MAKING THE WORLD OF WONDERS

A STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING OF EFTELING THEME PARK

Master thesis

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Abstract

This project undertakes the analysis of the Efteling amusement park marketing efforts. The paper examines both company and consumer perspective by conducting the analysis of three branding components - brand identity, brand positioning and brand image based on the social media marketing efforts for the UK market. As Efteling is aiming to gain awareness on the European markets, it is especially interesting to investigate the approach to achieve competitiveness in the global tourism market by the usage of social media platform - Facebook. Underlying our research is the pragmatic paradigm with its central focus on action and problem solving, which is reflected in the findings. The data was gathered from the Efteling Facebook page with the usage of digital tools - NetWizz and Facepager which are the API based platforms. For the purpose of the project, we analyzed all the Facebook content including posts, visual updates, videos, comments and reviews to gain an extensive overview of the digital scape of Efteling. Data was analyzed with the usage of semiotics and netnography and supported by the word frequency tool in order to substantiate our findings. In order to analyze the company's brand identity strategy we conducted an in-depth interview with the social media marketing manager of the park for the UK market - A.B. . Insight into the consumer perspective and ultimately - the brand image was possible thanks to the consumer survey and the feedback analysis with the previously mentioned word counter tool. As the main focus of our study was the impact of social media on the destination marketing strategy of Efteling the findings revolves around the effectiveness of marketing and communication efforts. One of the key findings indicates the cohesiveness of the marketed themes - family and fairytale - with the experience at the park ultimately contributing to the positive reviews of the park and the enhanced positive brand perception. Furthermore, we can notice the recurrence of the Emotional Selling Point used as a brand positioning tactic where the central family theme is connected with the multigenerational aspect. Apart from the cohesive messages there were however slight inconsistencies detected, one of them being creating the informative type of content rather than address marketing messages to loyal customers. Another contradictory element is the lack of implementation of the 'adventure' focused

messages despite the existing demand as resulted from the consumer survey. In the era of digitalization, conducting the research based on the destination marketing efforts allocated in the digital scape is a new take on the research in this field.

Introduction

Efteling Holland is one of the oldest European amusement parks and at the same time a very popular tourism destination on the national market. Acknowledging the potential of the destination, the management of the park decided to create designated marketing campaigns for specific markets, UK being one of them. Through the online efforts of social media marketing targeting the UK market, Efteling is promoting the destination, it's values and uniqueness which makes it especially interesting to analyze in terms of which of the messages the park are communicated and how are they being perceived by the audience which is conducted in this project. Thanks to the complex approach examining both the company and customer perspective, we can gain an insight into the social media destination marketing efforts.

This project consists of the following chapters:

1. Problem statement - where the complexity of the project is explained including the overview of the methods used and information about the amusement park.
2. Methodology - providing the overview of the pragmatism, which is the paradigm applied to the project.
3. Methods - consisting of netnography and followed by the description of the digital tools and platforms used in the project to conduct the analysis.
4. Theory - giving an overview of the theoretical framework relevant for the project including the destination marketing, branding theory and semiotics.
5. Analysis - divided into core parts: brand identity, brand positioning and brand image conveying the in depth analysis of the core messages applied by Efteling to the UK market and the consumer perception.
6. Conclusion - presenting the summary of the analysis and the final considerations.

1. Problem statement

In this chapter we would like to present an overview of methodology and motivation for the choice of topic. It will also allow the reader to get an overview of elements implemented in the project.

Efteling Theme Park is a located in the Netherlands, approximately 100 km from the capital - Amsterdam. It is one of the oldest amusement parks in Europe, dating back to 1952. Efteling is well known among the locals as it offers a unique atmosphere of the fairytale world (as mentioned on the official web page www.efteling.com). Although the park's offering is not characterized by the fast roller coasters or the latest technology within facilities, it's the family and fairytale unique selling point of the park that attracts thousands of visitors year after year. Seeing the potential of the park, the management decided upon creation of a campaign directed to different European countries, UK being one of them. Efteling has communication teams in several countries such as Belgium, Germany, etc. In addition, Efteling was also included in the promotional campaign of Amsterdam in the beginning of 2017, which led to the creation of a direct train connection between Amsterdam and Efteling to increase the incoming tourist flow. The amusement park has entered the UK market in 2015 and for the purpose of marketing; a special Facebook page was created, aiming to attract the interest to the park on the British market. The Facebook page covers information about the park, news, competitions, events, updates and designed ads as a way to engage with the UK market.

From the research perspective, Efteling is a great example of tourist destination marketing and therefore, it became of our interest. Furthermore, due to the fact that Efteling decided to cooperate with Seriously PR, which was responsible for the marketing campaign and where one of the researchers was employed at the time of

data collection, we had direct access to the social media platform - Facebook - which, at the same time is one of the main data sources for the project.

Facebook as a main source of data is motivated by the fact, that this is the only social media platform Efteling has applied to the UK market (at the time of the research). Furthermore, with an access to the statistics and inside data, we find it extremely important in terms of investigating the destination marketing strategy. Ultimately, the Facebook page aimed to not only gain the interest among the British consumers but also attract the media attention to the park to spread the information and to become more competitive. To access a full overview of the strategy behind the marketing campaign creation and the design of the content, we have also interviewed the Social Media Manager responsible for the management of the social channels A. B..

The project utilizes an extensive number of data, which is further elaborated in chapter 3.3.4 Online tools for data collection. We departed from the company's perspective by using netnographic analysis based on the Facebook page supported by the interview with the social media marketing manager to confirm our findings. To continued we compared and contrasted our results with the consumer perspective obtained by analyzing Facebook comments and reviews together with undertaking a consumer survey on the Facebook page. The analysis chapter is divided into three cohesive parts based on the brand positioning model described in chapter 4.2 Branding.

Through the project we aim to answers the research questions which will allow us to investigate how the destination marketing campaign has been designed in the case of the amusement park, and what is the response to the marketing efforts from the user perspective. Ultimately, this project aims to answer the following questions:

1) **What are the key elements of Efteling social media marketing strategy based on the Facebook page?**
2) **How are these elements used in Facebook marketing?**

3) **How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?**

The main question, 'What are the key elements of Efteling social media marketing strategy based on the Facebook page?' aims to deconstruct the marketing campaign in order to distinguish the key messages that were used in the strategy. Gaining an understanding allows us to obtain an overview of the campaign from the company's perspective. In this part we are focusing on the brand identity of Efteling which is consistent with the company's plans for marketing on a new market, as described by the undertaken interview. In addition, the vision of the company and the selling point are revealed in this part, which corresponds with the brand identity in the branding model used as a theoretical framework.

'How are these elements used in Facebook marketing?' - This questions allows to investigate how social media is employed as a part of an online marketing campaign. As mentioned before, Facebook was selected as a channel as at the time of data collection, Efteling did not have any other dedicated social media channels. Moreover, one of the researchers was permitted access to internal data. Therefore, Facebook was the main source of collecting information as it has the most extensive data from the moment Efteling entered the UK market in 2015.

'How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?' - Based on the elements distinguished through the previous questions, we will investigate how they key messages are perceived by the UK audience. Last question allows us to expand the spectrum of the marketing efforts by investigating consumers perception of the identified messages. It is especially interesting to investigate the response of the consumers to the destination marketing efforts implemented by the park to evaluate the impact of the chosen approach. At last, it will allow us to establish whether the key messages of the destination marketing campaign are effective for the UK market.

2. Methodology

It is argued that in social science research methodology aims to justify the framework of the research: 'Methodology, as the word suggests, relates to a process where the design of the research and choice of particular methods, and their justification in relation to the research project, are made evident' (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.6). At the same time, the methodology has to correspondent with the paradigm and to be differentiated from the methods: 'The most common definitions suggest that methodology is the overall approach to research linked to the paradigm or theoretical framework while the method refers to systematic modes, procedures or tools used for collection and analysis of data' (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

Prior to every research it is necessary for the most appropriate methodology to be determined (Beiske 2002). In the case of this paper, we have critically discussed the approach for the project in order to ensure the choice of most suitable methods and the methodological framework. Furthermore, it is argued that the paradigm guiding the research creates 'assumptions about reality that we bring to our work' (Crotty, 1998, p. 1). Through this chapter we will present in depth the choice of framework applied to the research followed by the choice of methods.

2.1. Research paradigm Pragmatism

At first formulated as 'a theory of meaning', pragmatism was developed by C.S.Pierce in the 1870's (Queiroz & Merrel, 2006, p.37). Pragmatism is derived from the Greek word 'pragma', meaning 'action' and was later introduced by William James in the 1907 work 'Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking', in 'an attempt to provide practical solutions to contemporary problems experienced by people A and society' (Giacobbi, Poczwardowski, and Hager, 2005, p.20). Recent views on pragmatism have seen a raised interest on the

paradigm, with some controversial views led by 'neo-pragmatists' philosophers like Richard Rorty. 'The pragmatic revisionists tried to restore the possibility of criticism by putting us back in touch with the world beyond thought and language. They set out to locate more objective understanding of truth in the work of the historical pragmatists, and they make their own new arguments in favor of attention to "how things are anyway" and "getting things right"' (Calcaterra, 2011, p.2).

In his account of the history of pragmatism, James attributes its origins in Charles Peirce's article ‚How to make our ideas clear' from 1878, although mentioning that Peirce did not specifically refer to his concept as the maxim of ‚pragmatism' (James, 1975, p.34). Though the works of James are derived to some extent from Pierce's learnings, several other authors are considered to have influenced his pragmatic theory, such as Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Hume. Here it is worth mentioning the differences between Pierce and James pragmatic approach. Dewey mentions peirce's influence was Kantiansm and a focus on theoretical sciences, whereas James formed under a British empiricism tradition and had a strong interest in psychology. For the purpose of this research, we are not going to elaborate on this debate due to time and space limitations.

As a social research paradigm of research, pragmatism is derived from the works of Pierce, Dewey, James and Mead, followed by the more recent studies by Rorty and Cherryholmes (Creswell, 2003). The main focus of pragmatism is action centered research, together with a emphasis on real-life problems and the application of mixed methods. Such approach leads to a broader understanding of the project. Taking into consideration philosophical assumptions that precede it, pragmatism is merging elements from these rather than opposing them, as it aims 'not to find truth or reality, […], but to facilitate human problem solving (Powel, 2001, cited in Pansiri, 2006).

Traditionally, Pragmatists aim not to engage in debate regarding the validity of constructivist or positivistic philosophical claims neither they are concerned with finding the truth, rather being concerned with solving practical real-life problems: 'the mission of

pragmatism is to bring philosophy into relation to real life and action. So far, from regarding thought as a self centered, self enclosed activity, pragmatism exists upon replacing it in its context among other functions of life, and in measuring its value by its effect upon them (Skowronski, 2015, p.23).

In connection to the tourism sector, pragmatism found its relevance in the conduction of the research utilizing mixed-methods approach aiming to reveal practical solution for the challenges social science researchers encounter in this field (Pansiri, 2006).

To a certain extent, pragmatism and its use of mixed method approach provides an answer to what Bryman 2008 refers to as the 'paradigm wars'. There has been much debate in the literature as to the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research, both from an epistemological standpoint, with regards to 'the issue of desirability of a natural scientific programme for social research', and from an ontological one, regarding 'contrast is often drawn up in terms of a contrast between objectivist and constructionist accounts of the nature of society' (Bryman, 2008, p.2).

Given the above theoretical considerations we are going to continue by making a case for applying pragmatism to our study. As we are dealing with a real life problem - marketing efforts of Efteling amusement park - there is a call for research that will help to answer the questions guiding this study and provide answers that can influence the shape of the future marketing actions of the destination: 'Pragmatism presents a very practical and applied research philosophy that is oriented towards action' (Rorty 1989 cited in Klenke 2016, p.23).

To gain a broad understanding of our problem we use a mix of methods both qualitative and quantitative and critically discuss the implications of our case. Our research approach is not predefined by a set of methods or assumptions, but we are guided by our case in deciding upon the relevant methods. For example, to gain an insight into consumer's perspective, we are not only using a survey but supporting our study with data extracted from the online environment – Facebook page.

2.2. Research design

It is argued by the social science researchers that there are three ways of reasoning while conducting a research: deductive, abductive and inductive (King & Horrocks 2010). The deductive reasoning is consistent with a particular rule that is applied through the research (Aliseda 2006, p.55). It is furthermore characterized by the following two aspects: certainty and monotonicity (ibid.). On the contrary there are however 'other types of formal non-classical reasoning, which albeit their lack of complete certainty and monotonicity, are nevertheless rigorous forms of reasoning with logical properties of their own' (ibid. p.56). As opposed to deductive reasoning, Inductive and abductive reasoning are considered as less certain due to the fact that conclusions are not being drawn from general premises (ibid.). Gathering data is the focal point of the inductive research with the purpose of setting patterns and hypotheses as a starting point for the study (Feeney & Heit 2007). Moreover, despite all the elements being predefined and theoretical framework being agreed upon the result and conclusion cannot be treated as the ultimate answer to the research question (Hatch & Hatch 2006). At last, abductive reasoning, firstly introduced by Peirce 'begins with an incomplete set of observations and proceeds to the likest possible explanation for the set' (www.butte.edu). In this line of thought, the abductive reasoning is characterized by 'reasoning from the given data to a hypothesis that explains the data (Walton 2005, p. 13).

Considering that our research study is based on identifying patterns from qualitative data which are supported by quantitative survey, we can argue that no set of rules has been applied to begin in the early stages of research. Furthermore, our problem formulation is not based on any pre defined assumptions about Efteling social media but is rather guided by the context gaining a broad understanding of the online setting. As the inductive approach is argued to focus on the generation of a new theory emerging from the data (DeborahGabriel.com) our study is contributing to concept of using social

media for tourism marketing which is still an underdeveloped field of research. Therefore, the inductive reasoning is relevant to our project.

2.3 Epistemology and ontology

In his book 'Qualitative Inquiry and research Design', Creswell (2003) describes ontology as the nature of reality and epistemology as the theory of knowledge, or 'how researchers know what they know' (p.5), relating to the research as a process underpinned by 'making knowledge claims' which 'might be called paradigms' (ibid, p.6). In regards to the pragmatic framework used in our paper, it is worth mentioning this approach to research is not concerned with any one 'system of philosophy or reality', while 'truth is what works at the time', letting the problem guide the framework they will use. Furthermore, combining different sets of methods provides a better understanding of the research problem.

Ontology is described in the literature as 'an explicit specification of conceptualization' (Gruber 1993 cited in Kameas et al 2006, p. 4), and is further argued to be 'the branch of metaphysics concerned with what exists, with being and reality…' (Adams St.Pierre, in Denzin & Lincoln, p.615). Considering the pragmatism being the framework for this project, we are not implementing a set of methodological rules and are rather being guided by the problem statement. Therefore, we do not seek to find 'the truth' about our research answers, but rather to find a solution to a real life problem. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of pragmatism, where it is argued for the changeability of the truth depending on the practical circumstances (Müller 2010, Creswell, 2003).

2.4 Mixed methods approach

Mixed methods approach is described in the literature as a approach where both qualitative and quantitative data is gathered to answer the research question (Hesse-Biber 2010), where the 'combination of methods involves the collection, analysis and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in a single research study' (Hesse-

Biber 2010, p.3). As we are combining both the company's and the consumer's perspective a mixed set of methods is used for the present study, qualitative netnographic analysis and quantitative survey. The application of the mixed methods within the research allows for complex analysis of a collected data 'Mixed methods is a rich field for the combination of data because with this design ''words, pictures and narrative can be used to add meaning to numbers'' ' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004, cited in Hesse-Biber 2010, p. 3). The textuals gathered through netnographic research combined with the visual elements of the park and the statistic data collected through the survey allows us to explore a multidimensional aspect of the project, which is achieved by taking into consideration both the company's and the customers perspective to answer our research questions.

Within the mixed methods approach the triangulation of methods can be distinguished. Triangulation of methods refers to the approach, where while using 'more than one method while studying the same research question in order to '' examine the same dimension of a research problem'' '(Jick 1979, p. 602 cited in Hesse-Biber 2010, p.3). As previously mentioned in our problem statement will be investigated the social media marketing strategy and its key elements via a multi-methods approach in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the digital scape. Starting from collecting data through the netnography in order to investigate the online marketing strategy undertaken by Efteling we continue by presenting the effect on the target audience.

Triangulation research offers the opportunity to validate research findings 'the goals of triangulation are to confirm data and ensure their completeness' (Begley 1996, cited in Taylor 2006). This concept is reflected in the project by the utilization of various research methods such as survey, interview and online data including Textual and visual elements. The gathered data allow us not only to investigate Efteling as a tourism destination from the business perspective but also gain the insight in the consumer approach leading to a broader understanding of the marketing efforts.

There are four types of triangulation identified that can be discussed in the context of this project:

- First type - data triangulation - refers to the use to different types of sources as opposed to the use of different types of data. Denzin is mentioned as an advocate for studying a problem at different dates, places and from different persons which is associated with Glaser and Strauss concept of theoretical sampling (Flick 2017, p.183).

- Second type - investigator triangulation, several researchers have the advantage of avoiding bias towards the study. As our research was undertaken by a team of two researchers, a critical discussion was possible upon deciding on the approach of this study.

- Third type of triangulation - theory triangulation - based on the Denzin's systematology refers to the open approach towards data where multiple perspectives are taken under consideration: 'various theoretical points of view could be placed side by side to assess their utility and power' (1989 p. 239-240 cited in Flick 2017, p. 183). Through the process of research various theories were applied to ensure complex understanding of the problem statement.

- The fourth type - methodological triangulation is divided in two subtypes: within-method and between method triangulation. Referring to the first type, this applies to our study as within analyzing data obtained from netnography we not only followed the steps proposed by Kozinet (1999,2002,2010,2015) but we also supplement with semiotic interpretation of our visual and textual information (ibid).

These four types of triangulation are essential in order to ensure an in depth approach to our study in relation to the pragmatic perspective.

2.5 Qualitative vs. quantitative

Qualitative research is defined as method 'involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter' (Murray 2003, p. 1). It is further argued, that the qualitative approach towards the research focuses on the implementation of the meaning 'natural setting, attempting to make sense of [it], or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them' (ibid.). On the other hand, quantitative research is focused on utilizing numerical and statistical methods (ibid.). Traditionally, quantitative research has been associated with positivism while qualitative studies were related to an interpretivist or constructionist approach (Bryman, 2008). Pragmatism focuses on the importance of the case first and foremost, rather than deciding upon a rigorous set of methods beforehand: 'Instead of methods being important, the problem is most important, and researchers use all approaches to understand the problem' (Creswell, 2003, p.13). Although quantitative and qualitative research are different in terms of the approach scholars argue that combining these two in the study can lead to gaining an in-depth understanding of the investigated problem (Murray 2003, Belk 2006) : 'Mixed-method research that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques is essential for many complex research projects whose goals require analysts to draw on the orientations and characteristic strengths of both traditions' (Goertz & Mahoney 2012, p.3). Putting in to the research context our theoretical assumptions, our mixed set of methods can be divided into qualitative approach by the semiotic and netnographic analysis followed by the interview. On the other hand, quantitative research refers to the use of the consumer survey that investigates the online community of Efteling theme park. This complex approach calls for an extensive data interpretation that can cause potential challenges for the researcher within the data organization, interpretation and availability of the resources (further elaborated in the chapter 6. Limitations and ethics) it aligns with the pragmatic approach, as it '... supports the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study' (Klenke 2016 p. 22).

