9	1,000	,701
s_8_10	1,000	,710
s_8_11	1,000	,674
s_8_12	1,000	,765
s_8_13	1,000	,791
s_9_8	1,000	,878
s_9_9	1,000	,814
s_9_10	1,000	,730
s_9_11	1,000	,675
s_9_12	1,000	,709
s_9_14	1,000	,724
s_10_4	1,000	,715
s_10_5	1,000	,801
s_10_6	1,000	,812
s_11_1	1,000	,783
s_11_2	1,000	,795
s_11_3	1,000	,763
s_11_4	1,000	,696

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10,440	21,749	21,749	10,440	21,749	21,749
2	4,197	8,744	30,494	4,197	8,744	30,494
3	2,722	5,672	36,165	2,722	5,672	36,165
4	2,305	4,802	40,968	2,305	4,802	40,968
5	2,012	4,192	45,159	2,012	4,192	45,159
6	1,959	4,082	49,241	1,959	4,082	49,241
7	1,670	3,479	52,720	1,670	3,479	52,720
8	1,512	3,151	55,871	1,512	3,151	55,871
9	1,458	3,038	58,909	1,458	3,038	58,909
10	1,299	2,707	61,616	1,299	2,707	61,616
11	1,200	2,499	64,115	1,200	2,499	64,115
12	1,176	2,451	66,566	1,176	2,451	66,566
13	1,095	2,281	68,846	1,095	2,281	68,846
14	1,033	2,153	70,999	1,033	2,153	70,999
15	1,018	2,121	73,120	1,018	2,121	73,120
16	,952	1,984	75,105			
17	,872	1,817	76,922			
18	,805	1,678	78,599			
19	,755	1,573	80,172			
20	,717	1,493	81,665			
21	,680	1,417	83,083			
22	,639	1,331	84,414			
23	,587	1,223	85,636			
24	,554	1,154	86,790			
25	,527	1,099	87,889			
26	,514	1,071	88,960			
27	,438	,912	89,872			
28	,422	,880	90,752			
29	,396	,825	91,577			
30	,377	,786	92,362			
31	,360	,750	93,113			
32	,342	,712	93,825			
33	,314	,653	94,478			
34	,300	,624	95,103			
35	,283	,590	95,692			
36	,264	,550	96,243			

37	,231	,482	96,724			
38	,203	,423	97,147			
39	,191	,398	97,545			
40	,180	,376	97,921			
41	,176	,367	98,288			
42	,156	,325	98,612			
43	,140	,291	98,903			
44	,122	,253	99,157			
45	,120	,251	99,407			
46	,114	,238	99,645			
47	,093	,194	99,839			
48	,077	,161	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			,663
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		489,904
	df		45
	Sig.		,000

### Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,179	31,790	31,790	1,968	19,682	19,682	2,204	22,042	22,042
2	2,056	20,560	52,350	1,712	17,119	36,800	1,564	15,643	37,685
3	1,442	14,422	66,771	,389	3,894	40,694	1,513	15,134	52,819
4	1,213	12,125	78,896	1,946	19,461	60,154	1,080	10,803	63,621
5	,563	5,629	84,525	1,294	12,943	73,098	,948	9,476	73,098
6	,462	4,625	89,150						
7	,363	3,627	92,777						
8	,290	2,896	95,673						
9	,231	2,310	97,983						
10	,202	2,017	100,000						

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

**Rotated Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
s_9_9	,920	-,034	,390	-,002	-,001
s_9_8	,878	-,301	-,372	,000	,001
s_8_12	,312	,944	-,104	-,002	-,002
s_8_13	,129	,672	-,122	,161	,026
s_11_2	,249	,110	,073	,861	-,094
s_11_1	,281	,183	,200	,754	,000
s_11_3	,275	,063	-,041	,726	-,001
s_8_8	,134	,363	,053	,055	,781
s_8_9	-,012	,277	,058	,279	,584
s_1	,060	,141	,142	-,050	,577

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

a. 5 factors extracted. 24 iterations required.

### ***Relevant questions from the quantitative interviews***

<i>ID</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Question</i>
s_9_9	Atmosphere	2. there is not too much traffic on the streets'
s_9_8	Atmosphere	1. you do not feel that there are too many people on the streets/restaurants/bars'
s_8_12	Image	5. the city is close to the sea'
s_8_13	Image	6. the city is known for warm and sunny weather'
s_11_2	Safety	2. you feel safe to walk around the city with your belongings'
s_11_1	Safety	1. there is no risk of pickpocketing'
s_11_3	Safety	3. you feel safe enough to not be cheated in restaurants/bars'
s_8_8	Image	1. the city is world renowned'
s_8_9	Image	2. you have heard or seen images of the city from friends or media'
s_1	History and Heritage	1. the city is mentioned and had an important part in history'