Briefly taking note of the traditional social science debate between quantitative and qualitative research, where the first is 'concerned with discovering facts about social

phenomena' within a 'fixed measurable reality', while the latter is rather focused on 'understanding human behavior' within 'a dynamic negotiated reality' (Minchiello et al., p.5), it is worth mentioning the approach of 'methodological pluralism', where the relevance of methods is assessed 'in terms of how appropriately it tackles the research on hand' (Payne &Payne, 2011,p.149) arguing for the importance of considering the research question first and foremost.

As new ways of conducting research are emerging the borders between the two traditional types of research are becoming increasingly blurry. For example we note the new research studies in the tourism sector related to mobilities argue for the need of merging the approaches: 'both qualitative and quantitative methods need to see tourism over the totality […] as well as an individual's course of interaction. Without such an approach we are forever doomed to see tourism effects only at the destination scale rather than as. A part of broader understanding of mobility (Burns & Novelli 2008 p. 24).

The implementation of the qualitative and quantitative research within this paper aimed to obtain a multidimensional overview of the problem, from company and consumer perspective. The relationship between pragmatism and qualitative approach is important to acknowledge as they are often seen as interdependent in the literature: 'For qualitative inquiry, pragmatism or the pragmatic outlook is important for at least two reasons: (1) Pragmatism is a philosophical source of symbolic interactionism [...], (2) the contemporary pragmatic outlook comprises a set of ideas that are often appealed to in defending qualitative inquiry as a viable option in the social sciences' (Schwandt 2007, p. 240)

Moreover, the table (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2016) highlights the diversity of methods that are used in a pragmatic approach by adapting to the context of the research. In addition, we can observe the contrast with other existing philosophical frameworks of research that may have a more strict impact on the set of methods employed, for example positivism is traditionally associated with quantitative methods and interpretivism associated with mainly qualitative methods. Although this is not the object

of the study, it is worth mentioning of different aspects of the choice of research methodology and adapting the most relevant methods.

Table 1. Paradigms of social research, Mackenzie and Knipe, 2016

Paradigm	Methods (primarily)	Data collection tools (examples)
Positivist/ Postpositivist	Quantitative. "Although qualitative methods can be used within this paradigm, quantitative methods tend to be predominant . . ." (Mertens, 2005, p. 12)	Experiments Quasi-experiments Tests Scales
Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Qualitative methods predominate although quantitative methods may also be utilised.	Interviews Observations Document reviews Visual data analysis
Transformative	Qualitative methods with quantitative and mixed methods. *Contextual and historical factors described, especially as they relate to oppression* (Mertens, 2005, p. 9)	Diverse range of tools - particular need to avoid discrimination. Eg: sexism, racism, and homophobia.
Pragmatic	Qualitative and/or quantitative methods may be employed. Methods are matched to the specific questions and purpose of the research.	May include tools from both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Eg Interviews, observations and testing and experiments.

2.6 Data validity and reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985)have developed four criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research (cited in ibid., p.4-6): 14

1. Credibility, refers to the objectivity of the research, the 'separation between the researcher and their subject'(p.4). This was achieved by being guided by the case rather than restricting the research by the theory, making adjustments along the project. For example, the initial interviews with consumers were replaced by an online survey due to limitations. However following the pragmatist framework allowed us to adapt the approach to the necessary changes and be guided by a flexible set of methods and theories.

2. Transferability, 'the analytical transfer of theoretical propositions to other objects (people, settings, phenomena, etc.)', at the same time considering the qualitative aspect of the research (p.5). Despite the project analyzing the case of

Efteling, the findings can serve as a guideline for using social media for destination marketing as it is still considerably under researched field. This is possible as we have attempted to do a most thorough analysis of our collected data, taking into account both the theoretical framework and the methodology. As in our study, we have taken a passive approach to the research. We strived to maintain objectivity to the best extend by applying the theoretical framework rather than our own experience.

3. Dependability, 'the correspondence between the data recorded by the researcher and what actually occurred in the setting' (p.5). Dependability has been applied by designing the survey in a consumer-focused way with precise questions. In addition, the multitudes of methods we used throughout the research support each other and help us provide more accurate description of our findings.

4. Confirmability, ensures an unbiased approach 'by looking for a variety of explanations about the phenomenon[…], reporting theoretically meaningful variables, and giving others access to factual data[…]from the empirical material'(p.5). Confirmability is applied to the project by the revision of gathered data numerous times followed by the dynamic changes within the analysis and the interpretation. The above mentioned ways to measure trustworthiness will be assessed in our research data findings. Lastly, the limitations and other ethical aspects are elaborated upon in the chapter 6. Limitations and ethics.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) discuss validity with regards to mixed method research, focusing on the design and the interpretation stage of research: design quality and interpretive rigor. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2004) on the other hand focus on data analysis. Drawing on these examples, Creswell and Clark (2011) have put together a set of recommendations for researchers to ensure validity over all the stages involved in a study:

1. If undertaking a mixed study with both qualitative and quantitative research, focus must be on considering validity for each of the two types of research. As mentioned above, in our study we will apply the validity criteria for qualitative and quantitative research alike. For example, in terms of data collection we ensured we selected the appropriate target individuals, the UK audience on the official Facebook page. In addition, samples from each type of data aim to gather the same type of information to gain an in depth understanding of the Efteling marketing strategy applied on the Facebook page.

2. Strategies that address validity issues should be employed for data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that regard the merging of qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study and the combined conclusions that result from these (Creswell, Clark ,2011, p.242). This is reflected in terms of data analysis by choosing the corresponding data to illustrate the interpretive findings.

3. Methods

In this chapter we would like to elaborate upon the methods used in the project as it is crucial to gain the understanding of the undertaken actions for the analysis.

3.1 Interview

By looking at the project from a multidimensional perspective (companies and consumer) we strive to use a broad spectrum of methods that would allow us to get a full understanding of the research problem. This is reflected by the usage of a mix of qualitative and quantitative research. In what concerns the qualitative part of our research, we turned towards using an interview that illustrates the brand identity and positioning of Efteling described in 5.1 and 5.2. Researchers argue for the value of the interview as a qualitative method that claims 'to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings, interviewing has 'usually' been thought of as a key factor in research design' (Weiss, 1994). It is further argued by

Kvale (1996) that in most cases of events which are 'not often directly 'observable', 'talking to people would be one of the most effective methods for attaining and exploring such constructs'(Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 39-40). In order to gain an insight to the marketing strategy it was useful to have a in depth conversation with A.B., social media manager of Efteling for the UK market. Thanks to the interview, we had the ability to moderate the question to ensure gathering the most relevant data, rather than being limited by the pre-defined set of questions. Interviews, unlike other methods, give the researcher the opportunity to gather in-depth information and gain awareness of any potential emerging topics of research: 'More specifically, as interviews are interactive, interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into any emerging topics' (ibid.).

One recognized type of interview is the in-depth interview, characterized by researchers as 'a conversation between equals, rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange' (Taylor, Bogdan, 1984, p.77) As previously mentioned, the interview structured as a conversation allows for approaching different perspectives and exploring a multitude of angles of the research problem, which was implemented in the case of interview with A.B. Recent studies argue for the transformation of the interview, as the process becomes more 'interactionally sensitive and constructive perspective, featuring the active narrative of the enterprise' (Gubrium & Holstein 2012, p.27). For instance, our interview with the social media manager allowed us not only to gain insight into the communication campaign but also to analyze the meanings behind the Facebook marketing efforts.

There are 4 types of interviews identified in social science research (Alshenqeeti, 2014):

The first is the structured interview, whose key feature is that it is mostly organized around a set of predetermined direct questions that require immediate, mostly 'yes' or 'no' type, responses, which is more similar to quantitative research.

The second type is the open-ended (unstructured) interview. Gubrium & Holstein (2002) point out that, 'unlike the structured interview, this kind of interviewing is an open situation through which a greater flexibility and freedom is offered to both sides of the participants' (ibid, p.40).

Third, is the semi-structured interview, which is a more flexible version of the structured interview as "it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.88).

The fourth type of interview is the focus group interviewing which is, according to Barbour & Schostak (2005),'…an interviewing technique in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being 'focused' on a given topic' (p. 46).

Following this categorisation we can argue that we use a semi-structured interview with the social media manager of Efteling, particularly because of the specific questions related to the Facebook advertising campaign that provide the structured part of the interview.

3.2 Survey

Traditionally, surveys are characteristic of quantitative research. In case of this project we have applied survey as a complementary method to netnography research to obtain broader understanding of the researched problem. There are several types of survey: face-to-face interviewer surveys, telephone and internet surveys (Interviewing; Telephone and Computer-assisted Polling; and Internet Polling); and self-completion surveys (Questionnaires) (Payne & Payne, 2004, p.219) . However, all the types of surveys are guided by the same principles 'Theories and ideas need to be expressed in terms of operational definitions, by means of which data can be collected.

Operationalisation begins as an intellectual process, leading to draft measurements and questions.' (Payne & Payne, 2004, p.219).

For the purpose of this project the survey was conducted online within the UK based Efteling visitors that left the comment/review on Efteling's Facebook page. As we are investigating a particular market it was essential to gain an overview of the consumer perception as based on the branding model elaborated in chapter 4.2. As the online environment is our main source of data collection we decided upon using a survey conducted online. The traditional way of conducting quantitative research has changed due to the latest technology development. In line with the advancement of social media, more recently the online has shaped the way social research is conducted 'Online research practice requires an epistemology and ontology of research that stresses "the hybrid and unfinished character of cyberspace" (Teli, Francesco, & Hakken, 2007, p.188 in James, Busher). Further on, it is becoming increasingly interesting for the marketing study to engage with the emerging online communities and draw on information gathered from online platforms as a data source '[...] utilize online communities and their conversations as part of the process of production, either as a form of marketing research' (Kozinets 2010, p. 175). Survey in the case on this project was the only available way to gain direct contact with the UK based Efteling visitors, as it would be very time consuming and difficult to conduct the physical interview at the location selecting only British/UK located visitors. Therefore, turning towards the digital environment allowed for gathering quantitative data. Moreover, online survey was limited by the Facebook settings further elaborated in the chapter 6. Limitations and ethics.

Social surveys involve three characteristics (Payne & Payne, 2004, p.219):

1. The data is collected in a standardized way from a sample of respondents - in the case of this project the sampling was applied to the Facebook page as this was the main focus of the research;

2. The data is codified - this step was achieved by the usage of Kwiksurveys platform, further explained in the chapter 3.3.4.4 Kwiksurveys. This platform was used to conduct the survey and generates the respective tables and graphs based on the gathered answers therefore, there was no need for an external tool to codify the data;

3. The data is resulting in quantitative information - with the usage of Kwiksurveys platform the data was categorized to support the qualitative data. As previously mentioned, the survey platform is equipped in the set of tools generating and organizing the findings, which were used as a basis of our third chapter of analysis 'brand image'.

The basic steps in the survey process (see Figure 1.1) are the same for all types of surveys. The process begins with defining the study's goals and objectives and continues with a literature review and consultation with experts.

The steps of a survey applied to this project are based on Sue & Ritter (2012, p.13):

1. Define survey objectives or hypothesis, conduct literature review, consult with subject matter experts, conduct preliminary research - as the survey objective was to gather the insight on the key messages of Efteling Facebook page, we applied a set of questions that would support the findings. Furthermore, the questions backed by the theoretical framework presented in the chapter 3.2.

2. Choose survey method: email, mobile, website - next step was determined by the focus of the project - Efteling Facebook page, therefore, there was no further consideration about the choice of channels.

3. Evaluate sampling options: probability, nonprobability - the target group for the survey were the active Facebook participants who were further contacted by the messenger tool. This is explained in details in chapter 5.3.2 Consumer survey.

4. Design and select sample - similarly, as mentioned in point 3, the target group were the Facebook page participants further elaborated in 5.3.2 Consumer survey.

5. Draft questionnaire and invitation - we worked on a set of questions based on the research questions for the project and based on the existing theory where it is argued for higher effectiveness within shorter surveys with a clear structure and easy to understand questions (Rossi et al, 2013).

6. Pretest and revise questionnaire and invitation - before sharing the survey with the target group we have tested it between the researchers to make sure everything was working properly.

7. Launch survey, monitor responses and send reminders - this step was achieved by distributing the survey to Facebook followers of Efteling page and the results were constantly monitored to ensure data validity. However, the survey met several obstacles further elaborated in chapter 5.3.2 Consumer survey and 6. Limitations

8. Prepare report and present findings - last step of the survey was completed by the online platform used for conducting the survey - Kwiksurveys, which also generates the graphs and tables of the findings. This platform is further elaborated in the chapter 3.3.4.4 Kwiksurveys.

The above steps served as a guideline and were applied through the process of creation and application of the online survey. The survey template can be found in the annex 5.

Online surveys have different applications according to the types of research. For example 'An exploratory survey posted to a social networking website may uncover the fact that an organization's customers are unhappy. A descriptive study consisting of an e-mail survey sent to a random selection of customers who made a purchase in the past year might report the type and degree of dissatisfaction. The explanatory research would attempt to understand how different factors are contributing to customer dissatisfaction' (Sue & Ritter, 2012, p.2-3). As we strived for active approach through the study in lines with the paradigm of pragmatism, our study can be argued to follow exploratory research with the online survey corresponding to this type of study. Explanatory position is applied by the efforts to explain the social media campaign of

Efteling Theme Park as a tourism destination and it's implication on the visitor's perspective.

3.3 Netnography

In this chapter we elaborate upon one of our main qualitative research methods, netnography. We are, as well, giving an overview of the theoretical background of netnography followed by an applied perspective to our research context, which relates to marketing studies. Finally we describe the steps undertaken for our planning and data collection with the help of netnography.

Netnography was essential for our study as we deal with a complex array of online data, ranging from textuals such as Facebook reviews, Facebook comments, post captions, to visual elements such as campaign images and videos: '[...] netnographic researchers are not dealing merely with words, but with images, drawings, photography, sound files, edited audiovisuals, presentations, website creations and other digital artifacts' (Kozinets 2010, p. 8).

3.3.1 Literature review

The internet has forever changed the way social interactions take place allowing instant connection with other users, which lead to an astounding 1,94 billion global users worldwide from the recorded 45 million in 1966 (Kozinets, 2010).

Consequently social science research is experiencing a need to adapt to the current context dominated by the rise of social media and the related 'virtual communities' (Chan & Lee, 2010).This new interpretive method is increasingly used in marketing research as the online communities are increasingly recognized as a valid source of data (Pettigrew and Roberts, 2016).

The concept of netnography was firstly defined by Kozinet as a way to research the consumer behavior of the emerging online communities (1998, p.336), the new research method being a response for the digitalization of the research data resources (Kozinets 2010). Further on, netnography was described as a 'specialized form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer-media contingencies of today's social work' (Kozinets 2010, p. 1), with Kozinets linking the two research methods.

The ongoing debate regarding the status of netnography among ethnographic research brings critique such as the 'static word netnography' which arguably showcases the tourists as they present themselves, their 'posted identity' as opposed to traditional ethnographic research which gives a first hand account of tourists behavior (Blichfeldt and Marabese, 2014, p.65).

However, Kozinet proposes the advantage of researching the online environment as an alternative to qualitative interviewing - the central method of gaining information on tourists- stating that the mere fact that a researcher organizes the interviewing context might interfere with the answers provided, simply by raising questions the interviewee had not previously considered. While seeing this stance as 'harsh' on traditional qualitative research, Blichfeldt and Marabese (2014) partly acknowledge his view that 'life posted' by tourists has the benefit of avoiding the potential bias of a research initiated context (p.62). However we agree that netnography is a valuable alternative for qualitative research as the online scape is recognized as a rich source of data.

Moreover, netnography uses information that is publicly available on the Internet and 'provides marketing researchers with a window into naturally occurring behaviors, such as searches for information by and communal word-of-mouth discussion between consumers' (Kozinets, 2002, p.3). Kozinet elaborates on the advantages of netnography as a valuable tool of gathering qualitative information.

Furthermore and particularly relevant to our study are discussions about the links between reciprocity theories and stimulating co-shopping in online communities

theories. Chan and Li argue that virtual communities encourage voluntary behaviors of resource sharing that further impact consumer decision making process. In the case of Efteling, this is supporting of measuring the effectiveness of the social media marketing efforts. Although not the focus of our research, it is worth mentioning the link between the marketing efforts and the consumer decision-making process which ultimately leads to a purchase, concepts which are inseparable. 'For example, consumers who receive socioemotional support from other consumers reciprocate by displaying helpful and discretionary behaviors that enhance the organization's service performance and quality' p.1034. This is interesting to note as an advantage of studying the online community of our business page, information which would not be available anywhere else.

Another criticism relates to employing content analysis traditionally used for media research in online environment, with some researchers tackling ethical considerations such as establishing the lines between 'semi-private communication or public communication' (Langer, Beckman, 2005).

As the online environment is a recognized source for the creation of meaning it allows for analyzing the interaction between the online actors: 'Interactions between online actors can demonstrate meaning in the making, allowing analysis of the nature of the interactions and how consensus is, or is not, achieved' (Sandlin, 2007 cited in Pettigrew and Michele Roberts). The anonymity of the internet is argued to encourage consumer feedback and help confront some of the challenges of more traditional social research methods (ibid.). In relation to the project, gathering the consumer feedback that is available on Facebook would be very difficult to obtain through the traditional interviews due to the limited sources. In addition, the level of audience targeting is also a significant advantage of the project as we are looking specifically at the UK audience. Moreover, netnography allows for access to the extensive data focused on a certain online community, in case of this project - the Efteling theme park Facebook audience, rather than examining every opinion as individual: 'Netnography is not an individualistic approach examining the personal posting of messages on the internet, or their

aggregate' (Kozinets 2010, p. 8). In this way netnography allows to explore different aspects of the investigated topic with the online data being a comprehensive set of data for marketing research.

Similarly to the traditional research methods, there are different types of approaches that can be undertaken by the researchers. Kozinet (2002) distinguishes three main types of netnography based on the level of the involvement (Fig.2)

1. Observational Netnography - where the research is limited to the observation of general digital scapes without any focus;
2. Participant-observational Netnography - where the researcher is observing a particular digital scape to the study of interactions and experiences manifesting through digital communications (Kozinets 1998);
3. Autonetnography - where the researcher uses personal experience and strives to connect it with a broader cultural, political or social meaning understanding;

Determination of which position will be applied through the data gathering process allows the researcher to structure the data collection and narrow down the area of interest. In terms of this project the 'Participant-observational Netnography' was applied. The choice of approach was determined by the fact that we focused on the Efteling Facebook page taking into account all the visual and textual data available with a special focus on the 'experience manifesting' as it refers to the consumer perception of the marketing efforts and the destination.

Figure 2. Types of netnography, Kozinet 2002
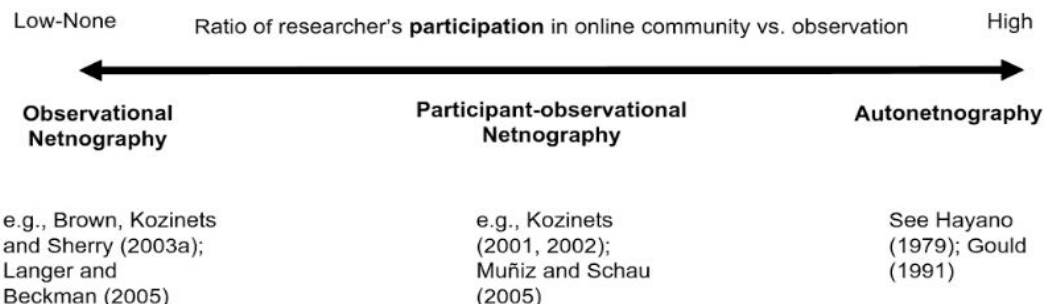
3.3.2 Netnography in marketing research

Netnography is a method used through many different types of study, marketing being one of them. Sandlin argues netnography 'is a helpful research tool for consumers [...] researchers who are interested in capturing and critically examining the [...] learning occurring in informal sites of consumer [...], especially in online communities' (2007, p. 228 cited in Kubacki & Rundle-Thiele 2017 p. 276). Moreover, as Facebook and other online platforms are becoming increasingly popular, it is consequently agreed among researchers that they are very valuable sources of data collection (Rieder 2013, Wilson et al, 2012). The gathered data allows for the consumer insight on the location/brand and can be of a great value while working on the marketing campaign: 'In consumer and marketing studies, we have generally adapted the use of the single term netnography to refer to the approach of ethnography applied to the study of online cultures and communities' (Kozinets 2010, p.6). Furthermore, netnography is argued for being especially useful while dealing with researchers within the marketing field. Upon reviewing methodological innovations, Bengry-Howell et al. (2011) 'found that citations of netnography have mostly occurred within the disciplinary fields of marketing (47%), management (17%) and business (12%) (cited in Kozinets, 2012, p.40)'.

In the case of our project netnography is used to investigate the use of social media as part of the destination marketing strategy of Efteling Holland. As a result we will not only understand how a popular tourist attraction is promoted on the UK market, but how social media plays a part in this attempt. As Kozinets argues that netnography 'can help you understand various contexts that make it possible, the new social forms it advances, and the old forms it replaces'(2015,p.5), we are exploring a new area of research in tourism which relates to the impact of the web 2.0 and social media, namely e-tourism research (Mariani et. Al, 2016, p. 322-323).

3.3.3 Netnography planning and data collection

Kozinets (2002, 2006, 2010) proposes several steps of conducting netnography: Entrée, Data collection and Analysis, Providing Trustworthy Interpretation, Research Ethics and Member Checks that we would like to elaborate upon in the context of this project.

1. Entrée - 'includes the formulation of research questions and identification of an appropriate online community for study' (Bowler 2010, p. 1272). For our research the online Facebook community was chosen due to inside access to the platform. In addition, it is the only social media platform designated to the UK market which is the focus of this project.

2. Data collection and Analysis - information about the online community and its members and observation of the creation of meaning in the online scape. This information will be further detailed in 3.3.4 Online tools for data collection.

3. Providing Trustworthy Interpretation - this step was achieved by the implementation of the Pierce's semiotic model, using online tools to measure word frequency in an attempt to identify key messages within the text.

4. Research Ethics and Member checks - research ethics are further elaborated upon in the 6. Limitations and ethics. Member checks are not relevant in our case, as due to the limited time resources it was not our focus to ask for feedback from the efteling representatives or consumers. However, it can be an opportunity to offer the findings of this project as advice for the future marketing strategy of Efteling.

### 3.3.4 Online tools for data collection and research

As the project is based on the online scape we used a number of online tools for data collection and organization. In this chapter we elaborate on each of the tool/platform used in order to make the reader aware of the complexities involved in the research process.

3.3.4.1 Facepager

For the data collection process we used Facepager, which is a tool made for fetching public available data from Facebook, Twitter and other JSON-based APIs. JSON-vased APIs is ' an open-standard file format that uses human-readable text to transmit data objects consisting of attribute–value pairs and array data types' (Crockford 2009). Usage of the Facebook API refers to the gathering of data available for public. Thanks to the usage of such tool, the data collection process can be done faster and more efficient, at the same time securing no data is left out. Moreover, Facepager allowing for the export to excel file gave us the opportunity to sort and organize the date in the most relevant way for this paper.

In order to fetch the data with the usage of Facepager we took the following steps:

1. Generation of the token - token is an online address of the page and is used to create a node. Token can be created manually or retrieved through already available platform, which in this case was https://findmyfbid.com
2. Creation of the node with Facebook ID - after the downloading of the Facepager, we have created a node by adding a note with the token. This steps informs the interface where the data will be gathered from
3. Choice of the data - Facepager offers a wide range of data to choice such as page comments, likes, shares etc within different areas - page, users, group and so on. After deciding which data is of interest we proceeded with the fetching process
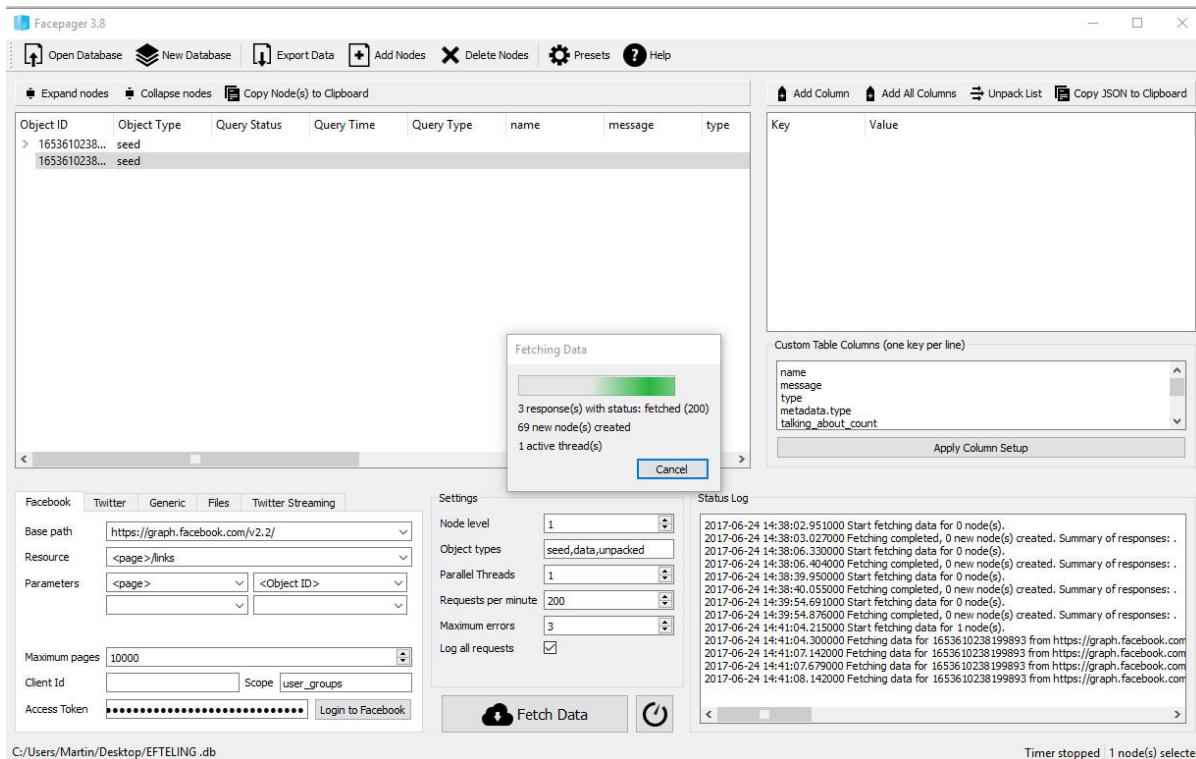
4. Gathering results - the results are afterwards displayed in the main field. To have a further overview, the data can be exported in CVS file to excel which allows for organization of the data

3.3.4.2 Netwizz

Netwizz, another tool used in the gathering data process, is a Facebook application created by Bernard Rieder from the University of Amsterdam, allowing for scraping the Facebook data from the desired source. Although the principal between Facepager and Netwizz is the same, Netwizz allows for the insight as per the origins of the visitors of the page. This is especially interesting, since we are investigating the UK Facebook page and we wanted to see whether the marketing efforts were reflected in the audience. The usage of Netwizz is fairly easy, all necessary steps include:

1. Login to the Facebook profile and downloading the application within Facebook
2. Generation of the Facebook profile ID same as in case of Facepager
3. Choice of data to gather from the profile

4. Export of data to Excel

3.3.4.3 Wordcounter

Another online tool that was used in the project was wordcounter (http://www.wordcounter.com). This platform allows for listing the most frequent words used within the designated text and generates a list, which can be seen in the analysis chapter of the project. After extracting the data from Facebook within the respective areas (comments, reviews, textual updates) we have prepared 3 separate files and each of them was analyzed with the wordcounter tool.

3.3.4.4 Kwiksurveys

After gathering the data from Facebook we decided upon distribution of the survey (prepared with the Kwiksurveys platform (https://kwiksurveys.com) to the UK visitors of the Efteling park based on the available contact information in the review section of the page. We have prepared the survey with supplementary questions that would allow us for getting an insight into the Efteling visitors. The survey was sent via a private message (as it was not possible to have it posted on the web page due to the parks regulations). We have gathered the total of 15 respondents. The limited number of responses was conditioned by the Facebook settings where the message from other user than from the 'friends' circle is automatically sent to the 'other inbox' (this is further explained in the limitations chapter). It is worth to mention, that Kwiksurveys is generating graphs based on the gathered data therefore, the usage of such online tool is helpful in the process of data systematization and organization.

3.3.5 Coding

Coding of the qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of analysis was guided by the six steps developed by Kozinets (2010) which include the following:

1. Coding - refers to the process categorizing the designated phenomenon. For example, in the case of the Facebook visuals, we identified 3 main themes, each with corresponding posts.

2. Noting - reviewing selected data to reassess established categories. In case if this project, this step refers to the process of reviewing images assigned to each category.

3. Abstracting and comparing - identifying patterns and correlating sequences of analysis. For example we are comparing and contrasting the most frequent words and phrases from Facebook posts with the interview information, to discover the corresponding themes between the brand identity and brand positioning.

4. Checking and refinement - Kozinets proposes to 'return to the field to check and refine existing understanding of patterns, differences and common' (2010). In our case we have reviewed the online environment multiple times to ensure the most accurate outcome.

5. Generalizing - elaborating a set of generalizations within the data, such as the themes identified from the visual/textual posts, correlated with the word frequency data findings.

6. Theorizing - construct new theory from the findings. Based on the concepts used, we explore current gaps in research such as the tourism social media marketing and challenges within theory, such as applying general branding concepts to the niche emerging field of destination branding.

Due to the complexity of the project and numerous data sources (interview, survey, FB visuals and textuals) we have decided upon the following data coding system:

1. Visuals - all visual uploads of the Efteling Facebook page were divided into the respective themes (family, fairytale and attractions). Upon the division of the pictures between the themes we have randomly chosen 4 for each of the categories and coded them in the following way

Image 1-12 (category 1-3; number of image in the category 1-4, and date DD/MM/YYYY

For example 1st image from the 1st category is coded in the following way:

Image 1 (1;1, 21/06/2017)

2. Interview: was coded in the following way (Q1-44) indicating the number of question and (A1-44) indicating the number of answer for the respective question.

3. Most frequent words - from both, companies and customers side are organized with the wordcounter tool, further elaborated in the chapter 3.3.4.3 Wordcounter and are organized from the most to the least frequent words.

4. Survey - results from the conducted survey are described in the following way
   Survey + Question + Number of the question + corresponding graph.
   For example, graph 1 from the survey is described as SQ1

5. Facebook reviews and comments are coded accordingly to the table which can be found in the Annex 3- Consumer Feedback.

4. Theory
4.1 Destination marketing and branding

In the past few decades' destinations have turned to concepts of marketing and branding as a means to attract visitors and investors alike, arguing for the growing importance of place marketing and place branding (Gertner, 2011).

Simon Anholt's 1998 article coining the idea of 'nation brands' is considered a key point in marking the differences between place marketing and place branding. Between 1990 and 2009, Gertner (2011) identified over 260 articles containing keywords related to the aforementioned disciplines (p.97). Although the concepts were born from the idea of

'nation branding' there is a call for research differentiation among the several types of 'places' identified in the literature, such as cities, festivals, provinces, islands, etc. In the case of our project we can argue that the marketing of Efteling has a close relation to nation branding and city branding aspects as it is officially positioned as 'Holland's hidden gem', not far from Amsterdam, which will be further explored in our research.

Upon exploring existing studies in this emerging field, Gertner assessed that 'branding' and 'image' are dominant concepts over 'marketing' (2011, p.97). Among the criticism related to place marketing and place branding as a stand alone discipline, Gertner mentions the predominance of qualitative and descriptive, without referring to any theoretical background or discussing further opportunities for research (2011, p.101).

Marketing a destination is influenced by a range of factors that are correlated with the success of a campaign, one of them being an integrated marketing approach: 'Benefits of an integrated approach are significant, including a) increased efficiency in developing materials […] b) increased effectiveness of communications, given their consistent presentation in the marketplace' (Lee & Kotler, 2016, p.57). Scholars attribute features such as message reliability to a series of elements, arguing for 'a need for coordination between several components, such as the place's reality, the desired image, place symbols, slogans, logos and visual language' (Avraham, 2014, p.175).

In terms of challenges identified in developing the destination marketing strategy of Efteling, we refer to Avraham's discussion on spinning less familiarity into an asset. As places new to the global map face difficult competition from mass tourism to already established places, some have used unfamiliarity as their advantage. This was the case of Efteling, described as 'Holland's hidden gem', a strategy that turns the uniqueness and remoteness of the destination into a positive aspect (Avraham, 2014, p.182). In this case, 'hidden' gains a connotation of exclusivity, becoming a means to stand apart from the competition and differentiating the destination in the marketplace.

Similarly to traditional branding, place branding originated in the United States with activities focused on 'creating differentiation and preference' (Hankinson, p.303), a process which entailed marketing communications and advertising. Early literature beginning with the 70s was based on two coordinates: urban image, derived from urban planning and policy and destination image, derived from tourism perspectives (Hankinson, ibid.).

Place branding has evolved from place marketing, due to the increasing need to look at places as brands, as places saw the need to build a positive brand image to stay competitive (Govers, 2011). An important consideration which has an impact on building a brand strategy is the overarching umbrella brand as opposed to place branding, an analogy derived from marketing theory which can relate to corporate brand and product brands (Anholt, cited in Govers, 2011). Therefore places branding viewed from a marketing perspective is related to 'a brand extension strategy' (Govers, 2011, p.228). The issue of destination image is also addressed when discussing place branding, as according to Govers, this concept is linked to reputation and the overall reputation of a specific place. Therefore issues like a negative image or safety concerns will be ineffectively addressed by a marketing communication campaign, but rather reputation is linked to 'strategy, substance and symbolic actions'. A similar stance is adopted by Hankison in mentioning how services branding or the role of services within a destination factors in on the tourists decision making process (Hankinson, p.305). Although this is not the main focus of our research, marketing efforts are constantly linked to a successful campaign that involves a call to action resolving in purchasing the product or service, or in this case attracting the visitors to the destination.

Concepts such as competitive identity are also related to place branding, Govers (2011, p.230) arguing that 'Building brand equity – that is, name awareness, image and loyalty – therefore has to start from an overarching strategy and policy that is supply driven, looking at competitive identity'. This is an all-encompassing approach that illustrates the difference between place marketing and place branding (Govers 2011, p.230). The two concepts are ultimately interlinked as place branding is a result of marketing efforts

which can be noticed in terms of this project analyzing the marketing efforts of Efteling amusement park.

Destination marketing is now acknowledged as a distinct paradigm in tourism research, as a result of the globalization and growing competition in the tourism industry (Pike and Page 2014, p.202). Researchers agree as to the extent of differentiation between destination and place marketing, the latter involving a multitude of aspects such as economic, historical or cultural, however agree on the overlapping of the two disciplines (Pike and Page 2014, Govers 2011).

An important consideration as to the importance of destination marketing in the overarching place branding strategy is the destination competitiveness, which applies in the case of Efteling. As the UK market is familiar to either local or more well known European theme parks such as Disneyland. Pike and Page review the key factors that influence a sustained destination competitiveness: '1) resources representing sources of comparative advantage, and 2) effective destination management, most elements of which the DMO has no control' (2014, p.209).

Considering the above, destination branding initiatives have been recognized as a result of the increased market competitiveness, in the attempt for DMOs to achieve differentiation (Pike and Page 2014). Debate is still ongoing amongst researchers as to whether consumers regard destinations as brands and the destination branding process is arguably far more complex traditional branding. In fact, Pike and Page argue there is a wide research gap in what concerns connecting destination branding with general product branding, despite research initiatives regarding destinations (ibid.).

Although destination branding carries wider significance than traditional branding processes, a definition of branding is nonetheless derived from a marketing framework of Blain (2005): 'Destination branding is the set of marketing activities (1) that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) that consistently convey the expectation of a

memorable travel experience; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk.' (Cited in Pike and Page 2014, p.211).

Worth reviewing from the wider product branding literature is the brand positioning model of Aaker (1991), which has been applied in the case of Efteling. This consists of: 'brand identity, the image aspired to in the marketplace for the brand; brand image, which is the actual image held of the brand by consumers; and, brand positioning, which represents the marketing communication attempts to achieve congruence between the brand identity and brand image' (Pike and Page 2014, p.211). The application of this model has been reviewed in the analysis part (chapter 5. Analysis), following Efteling marketing efforts on the UK market.

Derived from this, Cai(2002) described destination brand identity as the marketplace perception of a destination, considering umbrella brands such as nations and regions influence on identity.

4.2 Aaker branding model

Aaker, known as the 'father of branding' explains the importance of branding for marketing processes, both as a driver for marketing processes and for business strategy. Among his branding principles, he highlights the importance of brand awareness, an 'often undervalued asset', in terms of it being the driver of perceptions, liking and even behavior: 'brand awareness can be a signal of success, commitment and substance' (Aaker 1991, p.10). Another criteria Aaker states as essential are brand associations, which consist of 'anything that connects the customer with the brand' (ibid.). According to the author, they can be the basis for consumer relationship as well as influence the buying process. At the forefront of the branding process is brand vision, a key coordinate of 'the aspiration image of the brand'. This is also known in literature as brand identity (as previously used by Aaker) or brand values and is linked to driving the perception of both customers and stakeholders about what the brand stands for

(ibid.). This element is further acknowledged as a factor of influence in strategic planning efforts and drives the brand building efforts of the marketing program (Aaker 1991, p.25)

Aaker's most famous model based on the three above mentioned elements serves as a guideline for our data interpretation. Moreover, Aaker argues for the need of enforcing the brand identity through brand positioning exercises more so after the rise of technological developments.This is important due to the emphasis relying on the online environment for destination marketing which is reflected in the Efteling marketing efforts.

Figure 3. Aaker's branding model, 1991
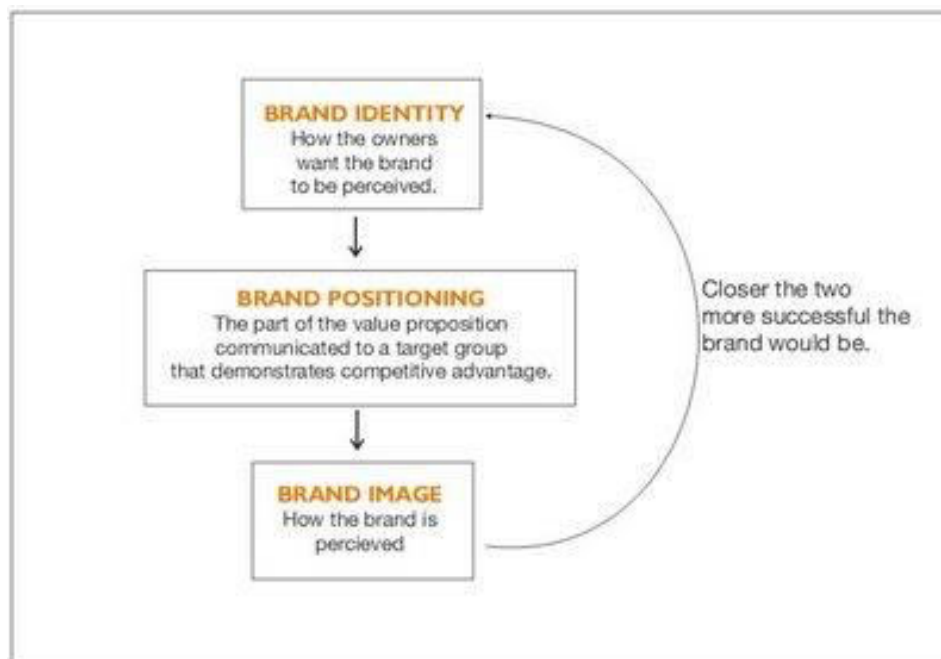
Studies argue for the importance of overall business factors of competitiveness in measuring destination success (Enright, Newton, 2004), closely correlated with destination image research. The author argues for a multitude of factors that determine destination competitiveness, among which destination management with its core focus

on destination marketing: 'Whilst the most researched aspect of management is destination marketing, the authors argue that a much wider set of management activities should be considered, including services, organization and the maintenance of the key tourism resources and attractors'(Enright and newton, p.778). The findings of our research reflect the importance of all the factors involved in the marketing and branding process, as they are intertwined and interdependent (which is further elaborated in the chapter 5. Analysis).

4.3 Social media in tourism

Social media in tourism, although playing a significant role for more than a decade now, are still lacking a comprehensive research within this field (Mariani et al, 2016). Web 2.0 (blogs, social media platforms and pages allowing for reviewing the products such as TripAdvisor) reshaped the communication within the online platforms from being just an informative space to a fully responsive and active scape, where users have the opportunity to actively participate in the destination's image: 'In social media, the travellers co-produce and share a huge amount of information and knowledge, namely user generated content' (Sigala et al. 2012, p. 2). The user generated content is nowadays more valued by a number of social media platforms users, as it provides 'unfiltered' reviews based solely on the experience of the individual at the destination (ibid.). This increasing potential was also recognized among scholars arguing for the need of adjustments within the marketing efforts and the perception of social media: 'If we accept that social media are playing an increasingly important role as information source for travelers, we can realize the great potential' (Xiang and Gretzel 2010 in Sigala et al. 2012, p. 12). It is further acknowledged by the World Tourism Organization which has stated that 'the key of success in internet is the quick identification of consumer needs, direct communication, comprehensive presentation, customization and updating the information' (Sahin & Segun 2015, p. 775). This can be achieved by constant monitoring of the social media outlets and active participation in the channels by, for example, relying on the comments, reviews but also engaging with the page community through an interactive-type updates encouraging the participation and

expression of opinions (Park & Gretzel, 2007, p.4). In terms of Efteling marketing efforts, it is possible to notice a constant monitoring of the Facebook actions by replying to the comments and reviews. The ability to engage with the page's community is vital as 'Social media can also play a crucial role for commercial behavior [...] [as] community opinions can be more influential for intentions compared to advertising messages or professional reviews [of product/destination]' (Sigala et al. 2012, p. 12). There are numerous ways to engage with the pages community that can be undertaken by the marketing manager to not only maintain the Facebook page responsive but also make it more attractive for the users. Some of the methods that can be used are the creation of games, competitions or promotions which, depending on the conditions of the game, can not only draw the attention to the Facebook page but also increase the interest in the destination (Abram and Pearlman, 2010). The activity of Efteling Facebook page is further discussed in the chapter 5. Analysis.

4.4 Social media marketing and USP

Social media marketing efforts, similarly to traditional marketing approach, should be characterized by a clear structure and consistency within the marketed messages (Hall & Maidenhead 2009, Masteron et al. 2014, Gray 2000). One of the ways to achieve it is to establish the Unique Selling Points (USP) of the destination/product which was firstly describer by Rosser Reeves, who opt for the clear establishment of the competitive features and its further application through the marketing process (Masteron et al. 2014, p. 466). The crucial element of establishing the USP is the determination of the most competitive features of the product that make it at the same time competitive in comparison to other products available with the similar profile (Hall & Maidenhead, 2009, p.2). Well established USP can successfully contribute to the decision making process while 'giving the company a competitive edge' (Gray 2000, p. 25). Establishment of the USP may be very challenging with a wide range of products available (in terms of the theory we consider Efteling a tourism product) available, therefore Philip Kotler offers a new concept referring to the creation of the unique 'emotional selling proposition', also called ESP to replace the USP. Emotional selling

point should be connected to 'a unique emotional association in the consumer's mind' (Kotler, cited in Hindle, 2009). Such approach is possible to notice within the Efteling amusement park marketing strategy, as it was expressed by the Marketing manager - A.B. - 'There's quite a strong like element of nostalgia, so you get the grandparents comment, and then parents comment oh yes I'm going to bring my kids here like i've been, so the family element is pretty strong' (Interview 1, A29). The USP is the fairytale world and experience for the visitors. However, this element is not characteristic only for Efteling as there are numerous other locations with the fairytale theme. Therefore, the marketing efforts of Efteling were directed towards the ESP which is the nostalgic connection with the park thanks to the positive experience and the will to 'rediscover' the park with younger generations (for example grandparents visiting the park with the grandchildren as they were visiting it with their grandparents). Efteling as one of the oldest amusement parks creates such opportunity which is consequently applied in the marketing process.

4.5 Facebook in social research

Facebook is one of the most popular social platforms in the world counting 1.94 billion users in 2017 (www.zephoria.com). The number of users is set to increase by approximately 15% each year making Facebook very interesting tool not only for personal but also academical use due to the amount of accessible data (Rieder 2013). Although traditional methods such as interviews and focus groups are still widely use , the ability to gather the data though the internet gives new opportunities therefore, a new set of methods was introduced called 'data crawling' (Rieder 2013, Wilson et al, 2012). Furthermore, scholars argue for numerous advantages of using the data crawling, which refers to the collection of the web information accomplished with, or without a usage of digital tool (ibid.). One of the most significant advantage is the opportunity to access data otherwise not possible to achieve, or very challenging to achieve through traditional methods 'digital methods have a number of advantages concerning cost, speed, exhaustiveness, detail' (Rieder 2013). The setting of this paper is an acceptable example of this. Considering we are investigating the marketing

campaign of Efteling theme park from both company and the user perspective with the focus on the UK market it would extremely challenging to obtain the insight only with the usage of interviews at the destination. First and foremost, that would require traveling to the destination followed by selecting UK based tourists visiting the park. Thanks to the ability to gather the data from Facebook page, we have the opportunity to read the reviews directly on the page from the UK visitors of the park. In addition, crawling the Facebook page allows for the collection of extensive amount of data which is codified with the Facepager software, further described in the chapter 3.3.4.1 Facepager.

Another important factor is the organization of the collected data. Due to the fact that the data was collected via Facebook the organization of it was faster and more efficient. While using the web data new tools emerged allowing the researchers to categorize and organize the outcome called digital tools. There are numerous tools available for the researchers ranging from basic data organization with the usage of keywords, ending on more complex programs that utilize visual and textual sources. As a best example will serve here Facepager program used in this project and further described in chapter 3.3.4.1 Facepager.

Rieder (2013) argues for two ways of gathering the data from online sources:

1. Active approach, where the data is gather through the internet actively not only by scraping the internet but also by provoking the reactions by comments, private interaction and more.
2. Passive approach, where the data collection process is limited to scraping the web and focusing on already available sources without direct contact with the users.

In the process of data collection for this project the active approach was applied based on the above categorization proposed by Rieder (2013). We have collected the data already available within the Facebook page of Efteling theme park but also we have interacted with the visitors of the park by contacting them and requesting filling the

survey we have prepared. The motivation for this was argued by the fact that was the most convenient way to obtain direct contact with the UK based visitors of the park. Moreover, undertaking the active approach gives us the opportunity to gain an insight from the consumer perspective making the project more complex and multidimensional.

4.5.1 Online communities

In terms of this project, online communities play a significant role in the data collection process as they reflect changes in the tourism sector 'online communities [...] are worldwide used to get common information. This very fact led to an increase of digital platforms on the Internet, which quickly became 'that network of networks' (Chan & Li, 2010, p. 1033). In connection to Efteling, online communities allow us to research the consumer perception of the destination and the way Efteling positions its brand on social media for their target audience. The possibilities to gather data with the usage of online platforms increased the research opportunities especially in the field of consumer studies, which applies to the tourism sector: 'The Internet is redefining the way in which researchers and consumers can access information on hospitality products and experiences' (Mkono, in De Joseph S. Chen, vol8, p. 235). Consumer perception is especially interesting for this project where we strive to analyze the response of the marketing efforts of Efteling amusement park applied to the UK market.

The netnographic research was applied through the data collection from Facebook, which is the only destination marketing platform directed to the UK market (as per the time of the research). The gathered data consisted of comments/reviews of the destination followed by the online survey. Moreover, the comment and review section of Facebook allow to gain first hand insight in the consumer perception as their main function is described as 'exchanging resources such as information, ideas and advice about their common interests' (Chan & Li, 2010, p. 1033). This is a valuable insight into the brand image, that is how the brand is perceived, as: 'consumers […] interact online because of their shared enthusiasm for and knowledge about specific consumption activities' (Kozinets 1999 in Ibid.).

Another reason why online platforms are especially interesting for the researches is the freedom of expression allowing for more detailed and truthful reviews: 'social aggregation that emerge from the net when enough people carry on […] public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace' (Rheingold 1995, p. 3 cited in Kozinets 2010, p. 8). In addition, the accessibility and the role of social media in daily life positively influences the amount of reviews daily, therefore, it is very accessible for the researchers to gain first hand information that is up to date as 'Being in contact with an online community is increasingly a regular part of people's everyday social lives' (Kozinets 2010, p. 14).

4.5.2 Word of mouth

Word of Mouth (WOM) is described by scholars as one of the most powerful marketing tools (Barber & Wallace 2010, p. 7) and is defined as passing on the information by the usage of oral communication (ibid.). WOM focuses on creation of the nodes influencing customers or potential target group to start communication about the given topic (ibid). In other words, WOM focuses on provoking the communication which can be done with the usage of numerous elements, one of them being the social media campaign (Sernovitz 2015). Moreover, WOM in marketing takes a special place as '[...] after dealing with institutions that fail to deliver on their promises, they do not readily believe professionally crafted messages or messengers' (Cakim 2009, p. 10). Consumers become more selective and aware through decision making process therefore, they look for alternative source of information about a place/product rather than blindly believing in the marketing slogans. WOM serves not only as a marketing tool but also verifies the product and this element makes it potentially interesting (Rosen 2002). Knowing this, numerous platforms based on WOM were created such as TripAdvisor. The reviews platforms serve as a modern WOM channel where everybody is able to express opinion freely and anonymously (Rosen 2002). Following this trend, Facebook enabled the comment section upon the creation of particular type of profile such as place or brand. This function allows the users to write reviews and rate the page which can serve as a

valuable source of information for future potential customers and was further elaborate on in the chapter 5. Analysis.

Although WOM is not the main focus of this project it would be incomplete to carry on with the paper without mentioning upon it, as one of the main sources of data are Facebook reviews that are further analyzed with the usage of the digital tool. Reviews are a very important part of the social media marketing as they show interest toward the location/product. In the case of Efteling amusement park, reviews serve as a source of information for the future potential visitors and help in the decision making process.

4.6 Semiotics

One of the most recognized definition of semiotics comes from the Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communications, describing semiotics as 'the study of science (both for verbal and nonverbal). Semiotics is widely assumed to be purely a structuralist method of textual analysis, but it is much more broadly concerned with how things signify and with representational practices and systems (in the form of codes)' (Oxfordreference.com). Semiotics can be applied to numerous fields of study, a most recent practice being social media marketing; therefore, it was especially interesting to apply it to the study focusing on the digital scape of Efteling. Dating back to the antiquity semiotic history was a subject of interest for a number of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and St. Augustin etc. being established as a modern field of study though the works of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American logician Charles Sanders Pierce (Berger 2011).

4.6.1 Charles Pierce model

One of the leading models used in the modern semiotic analysis is the pragmatic model of Charles Pierce with the concept of semiosis or the action of science, which had an impact over several disciplines of study, from philosophy to the cognitive science (Queiroz & Merrel, p.39). Pierce was responsible for entitling the discipline semiotics and for expanding on Saussures principles. A new concept formulated by PIerce is the

signs object or what the signs stands for, a theory which gave birth to the three types of relationship between a sign and its object. The first one, iconic, based on the relation of similarity for example someone's portrait is the icone of that person. The second relationship is indexical meaning that the sign is affected by the object: a knock on a door is an index of a visit. The third type of relationship - simbolic - a relationship based purely on convention: 'Passwords, tickets to a show, banknotes, and the words of a language are symbols' (Everaert-Desmedt, 2011).

Pierce's pragmatic model is built on a number of categories that represent classes of relations: firstness, secondness and thirdness which take into consideration 'the context in which signs are produced and interpreted' (ibid.). Firstness refers to independently existing things seen as the category of possibility while secondness is: 'the mode of being that is in relation to something else', while thirdness is: 'the mediator through a first and the second are brought into the relation' (ibid.). For our research we focus on the triadic relationship sign (S) - object (O) - interpretant (I) which is the minimal unit of semiotic analysis (Everaert-Desmedt, 2011). For Pierce any entity may be considered a sign from when it enters the process of semiosis: 'A Sign is a Cognizable that, on the one hand, is so determined [...] by something other than itself, called its Object, while, on the other hand, it so determines some actual or potential Mind, the determination whereof I term the Interpretant created by the Sign, that that Interpreting Mind is therein determined mediately by the Object' (Pierce, cited in ibid. p.40). In theory the semiotic process in unlimited however, Pierecs pragmatic model brings to the discussion another concept called habit or the final logical interpretant referring to: 'our habit of attributing a certain signification to a certain sign in a certain context with which we are familiar' (ibid).

4.6.2 Semiotics in consumer culture

A growing consensus is being reached among researchers that human consumption is a field with many aspects open to interpretation (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993, ch1, p.2-8). The rise of qualitative methods of analysis that has gradually gained momentum

over traditional neopositivistic viewpoints has made its way into consumer research, one prominent interpretive approach being semiotics (ibid.) which is in line with a review of postmodernistic research on consumers. The rise in popularity of the semiotic approach to consumer research has began in the mid 1980's, with a series of articles and contributions on the subject (Mick, 1986). Critique on the approach has been noted from marketing researchers supporting neopositivistic science (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993, ch1, p.2-8).

The plurality of semiotic studies fall under the name of 'semiotics', although some researchers still emphasize a distinction between neopositivistic semiotics and interpretive semiology (ibid). Neopositivistic semiotics draws on the principles of Charles Pierce, Morris 1946 and the American School of Semiotics follows the triadic scheme to explain the concepts of semiotics. Signs, 'anything that could acquire a semnification', designatum 'any object referred to by a sign' and interpretants as 'any disposition to respond'. While maintaining Pierce's distinction between icons indices and symbols as based on a relation of resemblance (ibid). 'Thus icons share characteristics in common with their designata, indices direct attention or point to their designata and symbols and symbols refer to their designata by arbitrary social agreement'(P.4). Interpretive semiology draws from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and is in line with the continental tradition in semiotics. Key representatives include Roland barthes and Umberto Eco (ibid). This approach disregards the 'designatum' as it focuses solely on the relation between sign and signifier, form and concept (Barthes), the expression and content (Eco) or the sound-image and concept (Coward -Ellis) ((Holbrook and Hirschman, 1993, ch1, p.8).

Follwing this line of thoughts, we have chosen nepositivistic semiotics due to its reference to Charles Pierce's pragmatic model. We will use semiotics as a triadic model to interpret the content of the Efteling social media channels in the context of its social media strategy.

5. Analysis

The data for this project has been gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain an in depth overview of the research questions explained in the problem statement chapter 1.

1) What are the key elements of Efteling social media marketing startegy based on the Facebook page?
2) How are these elements used in Facebook marketing?
3) How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?

The qualitative findings were gathered through an interview and netnography - through the process of Facebook information scraping. The timeframe for Facebook information scraping is September 2015 to 1st July 2017, this being consistent with the start of a dedicated UK Efteling Facebook page, until the day of analysis writing.

The quantitative findings on the other hand are collected through the online survey distributed among the UK based Efteling visitors, found on the dedicated Efteling Facebook page.

The structure of the analysis follows the brand positioning model of Aaker (1991) with the structure of brand identity, brand positioning and brand image, concepts defined in the theory chapter number 4. The motivation of following the branding model guidelines was to apply a clear structure within the analysis with a theoretical support. Moreover, the branding model has also served as a framework for the research questions, as a result of reviewing destination marketing existing literature. As we previously mentioned the multidimensional aspect of the project - both the company and consumer point of view - it was essential to follow a clear structure of research.

It is however important to note that using the branding as a structural guideline is in no way restricting the development of the analysis but serves as a means to evaluate the ongoing marketing and communication efforts of Efteling.

Throughout the analysis chapter, the following structure was implemented:

Three separate parts consistent with the branding model:
5.1 Brand identity. An overview of the company's perspective in terms of vision and planned   marketing efforts for Efteling as a tourist destination. For this part the main source of data was an in depth interview with A.B., social media manager responsible for the Efteling UK social media.

5.2 Brand positioning. The second part refers to the brand positioning of the value proposition communicated to a target group that demonstrates competitive advantages.

5.3. Brand image consisting of the analysis of the consumer feedback as we as comparing and contrasting the perception of Efteling in the context of brand identity and brand positioning.

5.1 Brand identity

As a first part of the analysis we focus on the brand identity of Efteling, as it 'represents the vision for how the destination should be perceived in the marketplace, with the aim of achieving differentiation (Pike and Page 2014, p.211). Such efforts are highlighted through the interview with the Social Media Manager - A.B. - where she mentions upon targeting a specific audience designated for the UK market. The complete interview transcription can be found in Annex 1. Differentiation is achieved through the unique selling point being a family destination but also attractive for its multigenerational aspect that plays on emotional nodes and bringing families together from children to grandparents. In addition other key elements identified in the marketing efforts are the

accessibility to the park, seasonality, adventure and exploration, fairytale theme and attractions, combined with an active approach towards consumer engagement further explained in this chapter.

The main focus of the campaign is the family theme, which is reiterated throughout the visuals and textual information as well. The initial purpose of the social media strategy was to position Efteling as family destination on the UK market.

(A4) A: The main purpose was to highlight Efteling to
the UK market as a family destination.

(A28) A: yes, i'd say it's the core message, the core market, yes definitely, it's largely centered around families from the accommodation to the offerings of the park.

This has included organic Facebook posts supported by a paid advertising campaign:

(Q6) D: Ok, yes...and for the Facebook page of Efteling, have you started at first using paid social advertising or have you started with using regular facebook posts?
(A6) A: Regular at first and then we introduced paid social in the summer.

Such clear approach, with predefined target group and consistent message through the social media campaign, is argued by Kolb (2011, p. 217) to be one of the key elements increasing the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Moreover, the implementation of emotional messages through the marketing process allows for building preferences for the destination over other, similar tourism locations (Ibid.). In the context of Efteling, the examples include a relation to the multigenerational element, where families feel an emotional connection to Efteling due to it being appealing to all members of the family of all ages, which made it a central strategic focus:

(A29) 'There's quite a strong like element of nostalgia, so you get the grandparents comment, and then parents comment oh yes I'm going to bring my kids here like i've been, so the family element is pretty strong'.

At last, it is worth mentioning, that the focus on the central point of the marketing efforts - multigenerational aspect - is in line with the concept of emotional selling point, which 'makes your product or service less vulnerable to the competition'(Leboff, 2007, p.86). Appealing to the consumers emotions makes Efteling more competitive in terms of the tourism offer, for example more global destinations such as Disneyland. The multigenerational aspect connected with the nostalgia is possible due to the fact that Efteling is one of the oldest European parks.

Another key element of the strategy are competitions, included in the paid advertising strategy to increase post and page engagement. One example is the interview question focused on the Facebook competitions, where we find out more details about Efteling approach:

(Q38) D: can you give me an example of how a competition would run on facebook, on how you would promote that on Facebook?
(A38) A: so for example, we could depending what the prize was, we could offer a stay at the park, and you could get people to share their biggest adventures, to get people talking, and obviously we could put some paid behind that just so the right people see it and yes, it should build up some nice …

Competitions are recognized in the marketing literature as a way to 'give businesses a boost in terms of awareness and engagement with both current and new audiences (www.allthingsweb.com, access on: 01/07/2017). Competitions, [...] can not only draw the attention to the Facebook page but also increase the interest in the destination (Abram and Pearlman, 2010). Competitions in the case of Efteling marketing are a way to achieve competitive advantage considering the issue of less familiarity in the context of other well known European brands such as Europa Park. This approach is consistent

with the tourism concept of spinning liabilities into assets by Avraham (2014) which refers to turning disadvantages into advantages for the destination (previously explained in the theory chapter 4.). In our case, the lack of familiarity is used as a selling point of Efteling, offering visitors exclusivity and differentiating the park from mass tourism destinations.

Social media are recognized as a valuable tool for tourism marketing with destinations becoming more aware of its potential and opportunities. This was acknowledged by the Efteling team, who decided upon focusing on Facebook as the only social media platform for the UK market (at the time of the research).

A5) A: Umh...they [efteling team] wanted to use social to open up a UK Facebook page that will target predominantly those customers to tell the story of Efteling, and kind of start from the beginning with the brand.

This reflects the consensus within literature where DMOs are looking achieve differentiation within the markets, with 'DMOs looking to create a sustainable competitive advantage for their destinations within the competitive arena of global tourism' (Pike & Page, 2014). The choice of using social media as a focus of the marketing efforts is augmented by the fact that Facebook is a diverse platform with multiple opportunities to reach the audience, more important as travelers are increasingly looking for firsthand information from their peers rather than responding to traditional advertising messages (Sigala et al. 2012). An extensive motivation for this argument can be found in the chapter 4.3 Social media in tourism.

The adventure and discovery key message is another element which resurfaces across the Facebook page, both in the organic and paid strategy, as a result of a pre-test campaign undertaken at the beginning of the social media activity. Later on we will elaborate on the usage of the adventure key message in chapter 5.2.

(Q14) D: So the first one reads 'an exciting adventure, come and discover Holland's hidden gem for yourself'. Was this part of the overall message, the 'hidden gem' message?

(A14) A: Yes, it's one that they use in their overall marketing and site wide and yes…

(Q15) D: So this is something that would be consistent with their overall strategy?

(A15) A: Yes, exactly.

*The conc*ept of spinning liabilities into assets is again used here, as Efteling is described as 'Holland's hidden gem', which is a means to turn less familiarity on a new market to their advantage, while highlighting the exclusivity and uniqueness of the destination. This is also reflected in the marketing efforts encouraging tourists to discover Efteling while traveling to Holland:

(A8) A: I think the main advantage is that we can target a quite a defined audience so...people that are travelling to Holland who might not know that Efteling exist, people in the UK with a family of a certain age, um...yes, we can really define our audience.

Although the key messages revolve around the fairytale theme, it is interesting to know that adventure and exploration has been performing best in the consumer pretest campaign, which will be reflected in the Facebook page content and further explained in the chapter 5.3. Despite the fact that the uniqueness of the Dutch fairytale stories that are characteristic to the park the adventure and exploration message is more in line with the nature of the destination. And therefore, focusing on this message will engage the relevant theme park audience. Ultimately, the creation of a successful marketing campaign revolves around testing several types of messages to identify the most popular and interesting for the theme parks audience. It is why the Efteling social media manager has concluded the importance of the adventure message after testing several messaging options:

(A11) A: Yes, so this one we were still in the early stages so we were testing what kind of messages work best with the UK audience...umh...and it was hugely clear from the

results that the ones centered around more adventure and discovery were much better received than the one that was more ...kind of 'fairytale

A distinct message refers to the seasonality aspect, for example the Winter Efteling campaign. Marketing Efteling as a winter destination also refers to the creation of the unique selling point where the competitive advantage is distinguished - a theme park open in the winter, as opposed to competitors which might not have a similar offer. Although traditionally winter is not perceived as an outdoor theme park activity, Efteling uses the family bonding message to shift this traditional perspective while calling for families to reunite for Winter Efteling.

(Q25) D: Is winter efteling a campaign that's running every year?
(A25) A: Yes, absolutely, from november through january
They basically turn the park into more of a winter wonderland, snowy, and some of the rides are more winter themed, you can ski cross-country and such.

One of the main tourism destination attributes explored by scholars is accessibility, which refers to the easiness of reaching the destination considering the cost of the expenses in relation to the value of the destination (Ivanova, 2017, p.121). Moreover, Toth and David (2010) (cited in Ivanova, ibid.) argue for the importance of accessibility in terms of a decision-making factor for prospective tourists. SImilarly, there is a focus on this particular aspect in the strategy of Efteling, as the location is potentially challenging: both due to the need to travel abroad and due to the distance to the nearest transport hub i.e. Amsterdam. To put this consideration into perspective, the best example would be a theme park located within a popular tourism destination (such as Tivoli in Copenhagen, Prater in Vienna). The challenging location of Efteling is the reason why the marketing efforts are focused on approaching this issue:

(A35) A: yes, definitely, through the content we tried to highlight how easily accessible it is and position it like family adventure. More and more people are not willing to travel too far, so I think if we can show people how feasible it is it would be good.

(Q32) D:how easy to reach is the park from the UK? A: really easy, just a short flight to amsterdam ..and from amsterdam?

(Q32) A: train, obviously a taxi but the public transport is pretty efficient and you can also get a ferry from various different ports.

As argued in the theory chapter it is worth to consider the relation between the overall branding concept and the emergent of destination branding in terms of impact over the marketing of the destination (Pike and Page 2014). For example Efteling uses the well known overall tourism brand of Holland to attract visitors who are being introduced to the brand:

(Q17) D: 'fairytales do exist, come and find them at Holland's hidden gem'...so would you say from these two you focused more on the adventure message?

(A17) A: yes, definitely, the adventure, discover, combined with the dragons and the excitement of the rides rather than other…

Marketing Efteling as a part of Holland 'refers to the concept of umbrella branding for macro regions such as countries and states to design an identity that will also subsume and suit regional brands has also been explored' (Pike and Page 2014, p.211). In this way Efteling draws on the overall brand of Holland to gain trustworthiness on the new market.

Examining the brand identity, referring to the Aakers branding model (1991) allows for systematizing the information about Efteling marketing efforts and the key messages that the marketing manager A.B. wanted to communicate on the UK market. At the same time, next chapter will examine the execution of desired messages and themes and how they were transformed into the Facebook content.

5.2 Brand positioning

In this chapter we focus on the destination marketing efforts of Efteling applied with the help of social media – Facebook targeting the UK market.

5.2.1. Facebook key messages

As we discussed the way the company wants to be presented in the previous chapter, we continued to critically assess how Efteling undertakes the marketing efforts with the use of social media. First, we analyzed the content of the Facebook page with the help of the semiotic method supported by extracting the central messages from the paid advertising campaigns. We followed with the analysis of the most frequent words used through the Facebook page content from the beginning of the profile in 2015 until 1st July 2017. This was implemented in order to support the findings of our paper.

Following the previously mentioned structure of the analysis chapter, in this part we focused on the Efteling positioning as a tourism destination. Positioning of the destination is argued by scholars to be a key element in the creation of destinations reputation and perception with the usage of visual and textual elements: 'Positioning a destination is the act of designing its offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target tourists mind (Kotler et.al, 1996, cited in Munar 2009, p.164).

After the process of 6 steps of Kozinets (2010)- coding, noting, abstracting and comparing, checking and refinement, generalizing and theorizing chapter-further explained in chapter 4, we have distinguished a number of four categories within the content of Efteling Facebook page. The distinguished themes partially correspond with the interview interpretation, which was referred to in the coming chapter.

The majority of identified uploads on the Facebook page consist of a visual followed by textual elements. This is argued by marketing scholars (Mariani et al 2015) to have higher effectiveness on the audience rather than plain textual updates. From the total of

239 visual uploads we distinguished 4 main themes throughout the posts: family (58 pictures), fairytale (73 pictures), attractions and facilities (62 pictures) and seasonality (11 pictures + 1 video). The Facebook posts can be found in Annex 4. Although the posts are interchangeable with one post being potentially relevant to more than one category, each post was however assigned to the most relevant category based on the principles of pragmatism and semiotics. The pictures were chosen randomly from each category for the purpose of further interpretation for the first 3 categories. In the case of Seasonality, we decided upon the analysis of the Winter Efteling video as it combines a multitude of season images not displayed on the Facebook profile otherwise.

5.2.1.1 Family theme

The first category 'family' consists of relevant images with the corresponding textual description, as appears on the official Facebook page. The focus is on images presenting the main selling point of Efteling and the main target of the social media efforts as presented by the interview, which is highlighting Efteling as a family destination. The continuous usage of family-related images allows for the creation of the 'networks of associations about places [...] referred to in psychology as Schemata' (Atkinson et al, 1987 cited in Govers 2011,p. 228-229). Thanks to the implementation of such schemata, it is argued that the decision making process can be influenced for the potential new visitors as well as to encourage tourists to revisit to the park. For this reason Pike & Page argue for the role of the destination branding elements as definitory in influencing the decision making process: 'Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice' (2014,p. 211).

Image 1 (1;1, 21/06/2017)

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · _11 timer_ ·

Only 11 days to go...The Symbolica Palace has lots of magical rooms to discover. What's your favourite room in your house and why? We'll give our favourite answer a magical Pardoes wand! Comment below...

_..._

We'll pick our winner this afternoon at 5pm so get commenting!

In the image we can notice a wooden carriage (S) with 2 rows of seats and two yellow handles(S). The carriage is decorated with spiral columns and a light globe in pale pink(S) at the helm. We can notice a similar carriage in the background with the same features (S) .The carriages appear in movement, in a room with marble tiles in white and brown. In the centre of the room there is a dining table with food and a person sitting in the middle of the table (S). The room has intricate golden decor pieces and a chandelier. In the right corner of the image there is an animated character(S) holding a light pink light globe, dressed in a red and gold jacket with a triangular element on the sleeve, blue hat and white gloves.

The above mentioned sign elements indicate a fairytale story scene (O), based on the animated character, the dining scene table and the sophisticated room decor(S). We are able to judge this using our cultural background as interpreters (I) by recognizing fairytale story elements. This represents the firstness category, wherein we can identify the fairytale theme park (O) represented by the fairytale elements (S). The picture indicates an indoors scene from the amusement park. There are 6 people observable in the carriage and their expression(S) reflects happiness and excitement of a family with children (O). At a second semiotic level, we can talk about a family happy to experience a holiday in the theme park setting. Adding to it the textual description we are informed about the opening of Symbolica, a new Efteling attraction, and are now able to associate the setting (S) with a magical room (O) suggested also by the Pardoes magic wand(S), which will be a new family focused attraction at Efteling, as revealed by the textual description. We can identify fairytale themed elements such as the magic, wand the story characters and the carriage due to the concept of cultural habitus, which refers to elements acquired via cultural learning and appropriation (Everaert-Desmedt, 2011).

Image 2 (1;2, 26/02/2016)

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · *26. februar 2016* ·

On the left side of the picture we can observe an adult with a boy sitting on his shoulders(S). They are dressed in dark colored jackets and the adult is wearing gloves and a hat(S). Both of them are turned towards the small house located between the trees. The house is white with yellow and pink elements and in an irregular shape(S). Closer to the people on the picture we can observe a cake-shaped element (S) placed on a concrete fence with blue balustrade. There are brown leaves on the ground(S) and only a few of the trees have green elements. The house is small in size and has pink and orange decorative elements on the facade(S).

At a first semiotic level we can associate the sign elements with an outdoor autumn setting(O) characterized once again by the fairytale theme(O), reflected by the colorful cake and candy house(S). We have further on found out from upcoming posts that this is a representation of Hansel and Gretel's (O)famous fairytale house(S). We can observe elements that stimulate the visitor's imagination (O), a common theme in fairy tale stories, such as the candy house and the colorful theme(S). We can notice the

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father and his son being close and spending quality time together, which represents the third level of semiotic interpretation, as Efteling is using this positive family friendly image to illustrate their brand image. The element of family bonding(O) is strongly suggested by this visual, with family being the core theme. As mentioned in the marketing literature, an essential element of enforcing the USP of a brand is establishing the most competitive features of the product that make it at the same time competitive in comparison to other products available with the similar profile (Hall & Maidenhead, 2009, p.2).

Image 3 (1;3, 21/02/2017)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort
Synes godt om denne side · _21. februar_ ·

Let's talk about pancake day, the best day of the year here at Polle's Keuken! With only 7 days to go, what are your top tips for the BEST pancake toppings?

...

https://www.efteling.com/en/park/restaurants/polles-keuken

In this picture we can see 5 people sitting at the table (S). The red table is located by the window and has numerous glasses and plates with food on (S). There are pancakes

(S) on the plates ready to eat. People are sitting on the brown couches. In the background we can see some wooden pottery and kitchen supplies(S). Behind the window it is possible to spot a green area with buildings. People are wearing long sleeve shirts. Two of them are sitting back towards the picture and three on the opposite side are smiling (S). Two of the people are adults and three are young children(S).

The intimate setting in this image can be associated with a family lunch (O), judging by the table setting, the food and the people seated together (S). Adding to it the textual description, we are informed that they are eating pancakes, a feature that is a key selling point to a visit at Efteling(O), which relates to the secondness category of interpretation. The image encourages spending quality time in the park along with the family (O) and suggests that the facilities at Efteling can accommodate these needs. The thirdness category of Pierce, that of potentiality, is invoked here by using a positive image, a family lunch with the children eating delicious food (O), in order to achieve the brand positioning: Efteling is a family orientated tourist attraction. This image conveys emotional attachment(O) by showing a positive family scene(S), which is meant to cause a predisposition for a visit. Such representation is in line with the marketing theory of creating emotional focused images relating to the visitors and therefore influencing the desire to visit the destination (Huertas & Marine-Roig, 2015, p. 297).

Image 4 (1;4, 10/10/2016)

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · 10. november 2016 ·

We won the Family Traveller award for Best Family Theme Park. We're so proud to have surpassed nominees including Universal Orlando, Disneyland Paris and Europa Park that we want to shout about It. Thank you all so much for making it possible!

In this picture we can see 7 people (S) on a wide path with fence on both of the sides. There are also flagpoles on both sides with green, yellow, blue and red flags(S). We can see 4 adults, one elderly person and two kids(S). In the background we can spot a large building with 3 pointy elements on its roof. There are also some trees and cars noticeable in the distance. All people are wearing coats and some of them have also scarves and hats(S).They are moving towards the front of the picture and have a happy expression on their face, while walking closely together(S). The sky is white and grey and the trees are bare.

The image presents a family scene once again, represented by the three generations

observed: young children, parents and grandparents(O), which are detected by signs such as physical appearance, clothes etc (S). Efteling provides the background for the family's happy scene (O), with the children running in an outdoor setting. The textual description mentions an award win for the best Family Theme Park (S)competing with popular attractions such as Universal Orlando or Disneyland Paris, which is a means to emphasize the family brand positioning(O) of Efteling- thirdness level of semiotics interpretation.

An important element used in the strategy is the emotional attachment to Efteling due to the destination being associated with memories across generations, consistent with the third level of semiotic interpretation, which uses elements of emotional appeal in order to achieve the brand positioning. This is reiterated in the interview with the social media manager as well, by the usage of the multigenerational aspect which invokes elements of nostalgia to appeal to prospective visitors. This elements are differentiation the park from mass tourism attractions such as Universal Orlando and Disneyland as mentioned in the above Facebook post, a fact reinforced by the winning of a prestigious family travel award. The semiotic analysis reveals the brand positioning efforts by making use of these elements to stand apart from the competition. Establishing themselves as a family destination and consequently implementing this element throughout their marketing efforts refers to the Unique Selling Point marketing concept which is a guide for the strategic focus of destination marketing (Stone, 2001).

5.2.1.2 Fairytale theme

The fairytale theme consists of similarly selected posts as the previous family theme, with image and textual description. The identified focus of the messaging here is recreating the fairytale atmosphere and featuring common fairytale elements in an effort to convey the emotional selling point of Efteling and its differentiation from theme park competitors that might as well employ a fairytale aspect.

Image 5 (2;1, 26/05/2017)

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · _26. maj_ ·

If you're travelling with Eurotunnel this weekend look out for the Efteling team, Red Riding Hood and Thomas the Knight will be telling fairytale stories. There will be crafts and kids will get a free gift for the train journey!

This picture presents a person in a red cape on the horse(S). The person is wearing a red outfit with pointy elements on the helmet and shoulders and is sitting on the horse. The horse is black and it has a red cape over with holes for eyes and ears(S). The scene takes place in the gateway surrounded by fogg(S). The gate belongs to a yellow/stone coloured building with gray/red roof(S). The walls of the building are cracked and have two small holes on each side of the gate. The arch of the gate is decorated with carvings of two symmetrical birds, one of each side placed between smaller carved elements. Above the gate we can see the letters 'Raveleijn'(S). Above the text there is a small hole with horse-looking sculpture(S).

The image 5 is also used as part of the paid strategy, the repetitiveness demonstrating the importance of the fairytale key message(O). This image showcases what appears to be a reenactment of an Efteling fairytale story, 'Raveljin', which is a popular onsite attraction(O), as mentioned on the official website efteling.com. This corresponds to the secondness category of Pierce, as we are aware as interpretants (I) of the nature of activities at Efteling. This kind of attraction is a regular part of Efteling, which surpasses the traditional fairytale aspect and takes the realistic fairytale setting one step further, taking the visitors in a real life tour of a magical alternative world (O). The image shows attention to details relating to signs such as the red cape(S), the horse and the smoke effects(S), which makes Efteling stand apart from similar places, with a distinct personal feeling involved in their fairytale elements(S). Moving further to a third level of interpretation, Efteling is using their USP to attract weekend visitors with a special entertainment program for children: crafts, fairytale storytelling and gifts as a bonus(O). This refers to the theory of destination competitiveness, a key aspect of successful destination marketing, which scholars argue is impacted by other factors as well such as the organisation of special themed events within the destination that differentiate the attraction from other available offerings: 'Whilst the most researched aspect of management is destination marketing, the authors argue that a much wider set of management activities should be considered, including services, organisation and the maintenance of the key tourism resources and attractors'(Enright and newton, p.778).

Image 6 (2;2, 17/04/2017)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort
Synes godt om denne side · _17. april_ ·

Who's hiding in our Gnome Village? Come and discover a fairytale adventure at Efteling
with your family, the summer holidays are fast approaching!

https://goo.gl/Ub9VTb

This image shows a mushroom shaped house with blue door and opened window with blue shutters(S). There is a wooden structure added to the building on the left side. Under the building we can see some rocks and stones and a figure wearing red and beige coloured outfit (S). The person is sitting. On the water located by the rocks we can spot a small wooden boat with another person in it. This person is holding a string or a stick, is wearing a blue coloured cape(S). There is also a black umbrella behind the person. The water is dark and is reflecting the building and the bushes. Behind the mushroom building there are some trees and greenery(S). Some of the trees do not have leaves.

This image presents a fantasy house(O), one of the numerous elements of the park corresponding with the fairytale world (O). However this time, the intended effect is more grim, suggested by the dark elements such as grey colours (S). While strolling through the park one has the opportunity to be surrounded by the out of ordinary infrastructure enhancing the feeling of being in a magical place(O). The characters are reminding of gnomes living in the wilderness of the park(O). In the third level of semiotic interpretation, by the textual description we find out this is the gnomes village (S) a sign which symbolizes the fairytale adventure(O) that accompanies a visit to Efteling. Furthermore, elements of the family and fairytale theme are intertwined as the description mentioned this is a summer attraction for the whole family(O). As argued in the literature, using repetitive images contribute to the message consistency and the awareness, encouraging visitors to build brand associations with the park: 'Building brand equity – that is, name awareness, image and loyalty – therefore has to start from an overarching strategy and policy that is supply driven, looking at competitive identity' (Govers 2011, p.230). Although we don't focus on brand equity in our project, it's worth mentioning upon the means to achieve this as it is recognised as the result of successful brand positioning efforts in the literature (Govers 2011, Pike & Page 2014).

Image 7 (2;3, 16/02/2017)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort
Synes godt om denne side · *16. februar* ·

Dust off the cobwebs and explore Holland's hidden gem on a family adventure this half
term, only a hour and 15 mins from Amsterdam, what are you waiting for...
Book Now | https://www.efteling.com/en/park

This image shows a woman leaning outside the window (S). She is holding a piece of blue textil and is wearing purple top with white elements. She also has a white hat with a pink bow. She is leaning outside the window with blue shutters that are wide open(S). The building is white and has a straw roof. There are white elements floating in the air. In the background we can see some leafless trees and a blue sky (S).

The next picture showcases a scene from a fairytale which we once more are made aware of due to Pierce's concept of 'habit': 'our habit of attributing a certain signification to a certain sign in a certain context with which we are familiar', our system of beliefs and thoughts acquired through socialization and cultural education(O). Although this could very well be an everyday scene, the surroundings and the elements of

dressing(S) indicate an out of ordinary element consisting of a popular fairytale reference.(O). This potentially random scene sparks the viewer's imagination due to its connotations at the secondness category of semiotics, where we are able to associate the meaning of this scene with a fantasy element. The figure in the window is mechanized and is moving in and out of the window surprising the passing guests. Such elements are implemented through the entire park, followed by the reenactments making it a lively and dynamic place (O). Such usage of consistent elements reiterate the brand positioning elements 'If [...] messages are consistent we may be willing to try a product. If the experience of use is consistent and the after-sales service is good, we may repeat-purchase and become a brand enthusiast and advocate' (Ind 2003, p. 4).

Image 8 (2;4, 16/01/2017)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · _16. januar_ · _Redigeret_ ·

Back in April, watch the Raveleijn show and experience the excitement as the story unfolds right before your eyes!

Centrally placed in the picture we can see a gate building in yellow colour with numerous pointy roofs (S). Around the building we can locate some greenery and a water pond on the right (S). There are also some fire flames bursting around the building. On the way to the gate we can observe a person dressed in blue holding a sword up (S). The gate building is located in the square between old looking urban setting. Colorful houses surrounded the square, with the main colours within the houses being white, blue, yellow/gold (S). This scene is observed by numerous people seated face towards the gate and back to the picture (S), who are located in the area surrounded by fence (S) and we can also spot a roof part with pointy ornaments (S).

The imposing building is a reminder of fairytale castles (O) with tall roofs and rich decor elements (S). The fire effects (S) indicate a formal ceremony (O) or a celebration (O), followed by the person in a blue dress which appears to lead the proceedings, helped by another on a horseback. The second level of the semiotic interpretation indicates an event held for an audience (O), which we can notice gathered around the fence. However we are informed by the description that this is the Raveleijn show, a popular Efteling attraction which draws entirely on dutch fairytale inspired elements (O). Incorporation of elements of a Dutch fairytale not only within the park but also through the marketing visuals and text applied through the Facebook page are aligned with the branding theory proposed by Govers (2011), where he argues for the need of creating the connection between the destination and the overall national culture and heritage: '[...]branding at higher level, should be about creating an overarching brand strategy or competitive identity that reflects a nation's city's or region's history, accomplishments and aspiration' (Govers, 2011, p.227).

5.2.1.3 Attractions and facilities theme

Attractions and facilities discuss the practical aspects of the tourism destination, at the same time showcasing how the rest of the key messages are integrated in a consistent brand strategy. One example for this is the availability of fairytale themed rooms, an

illustration of Efteling consistent integration of products and services in line with the marketing efforts. In the literature the role of the overall elements that contribute to the success of a destination is acknowledged as essential: 'Whilst the most researched aspect of management is destination marketing, the authors argue that a much wider set of management activities should be considered, including services, organization and the maintenance of the key tourism resources and attractors' (Enright and Newton, p.778).

Image 9 (3;1, 26/09/2016)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · *26. september 2015* · *Redigeret* · ·

Wild-water ride 'Piraña'

This image shows a black-orange water pontoon floating over the water (S). We can spot movement in the water. There are 6 people in the pontoon, 4 adults and 2 kids.(S) One of the kids is holding his hands up. There are some rocks and stones sticking out of the water. We can also see lush greenery and green trees in the background and a blue sky(S).

The diversity of attractions is a main selling point of Efteling theme park. This particular one image details an interesting facility, a 'wild water ride' (O). At a semiotic level, we can assess that although the theme park is a family attraction, there is something for the more adventurous types (O) and the whole family will be entertained. The multigenerational aspect (O) appears here once again, as the textual description informs us they are experiencing a wild water ride. This generates positive feelings and is aimed at inspiring the audience for their holiday activities. As argued in the branding literature, 'a brand image must symbolize something positive to the consumer if he or she is to contemplate buying it' (O'Shaughnessy, 2015, 326)

Image 10 (3;2, 15/03/2017)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · _15. marts_ ·

Get carried away this spring aboard one of our gondolas. Sit back, relax and take in the Efteling scenery on the 20 minute boat ride!

_..._

https://www.efteling.com/en/park/attractions/gondoletta

This image shows a boat in the middle of the water(S). The boat is white and has a small roof. There are 4 people in the boat (S). Around the water we can see greenery, bushes and trees. Behind the boat we can see a fence made out of bricks. In the background we can spot some people and a big, blue rollercoaster with numerous turns(S). There is also a rollercoaster carriage with people (S). The sky is blue with some clouds(S).

Picturing a perfect sunny day (O), this image offers an insight into the multitude of attractions Efteling has to offer. The first frame shows a family in a boat, which the textual description lets us know it's Efteling's gondola, consistent with the second level of semiotic interpretation. In the background there is a tall roller coaster, indicator of excitement and adventure (O) and a thrilling spring day (O). The third level of interpretation is consistent with a contrasting portrayal of relaxation and adventure, which in terms of brand positioning and strategy means Efteling is trying to convey that there is something for everyone at the park (O). The water element(S) is equally important, as it is an extra facility (O) available at Efteling. Despite having a family focus, Efteling integrates elements for a variety of audiences by presenting messages focused on adventure, more in line with traditional tourism offerings at theme parks. This is correlated with the fact that Efteling is aware of the informative aspect of Facebook and in order to attract a larger audience there is a diversity aspect applied to all the messages. 'If we accept that social media are playing an increasingly important role as information source for travellers, we can realize the great potential' (Xiang and Gretzel 2010 in Siagala et al. 2012, p. 12). Despite acknowledging the importance of social media, the differentiation within messages is rather limited focusing on the family and fairytale element, further elaborated upon in chapter 5.3.

Image 11 (3;3, 16/08/2016)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · *16. august 2016* ·

Don't forget that today it's ROLLER COASTER DAY! What is your favourite Efteling coaster? Don't forget to JOIN OUR EVENT, we're giving away Baron VR Headsets on Friday!

In this picture we can see a dark, wooden roller coaster carriage on the first plan with people seated inside(S). There are some trees right next to the roller coaster track. In the background we can see metal and wooden constructions of other roller coaster attractions(S).

Although the family and fairytale elements(O) have been predominant so far, this particular image showcases the traditional aspect of a theme park(O): roller coaster rides. This is an indicator of Efteling is keeping its positioning consistent for the general audience of rollercoaster enthusiasts, emphasized by the fact that the description relates to Roller Coaster Day(O). Moreover, based on the textual element of the post,

we can notice a giveaway competition which correlates with the marketing theory, where it is argued for the need of an active approach in the online environment of Facebook as such actions can positively contribute not only to the growth of the audience but also the perception of the brand (Abram and Pearlman, 2010). This can be achieved by the usage of several means such as competitions or promotions which, depending on the conditions of the game, can not only draw the attention to the Facebook page but also increase the interest in the destination (ibid.)

Image 12 (3;4, 23/09/2016)

Efteling

Efteling Theme Park Resort

Synes godt om denne side · _23. september 2016_ ·

Complete your Efteling experience with a stay in our hotel, our themed suites will ensure the enchantment and excitement doesn't wear off after your day in the park!

The last image in this category shows one of the accommodation options, a room at efteling (S). All the walls, floors and the ceiling are wooden (S) brown planks. There are some holes in the ceiling with blue-glowing surface. There is also a big bed placed in the room, covered with red and yellow sheet with some golden patterns on top (S).

Further from the bed we can see a wooden desk with white, ornamented chair in gold and white(S). On the desk there are some candles. In the back of the room we can see a wooden bunk bed (S) with red sheet and a red curtain hanging by the wall. Close to the bunk bed there are two chairs with red cushions. We can also spot several lights located through the room and 2 windows to the left.

The fairytale elements are very consistent in our semiotic analysis, emphasized by the fairytale rooms presented above (O). As interpreters, we are familiar with the wooden cottage with the intricately decorated furniture and royal prints like red and yellow bedding as a common fairy tale element (O), understood at a second level of Pierce's categories. However, taking our analysis further, the textual description features the complete Efteling experience, by introducing the fairytale themed hotel, which is a unique attraction in itself and completes the reenactment of a magical world (O) for tourists at Efteling. The service and facilities (S) at Efteling are highlighted here, which is a traditional way to emphasize the destination competitive advantage (O): 'People visit places and organizations located in places because of the services that they provide. Thus, services from the core of the place product and provide the benefits that the place brand offers' (Hankinson, 2010,p.305). This relates to the importance of a consistent overarching brand strategy, where all elements comprising of a destination have a significant impact on the achieved branding result. At last, it was highlighted through the interview with the social media manager A.B. that the marketing efforts are focused on encouraging the trip to Efteling with the overnight stay at the park with the images of the accommodation facilities:

(Q31) D: would you be able to talk about this one?
(A31) A: yes, so this one was just to promote staying at Efteling, so obviously for the uk market, they would most likely stay overnight as well, it's only a short flight but if you spend the whole day at the park you probably want to stay over and so it's just highlighting the options, trying to get them to click through to the website, to see…

5.2.1.4 Seasonality theme

The seasonality theme reflects targeted efforts to showcase the park for a specific time of year. A main focus here was the Winter Efteling campaign, which was argued to offer competitive advantage for the destination and was also a common theme in the interview with the social media manager.

Image 13 (4;1, 16/11/2016)

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/EftelingUK/videos/?ref=page_internal]

Efteling Winter video presents a series of images from the park. We can note several attractions that are not visible in the Facebook posts such as gospel choir, ice rink, cross country skiing (S), focus on the winter scenery but also on the cozy, family holiday (O). Despite the weather the video presents a multitude of activities that one can enjoy with the family. The video also emphasizes the regular park itinerary consisting of different rides and rollercoasters (S). One of the most interesting activities is sitting by the fire with the family and friends(S). The evening light show is a USP of Efteling as it is only possible to observe at night in the winter time in the park.

The category of secondness is represented by the meanings we can deconstruct after the descriptive elements. There is a cheerful music in the background (S) with a holiday spirit combined with the images of winter landscape with falling snow and cozy fires gathering families together (O), giving a feeling of coziness and welcoming atmosphere (O). We can also observe images characteristic for winter themed movies, while still preserving the elements of fairy tales (O). The people in the videos although being visitors, they are portrayed as part of Efteling family showing the emotional connection of a visit to the park. We can notice gesture cues (S) that indicate positive expressions like smiling, combined with the positive connotation images (O) which are one of the key elements creating a successful destination marketing strategy (Li, 2002).

In the thirdness category of semiotics we can interpret the usage of the video for the Efteling brand positioning. By reuniting the above mentioned emotional elements in line with the ESP, the message conveyed is making the viewer want to be part of the Efteling winter holiday experience. The creation of a positive image is furthermore argued by scholars to be one of the most efficient element of brand image (O'Shaughnessy, Kahle & Kim, 2006, Chitty et.al,2011, Haemoon Oh,2009, Sharma & Borna, 2014). The interpretation is confirmed by the interview with the social media manager:

(A24) A: Yes, just under two minutes, and it gives you much more depth, insights into what a trip to Efteling would be like and shows more of the things around the park and what you can do, and it's to highlight winter efteling and again, obviously to the uk market…

5.2.2 Facebook paid advertising posts

The importance for paid advertising campaign for the Facebook page can be attributed to brand becoming competitive in the social media scape (Weinberg 2009). Therefore, a Facebook platform is now differentiating between between regular organic posts and paid advertising posts. Organic posts can be understood as traditional updates either

textual or visual, that are visible for people following the page, but also publicly available on the page (www.facebook.com). Advertising posts on the other hand, can be displayed to the designated target group.   Such action allows for increasing the brand awareness by familiarizing new users with the offering (ibid.). Facebook advertising is a new interpretation of traditional forms of advertising and comes with its own terms (Weinberg 2009). However, Facebook advertising still borrows from the traditional principles of advertising defined by The American Marketing Association (AMA) as 'any paid form of non-personal promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor (George, 2008).

Targeting the relevant audience is a key factor that ensures destinations marketing competitiveness: 'While devising product market combinations that build on the brand, it is probably a good idea to think about who might be interested and who is likely to listen to any messages that are sent out' (Govers, 2011, p.230). This step is achieved by targeting specific audience and adapting the relevant messages the brand wishes to communicate. In the case of Efteling, the targeted group is the family and the messages distributed through social media channel are corresponding with the target. Successful marketing aims 'To think about what the target audience is, for product development, distribution and engagement' (Govers, 2011, p.230).

Image 14 (3/10/2016-4 /11/2016)

Eftelings campaign aiming for page likes is consistent with the family theme. Page likes refers to the overall number of likes for the official Facebook page which can be translated into the interest for the page. The image selected is depicting an old house with an unusual structure in the background (S) and what could potentially be a mother with her daughter walking outside (O).

The visual cues (S) we can interpret from this image are a happy family moment spent outdoors(O), with a fantasy décor in the background (O). This automatically brings to

mind a location for children's entertainment (O). The textual information is a revealing aspect of the way Efteling is using its family market positioning to showcase its key brand assets as a thirdness category of semiotic interpretation: Holland's hidden gem, a strategy based on turning lack of familiarity into a competitive advantage and an enchanted adventure, based on keeping the adventure and exploration key message consistent with a theme park attraction. Essentially Efteling is promoting a key message through its advertising strategy: while Efteling is a unique fantasy place with many assets (location, market differentiation etc.) it is first and foremost a place for families to spend time bonding and create valuable memories. In order to achieve consistency with the overarching strategy it is necessary to consider place marketing and place branding as a whole: places branding viewed from a marketing perspective is related to 'a brand extension strategy' (Govers, 2011, p.228). All the Facebook Advertising campaign posts can be found in Annex 2.

5.2.3 Most frequent words

TOP WORDS ⊕		BIGRAMS ⊕		TRIGRAMS ⊕	
Word	Frequency	bigram ❷	Frequency	trigram ❷	Frequency
efteling	206	at efteling	36	world of wonders	17
family	69	of the	31	efteling theme park	13
us	53	to efteling	23	theme park resort	13
park	42	don t	23	the doors of	13
fairytale	34	it s	22	open the doors	12
day	32	in the	21	s hidden gem	12
re	31	world of	21	holland s hidden	12
one	31	theme park	20	doors of our	11
world	31	to win	20	one of the	9
adventure	29	for the	20	adventscalendar efteling com	9
win	28	we re	19	https adventscalendar efteling	9
theme	28	of our	19	what are you	9
enchanting	26	if you	19	www efteling com	8
know	25	efteling is	19	efteling com en	8
new	24	efteling com	17	park resort updated	8
https	24	of wonders	17	efteling advent calendar	8
winter	23	your favourite	17	https www efteling	8
open	23	winter efteling	17	resort updated their	8

Figure 4: Most frequent words from Efteling Facebook page

Key words:

Bigram- most frequent combination of two words

Trigram- most frequent combination of three words

The last step of the positioning analysis part is to analyze the most frequent words based on all the textual updates from the Facebook page which are posted by the company (276 updates from 2015 until 1st July 2017, found in Annex 4). This step allows for detecting the most frequent words applied with the page to discover the focal elements and compare them with the Efteling brand identity endeavor. In addition, the program used also allows for detecting the most frequent bigrams and trigrams which gives the opportunity to analyse some of the most frequent word combinations within the textual updates.

Within the most frequent words, on the first place we can see 'efteling' mentioned 206 times. The name of the park with the mentioned frequency is influenced by the fact almost each of the Facebook updates consist of the link following the image / text and in most cases, the link is directing visitors to the Eftelings web page. Moreover, this is proven by the most frequent bigrams and trigrams such as 'efteling com' (mentioned 17 times), 'https www efteling' (mentioned 8 times), 'www efteling com' (mentioned 8 times), 'efteling com en' (mentioned 8 times), 'https efteling en' (mentioned 8 times).

The second, most mentioned word is 'family', which correspondence with the first category of the semiotic interpretation. This is the first indicator of consistency throughout the branding process, as the interview reveals Efteling wants to be perceived as a family destination, which is reflected in the brand positioning efforts over social media. 'Family' is mentioned 69 times and is a common theme resulted from our data findings, which supports Efteling target audience and will be compared with the key messages in the third part, brand image, to demonstrate relevance.

The third most frequently used word 'us', indicated using the first person pronoun in plural to get closer to the audience and make them involved with the brand: 'join us at Efteling!', rather than talking about Efteling as a third entity. In the marketing literature this is associated with a means to forge a relationship with the reader, demonstrate

ownership and authenticity (Meetcontent.com, Cohen 2014). Moreover, integrating customers is a crucial approach in the marketing strategy: 'Place marketing is thus a customer-oriented approach, which aims at integrating [...] potential 'customers' of a given place' (Rodoula et al. 2012 p.65).

The fourth most frequent word 'park' is an illustration of Efteling facilities which corresponds with the third category of the visual interpretation 'attractions and facilities'. Although emotional messages are conveyed, Efteling is still making sure the audience is informed about the nature of the destination, which is 'theme park' and 'Efteling theme park', common bigrams and trigrams as well.

The 'fairytale' (mentioned 34 times) is corresponding with the category in the semiotic interpretation, supporting one of the key messages of the park. 'Enchanting' is another word associated with this same message, together with 'of wonders' (mentioned 17 times) and 'world of wonders' (mentioned 17 times). Positioning Efteling as a fairy tale themed destination corresponds with the attempt to establish the unique identity among competitors. The increasing number of competitors drives the need for a positive image of the destination to be achieved (Li 2002). The repetitiveness of the mentioned words and phrases indicates there is a strong focus on promoting Efteling as a fairytale destination which at the same time corresponds with the brand identity, as elaborated upon in chapter 5.1.

The last predominant element is the 'adventure' (39 mentions) along with the 'Holland's hidden gem' (mentioned 12 times). As supported by the brand identity efforts of Efteling, the destination indicates exclusivity with a positive connotation, creating an opposition to mass tourism destinations which may be associated with well-known brand names. This refers to the unique selling point concept, where Efteling offers a quality experience for its visitors, based on the uniqueness, 'hidden' aspect of the destination (Kotler cited in Hindle 2009).

5.3 Brand Image

In this chapter we elaborate upon Efteling brand image defined as the consumers' perception of the brand (Glynn 2009). It is interesting to compare the results obtained after implementing the brand positioning efforts via the Facebook page. This step allowed for identifying the effectiveness of the messages implemented through the marketing efforts. As it is argued by scholars the competitive market position can be achieved through a consistent and clear positioning (Pike and Page, 2014, p.211), in this chapter we explore the correlations between the brand identity, brand positioning and brand image, to determine whether the initial marketing goals of Efteling were achieved.

As a data source for the following chapter we used the word counting tool to detect the most frequently used words through comments and reviews on the Facebook page (Annex 3 Facebook consumer feedback). This step allows for detecting themes and patterns within comments that are further compared and contrasted with the positioning targets. Additionally, data is supported by a consumer survey undertaken on the Facebook page by contacting users who have left reviews. Evaluation of the outcome and measurement of the results is a crucial step in determining the success of a marketing campaign: 'While there is no model to quantify the relationship between the work of DMOs time and destination competitiveness, research into market performance is generally spread across three themes: i) visitor metrics, ii) marketing communication effectiveness, and iii) branding performance' (Pike and Page, 2014, p.213). Thanks to this step, it is possible to adjust further implemented marketing efforts to ensure the competitiveness of the destination.

Therefore, we identified the themes that are correlated with the similarities and differences between brand image and brand identity and positioning elaborated upon in the chapter 5.3.3. Before we continue with this part we will present the frequent words

results along with the survey overview that provides the reader with comprehensive information as an overview of the brand image.

5.3.1 Consumer frequent words analysis

TOP WORDS		BIGRAMS		TRIGRAMS	
Word	Frequency	bigram	Frequency	trigram	Frequency
efteling	285	in the	77	adventscalendar efteling com	22
place	147	to go	61	would love to	20
go	123	this place	59	we need to	20
love	120	i was	54	when i was	19
park	116	of the	49	to go here	18
x	104	for the	42	love this place	18
family	97	at efteling	42	world of wonders	16
day	72	this is	40	i want to	16
one	70	can't wait	39	can't wait to	15
would	69	to efteling	35	adventure en park	15
went	68	theme park	35	want to go	14
year	67	would love	33	need to go	14
it's	66	do you	33	this is the	13
back	65	go here	32	the doors of	13
us	65	want to	31	i wanna go	12
xx	63	is this	31	one of the	12
adventure	60	on the	31	open the doors	12
visit	57	is the	30	this is where	12
amazing	55	for a	30	holland's hidden gem	12
years	53	when i	30	as a child	12

Figure 5: Most frequent words from consumer feedback, Efteling Facebook page

The above table presents the most frequent words within the comments and the reviews of the Efteling Facebook page. The complete overview with consumer comments and reviews can be found in Annex 3. First we identified the themes that are recurrent in the most frequent word which are majorly corresponding with the Facebook posts textual updates. The repetitive words are 'efteling', 'family', 'adventure', 'world of wonders' and are indicating the approach within the marketing is consistent and therefore, well received by the Facebook users. The only exception is the adventure theme, which, although desired in the brand vision, is not a focus the Facebook visual posts are conveying.

As the reviews are the result of real experiences of tourists going to the park and sharing their insights with the online communities, we can conclude that the marketing efforts are aligned with the real life experience of the Efteling destination. As previously mentioned the overall branding strategy of a destination comes from a variety of perspectives, including the facilities, the service and other resources, which policy

makers keep in mind when addressing issues related to the destination (Govers, 2011). As acknowledged in the marketing literature, positive reviews are beneficial for the brand image as the WOM is described to be one of the most powerful marketing tools (Barber & Wallace 2010, p. 7).

This place is like a fairytale. Love Efteling. Love Amsterdam. Love Holland . Why Oh why am I in England. Xx
Consumer Comment 72

Next we can identify words with a positive connotation such as 'go', 'to go', 'can't wait', 'would love to', 'to go there', which indicate the positive attitude towards Efteling and the desire to visit. Through the visuals Efteling is creating a range of connotations that are to inspire the visitor's willingness to experience the fairytale atmosphere with a visit to the park. This is an element of destination branding which relates to conveying a 'memorable travel experience', reinforcing the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination and leading to increased interest for a visit to the destination (Pike and Page 2014, p.211).

I've been on the flying dutchman...this atraction is excellent! My trip for person, who will be first time in Efteling - You wear a raincoat, because you maybe be wet after this atraction and not only after this ;) Efteling ist magic place :) I will be go there third time ;) Regards! :)
Consumer Comment 84

Positive feedback on the page from the community allows for the generation of 'brand advocates' who can potentially raise interest for the park: 'By enthusing your online community and inspiring them to share within their social circles you can essentially build a team of brand advocates where hundreds of people spread the word about your campaign, amplifying your marketing message in a means that was not previously possible' (Allthingsweb.co.uk, access on 01/07/2017). This is correlated with the fact that once a user likes/comments on a public page/content, such as ex. Efteling page, it

will appear on the 'news feed', which means it will be visible to all that users network. In other words this is equivalent with gaining exposure with the Facebook online community contributing to the effective brand positioning efforts. Moreover, a positive reviews are argued to encourage trustworthiness due to the resource sharing a particular community (Blichfeldt- Marabese, 2014).

5.3.2 Consumer survey

The second part of the brand image consists of using a consumer survey that was sent to Facebook users who wrote the review of the page. We have sent the survey to a total of 48 users and received 15 replies. The number of replies was affected by a Facebook functionality by which messages sent to private users are directed to the 'other' inbox which is not displayed within the regular inbox. Therefore, in order to see the message in 'other' inbox, the user has to access a special section of the inbox. Because of this being a less familiar function of the Facebook Messenger platform, it has been challenging to gather survey responses.

The survey created for this project consists of 13 questions and aims to gain the additional information otherwise not possible to gather from the Facebook comments and reviews. The survey guide can be found in Annex 5.

Within the survey structure, we used a number of 6 open questions, with the option for the user to fill in a textual answer, a number of 6 singular choice questions, with the option of selecting a predefined answer, together with 1 multiple choice question, with the option to select more than one relevant answer.

The aim of the survey was to gather the insight otherwise not available through comments and reviews on the Facebook page. Questions asked are short and usually are provided with the set of answers as there is an evidence of this type of survey being more effective rather than having extensive survey with complex questions (Rossi et al, 2013). Thanks to gathering the answers we are not only able to evaluate whether the

brand positioning is cohesive with the brand image but also detect the most desirable content for the social media channel.

**Where are you from? Please provide your town and country.**

Text Responses

Leek, UK
Stafford, UK
Coventry, uk
Uk. Rugby.
UK
Sheffield, UK
Karlsruhe, Germany
Hanley UK
Crowborough East Sussex
Bedford, UK
UK
Sandhurst UK
liverpool UK
Coventry, uk
Basingstoke, United Kingdom

SQ1. The first question 'Where are you from? Please provide the town and country' is an introductory question to obtain basic information about the research subjects. However, it was at the same time essential to assess the location of the users, as we are investigating the UK audience. Even though one person has different origin than the UK (i.e. Germany), we have confirmed they are located in the area nonetheless based on their public profile. The rest of the answers obtained are from various locations in the UK.

How did you hear about Efteling?

|	Facebook	Instagram	Other social media	Website	Newspapers/Magazines	Travel agents	Blogs	Competitions, promotions	Friends or family	Other (Please Specify)	Responses
All Data	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	5 (33%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	5 (33%)	2 (13%)	15
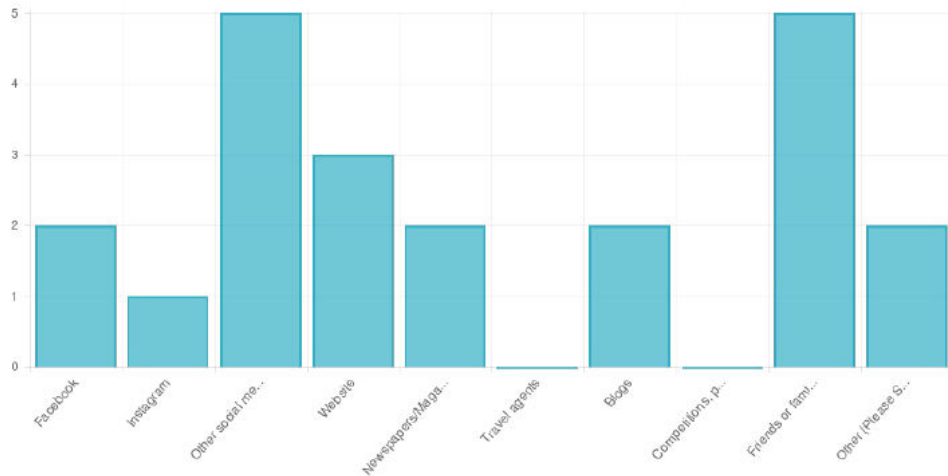
Text Responses

Theme Park Worldwide
youtube

SQ2. The Second question, 'How did you hear about Efteling?' was asked to gather an insight as per the source of awareness about Efteling. Since Efteling was introduced on the UK market it was only present on one social media platform - Facebook and is also actively promoted across the traditional media such as online magazines. Therefore, it was interesting to examine which of the channels was predominant in visitors brand awareness. Analyzing the answers, we can notice that the information about Efteling was delivered by friends and family (5 respondents) and other social media channels (5 respondents), while only 2 respondents stated they obtained information about the park from Facebook. We can therefore notice, that despite running paid advertising on Facebook, Efteling is promoted effectively through different channels, one of them being WOM, previously elaborated upon in the chapter 5.2. Recommendations from friends or family members are acknowledged by the scholars as one of the most powerful marketing 'tools': 'Friends and family are number one source for information about places to visit' (Rosen 2002, p. 5). Another popular channel of information about the

park was the website (3 respondents), followed by the outlets such as blogs, magazines and Instagram.

How long have you been aware of Efteling?

	Less than a week	Between one week and one month	Between 1 month and 6 months	Between 6 months and 1 year	More than 1 year	Standard Deviation	Responses
All Data	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	12 (80%)	4.56	15

Less than a week · Between one week and one month · Between 1 month and 6 months · Between 6 months and 1 year · More than 1 year
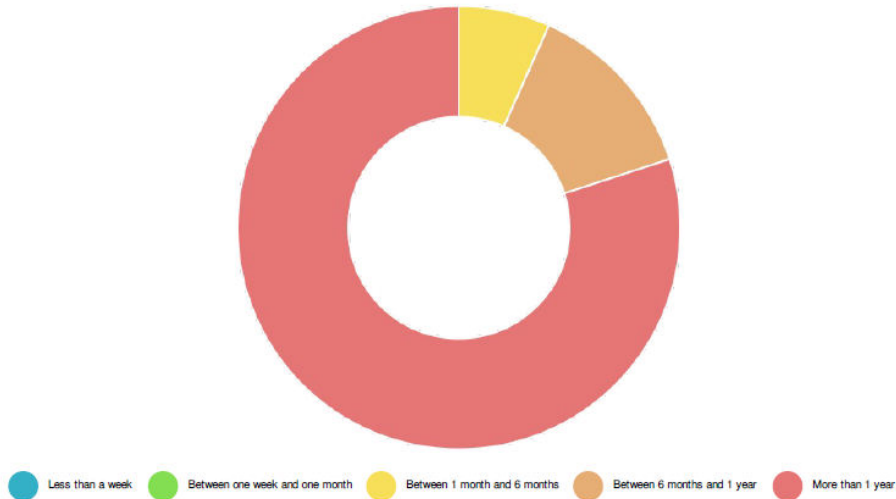
SQ3. The questions number 3 'How long have you been aware of Efteling' indicates the level of familiarity with the brand dividing between new users and old familiar visitors who have been aware of the park prior to introducing the paid advertising for social media. Moreover, we can have an overview of Efteling as a tourism product to establish whether it is a new or well known destination. Based on the findings from the survey, we can notice 80% of the respondents know about the park for more than a year. It would potentially be of interest to continue with this question on how long the respondents are familiar with the location to be able to establish whether the place was known before establishing social media channels (2015), however it was not the focus of our problem statement. Here we can note further recommendation for paid advertising strategy consisting of a change of the messaging to address more loyal audience rather than using simply informative posts for new users. For example, rather than promoting posts 'Have you heard about Efteling …' the content could be more engaging and focusing on the already established audience.

Which post do you remember from the Efteling Facebook page?

Text Responses

The Making of Baron 1898

360 degrees Baron POV video

About the constructioon of Baron 1898 and Symbolica

The chubby man with the hat. Pardue?

Promotions

None

None

Baron construction

N/A

None

None

None

Promotions

Promotional Video

Symbolica making of video

SQ4. The question 'Which post do you remember from Efteling Facebook page?' aims to gain an understanding of the consumer perception for the brand, by exploring the memorable content from the page. This question can be compared with the categories identified in the brand identity of Efteling to measure consistency within the social media marketing strategy. In the answers section for this question we can notice that almost half of the respondents replied in a neutral way, stating at the same time that they do not remember any content from the Facebook page. We can conclude here that the content on the Facebook page is not memorable enough for the audience, as they are not able to exemplify content. Promotions are however mentioned, an indicator of a category that engages the audience, as 'It is for this reason that research has shown that messages which are highly arousing (i.e. Catch attention) are more likely to be successful' (Fagan, 2016, p.67).

What type of images appeal to you from the Efteling Facebook page?

Text Responses

Lifestyle

Photos of attractions

Images of park scenery and attractions

The links with children's stories and the way Efteling brings that imagery to life.

Promotions

MOAR COASTER PICS

None

Construction and maintenance

Scenery, rides and landscaping.

Promotions

None

None

Promotions

Showcasing the park features

Photos of the park and backstage

SQ5. The next question 'What type of images appeal to you from the Efteling Facebook page?' Aims to obtain an overview over patterns of content the consumers are interested in, again serving as a form of measurement of congruence between brand identity and brand image. Evaluation of the most appealing visuals, from the consumer point of view, allows for adjusting the marketing efforts in order to ensure the best effectiveness of the further campaign. Based on the reviewed answers it is possible to notice the diversity of demands regarding the type of content. Such answers can indicate that there are different types of interests among the Efteling park Facebook page and thus, the content should be varied in order to adapt to different preferences to achieve the engagement (Bird 2004).

## If you could describe Efteling in one word, what would that be?

Text Responses

Magical
Charming
fantastic
Magical
Terrible
Pretty
Fantasy
Magical
Beautiful
Romantic
Breathtaking
Fun
magical
Magical
Magical

SQ6. The question 'If you could describe Efteling in one word, what would that be?' is directed as finding the key message the social media page conveys in the users' perspective. Thanks to the gathered answers it is possible to compare and contrast the associations about the park from the consumers that already visited the location. Analyzing the answers we can notice the word 'magical' was mentioned 6 times which is connected to the fairytale category in the semiotic analysis. At the same time, describing Efteling as a magical location by the visitors reflects the cohesiveness between the promoted messages and the experience in the park. Another words mentioned are 'charming', 'fantastic', 'pretty', 'breathtaking' and 'fun', all of which have a positive connotation. Research has shown there are several factors involved in the destination competitiveness, one of the most important being positive visitor experiences and an attractive environment (Pike and Page 2014, p. 210) which are in the case of the present question achieved by Efteling, as the marketing efforts are consistent with the real life experience of the destination.

What features of Efteling have you found more info about from the Facebook page?

	Food	Events	Rides	Attractions	Promotions	Location	Accommodation	Responses
All Data	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	8 (53%)	4 (27%)	7 (47%)	5 (33%)	4 (27%)	15
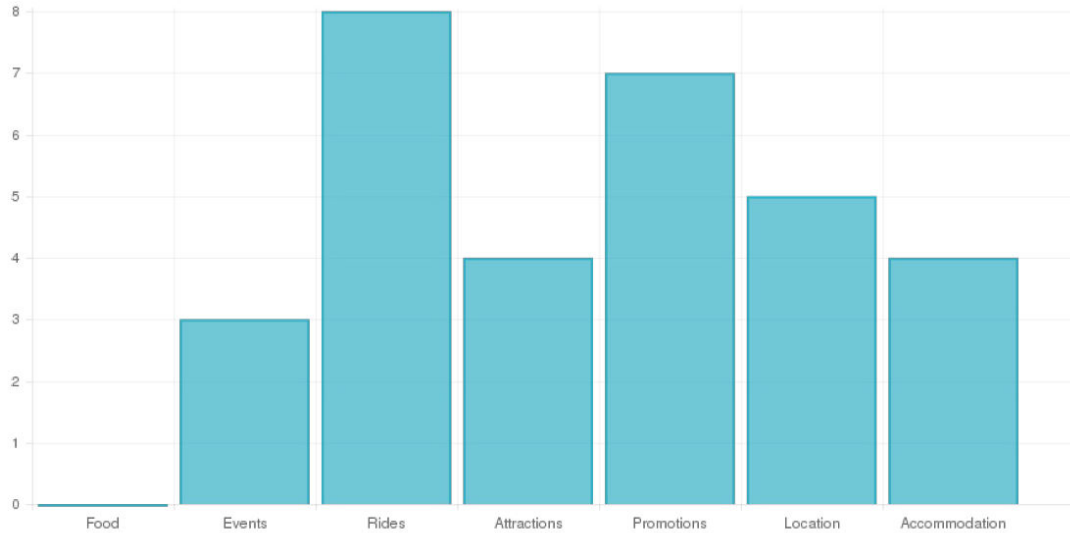
SQ7. The next question 'What features of efteling have you found more info about from the Facebook page?' allows for investigating which information can be found on the Facebook page in a sufficient quantity vs content that is lacking information. The outcome of this question also allows for adjusting the type and quantity of content within the web page as it indicates missing elements. In terms of the project, this question allows for distinguishing which type of content is of interest for the audience therefore, it can serve as a guideline while creating new marketing strategy for the UK market. The interest is focused on content about rides, promotions and location.

What type of info on Efteling would you like to see more on the Facebook page?

	Food	Events	Rides	Attractions	Promotions	Location	Accommodation	Other (Please Specify)	Responses
All Data	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	5 (33%)	4 (27%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	5 (33%)	15
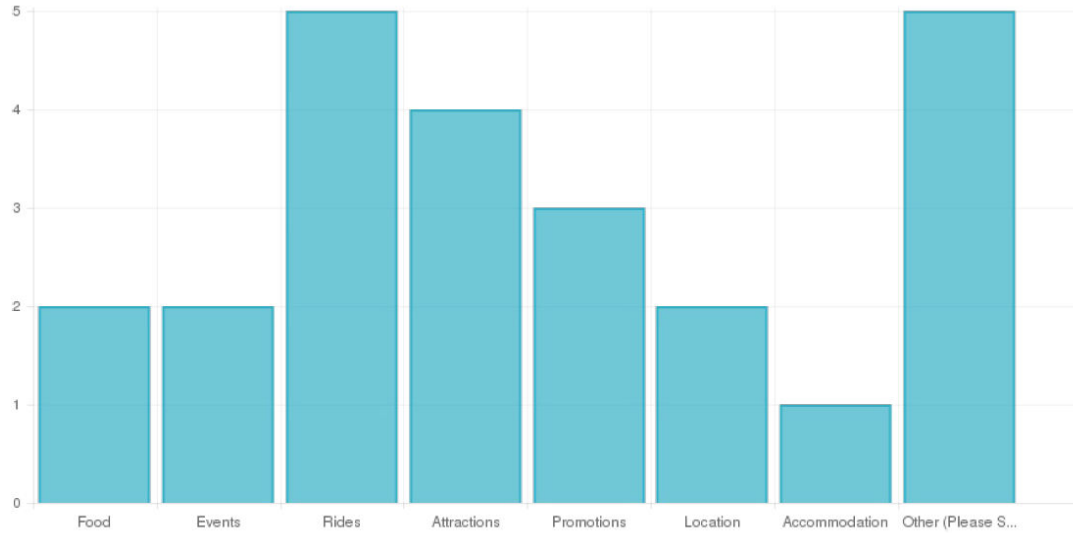
SQ8. We continue with the question regarding the most interesting content for Facebook page : 'What type of info on Efteling would you like to see more on the Facebook page?'. Through this question we can evaluate the most interesting and desired content. At the same time, the outcome of this question combined with the question number 6 allows to create the most accurate and interesting content. The predominant answer is based on destination facilities and attractions.

In your opinion, how easy is it to travel to Efteling?

	Very easy	Easy	Rather difficult	Extremely difficult	Standard Deviation	Responses
All Data	4 (27%)	8 (53%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	2.86	15

Very easy   Easy   Rather difficult   Extremely difficult
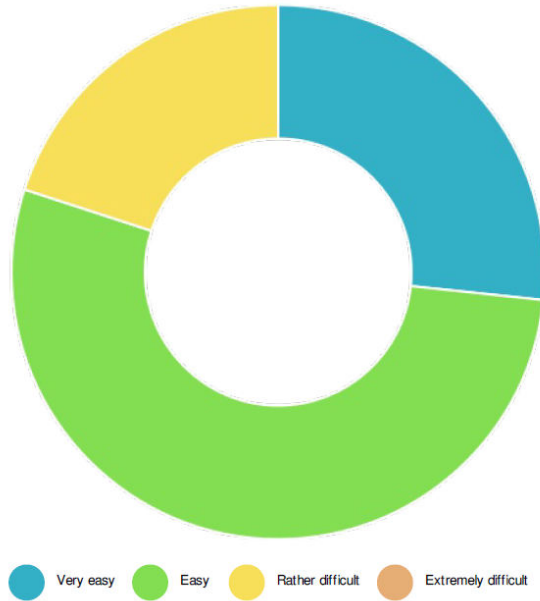
SQ9. The survey continues with another question: 'In your opinion, how easy is it to travel to Efteling?' - gathering data for this question allows to examine the accessibility of Efteling from the perspective of a visitor living in the UK. As mentioned earlier, the location of Efteling is not central and taking under consideration the travelling efforts the UK visitors have to undertake it is interesting to have the insight on that matter. As previously mentioned from the literature on the matter, a range of factors have an impact on brand competitiveness one of them being ease of access (Pike and Page 2014).The majority of answers indicate Efteling is easy accessible to visitors which contributes to the strengthening of marketing efforts.

Do you see Efteling as good value for money?

	Yes	No	Standard Deviation	Responses
All Data	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	6.5	15

Yes No
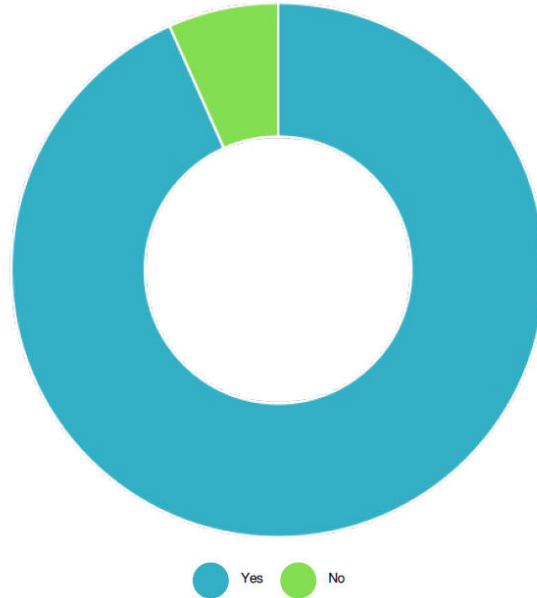
SQ10. We continue the survey with another question of value of the Efteling tourism offering 'Do you see Efteling as a good value for money?'. Through the gathered answers we can determine whether Efteling is an attractive destination for the visitors and the money invested in the traveling and the entrance ticket are considered worth spending which indicates the competitiveness of the destination. Respondents indicate the park is good value for money which contributes to the decision making process and a consistent brand image.

Have you visited any other theme parks in Europe?

	Yes	No	Standard Deviation	Responses
All Data	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	7.5	15

Yes   No
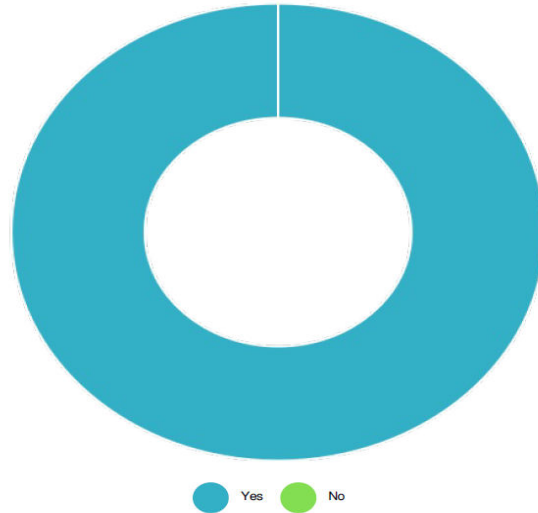
SQ11. Europe is known for many different amusement parks such as Disneyland or Europa Park. By asking 'Have you visited any other theme parks in Europe' followed by the next question 'If so, which theme parks have you visited' we can evaluate whether the visitors have any comparison point, and if so, to which of the parks.

We mentioned previously the difficulty facing DMOs in identifying resources that will differentiate their destination from competing places offering similar attributes and benefits. Increasingly, DMOs have been moving into branding initiatives since the 1990s, in the attempt to achieve differentiation (Pike &Page, 2014). Examining competitors allows for adapting the marketing messages to the audience.

If so, which theme parks have you visited?

Text Responses

Alton towers, phantasialand, tripsdrill, europa park, chessington, Thorpe park, Drayton manor, Disneyland Paris, flamingoland, Blackpool pleasure beach, fantasy island, sundown adventure land

Disneyland Resort Paris, PortAventura, Liseberg, UK Merlin Parks, Drayton Manor, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Oakwood

Europa Park, Phantasialand, Holiday Park, Hansa Park, Tripsdrill, Heide Park, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures

Somewhere in Rheinland-Pfalz. Cannot remember the name.

Toverland

Phantasialand, Movie Park DE and Toverland

Europa-Park, Tripsdrill

Phantasialand

Toverland, Phantasialand, Liseberg, Portaventura, Ferrari land and Europa Park

Europa Park, Phantasialand, Disneyland Paris

Blackpool Pleasure Beach and Drayton Manor

Gardaland, heide park

all UK parks, portaventura, tivoli gardens, phantasialand, movie park germany

Europa park, blackpool

Thorpe Park, Alton Towers, Chessington World of Adventures, Paultons Park, Disneyland Paris, Walt Disney Studios, Gardaland, Puy du Fou, Futuroscope, Duinrell, Walibi Holland

If you visited Efteling, what was your favourite attraction?

Text Responses

Flying Dutchman

Joris en de Draak

The Flying Dutchman

Python

Joris En De Draak (Vuur)

Watercoaster

Baron

Joris en Draak

De Vliegebde Hollander Water Coaster

Baron 1898 or Symbolica

Baron

dreamflight

Rollecoaster

The flying dutchman

SQ12 & SQ13: In the end, we ask for the favourite attraction in Efteling. Determining the most appealing attraction allows also for implementing the images of it in the further marketing efforts through visual and textual marketing to ensure the attractiveness of the content for the Facebook followers. Presentation of the desired content on the social media can influence the audience creating positive emotions which are argued to be one of the stimulators enhancing the purchasing: 'Marketing folklore suggests that emotion can stimulate buying interest, guide choices, arouse buying intentions, and influence future buying decisions' (O'Shaughnessy 2003, p. 5).

5.3.3 Comparing and contrasting brand image

After an overview of the key messages and identification of the similar patterns within the consumer perception, we move on to identify the contrasting aspects that result from interpretation of our data. The importance of gathering consumer feedback is at the basis of significant marketing research literature: 'Continuous feedback tells companies how to improve services and expand product lines in ways they might never have thought of themselves' (Møller, p.79).

It is essential for an analysis of the consumer perception to look into the characteristics of the target market of Efteling social media. By using Facepager digital tool, we gathered insights from the Facebook page that allow us to confirm the demographic characteristics of the investigated audience, that being the predominant UK location Fig.6. Therefore the social media marketing efforts are focused on the mentioned target group in the brand identity. It is why we can further discuss the consistency and effectiveness of the marketing efforts, which are elaborated in the present chapter. The importance of measuring the results of marketing efforts has been a widely discussed topic in the literature, however the field of destinations marketing in particular is lacking in substantial research on the matter, as Pike and Page mention studies that address this issue (Pike and Page, 2014, p.212).

However, we can notice a minor percentage of the audience being from different geographical location from which might indicate increased brand awareness across international audiences. Another reason might be the several options for Efteling regional facebook pages, which might cause the UK page to appear in search options.

AE	13
AU	65
AW	19
BD	18
BE	300
BG	37
BR	32
CA	46
CH	12
CW	18
CY	20
DE	189
DK	18
EG	19
ES	66
FR	44
GB	5516
GE	12
GR	38
HU	14
IE	270
IL	158
IN	36
IT	56
LU	16
MT	72
MX	15
MY	16
NG	36
NL	739
NO	22
NZ	18
PH	20
PK	40
PL	44
PT	29
QA	10
RO	82
RS	22
SA	11
SE	15
SR	23

Figure 6: Efteling visitors by location

5.3.3.1 Consumer family theme

Family is the key message of Efteling marketing strategy as it was presented in the chapter 5.1, as a brand identity focus, but also recognised as part of the brand positioning in chapter 5.2. Moreover, the family motive is present as a common pattern throughout the consumer comments and reviews, demonstrating consistency with the consumer perception.

Just back from a weekend there with grandchildren. Fabulous time had by all. Got to be the friendliest and best run family theme park in europe...□□□

Consumer Comment 956

The presence of the family theme through all elements of the social media efforts aligns with the branding theory, where it is argued for the need of the consistency within the messages that allows for the creation of the expectations towards a destination: 'When information is consistent with assumptions it becomes incorporated into the representation and can shape future expectations' (Hansen & Christiansen 2003, p. 402). Moreover, the connection between marketed messages and the experience being correspondent indicate the marketing efforts are truthful, which positively contributes to the strengthening of the brand image and the creation of relation towards the park: 'If [...] messages are consistent we may be willing to try a product. If the experience of use is consistent and the after-sales service is good, we may repeat-purchase and become a brand enthusiast and advocate' (Ind 2003, p. 4). Trustworthiness communicated through positive consumer feedback within the social mediascape is one of the key elements that can contribute to the brand image as the modern consumers are characterized by the limited trust towards the traditional media outlets such as pre-designed campaigns, there is a need for an alternative source of information about the destination '[...] after dealing with institutions that fail to deliver on their promises, they [consumers] do not readily believe professionally crafted messages or messengers' (Cakim 2009, p. 10). In the case of Efteling, the key focus of marketing efforts of the park is the family element that the existing visitors and potential visitors can associate

themselves with. The underlying messages highlight the quality time one can spend with the family in the park, unforgettable experience and memories. As the theme park online communities are characterised by a limited trust there is the benefit of sharing resources of information in order to gain credibility and trustworthiness, impacting the decision making process. For this reason positive reviews, also known as WOM, are recognised as a factor of influence on the success of destination marketing strategy (Rosen, 2002).

This is absolutely an amazing place !! So many wonderful memories !! Xx
Consumer Comment 1235

At the same time, the multigenerational aspect is also focused on. Considering the marketed messages and the consumer feedback, we can notice that the following elements are corresponding and creating a cohesive image of the park. Thanks to that, Efteling as a tourism destination gains the trustworthiness.

Visited when I was a child with my parents and had an amazing time. Hoping to take my children soon and hope they will love it as much as me!!
Consumer Comment 995

5.3.3.2 Consumer fairytale theme

Another important element of the marketing actions is the focus on the fairytale theme within the Facebook page. Numerous visual and textual elements refer to this theme creating the image of the park as a magical place. The element of magic allows for unforgettable memories with your family (as elaborated upon in the chapter 5.3.3.1) but also if you are traveling as a couple or even alone. Despite Efteling being mainly promoted as a 'family destination', the fairytale element allows for targeting other types of audience (singles, couples, elderly visitors etc.) which was also explained during the interview with A.B., Social Media Manager of the park:

(A27) A: yes, it's definitely, I mean to be honest it's great fun for anyone, whether you go single or as a couple but yeah, primarily the focus is family.

The 'fairytale-ness' of Efteling contributes to the creation of memories that are expressed through some of the comments on the Facebook page:

I went there 43 years ago, I was 5 and visiting my aunt and uncle. It was magical then, so I can only imagine how wonderful it is now. I remember the toadstools that played fairy music as you passed them. The nanny holding crying babies that only shut up when you put your rubbish into their mouths. The fairies emerging from flowers in a magical pool. So many beautiful memories. If you can afford to take your children, do. They'll never forget it. I didn't x
Consumer Comment 1234

loved it here when the grandchildren were small (Daniel, Amy and Callum). Even the waste bins were interactive to encourage everyone to throw their rubbish away correctly and all the beautiful little people. Approach some of the buildings and risk who would come out. after you. Exquisite and magical.
Consumer Comment 889

The above comments highlight the most memorable events from the Efteling park and are a great representation of feedback highlighting the magical aspect of the location. We can notice, that some of the key elements of the memory making were connected to the elements of magic of Efteling.

Moreover, the magical theme was detected through the distributed questionnaire (question no. 6.) asking for the word to describe the park. The fairytale theme, is not therefore consistent only with the objectives of the brand identity but also is reflected in the park and is corresponding with the consumer perception.

On the other hand, despite the fairytale theme being one of the main elements, next to the family aspect, the questionnaire allowed for the detection of another theme interesting for the visitors - attractions and adventure. This theme is corresponding with one of the semiotic themes however, it is not a focus of the marketing efforts. The adventure theme is acknowledged by SMM A.B. but does not play a key role. Adventure is possible to detect based on the provided visuals of the park as it is a part of the 'fairytale experience' and as a side product of this experience, however, this element does not have it's own focus within the marketing efforts. Analyzing the overall branding strategy of Efteling, it is possible to notice the constant repetitiveness of themes family - fairytale, without expanding it for other sectors such as attractions, which are the key element of the park. Despite different visuals and textuals, the repetitive messages can lose on the attractiveness for loyal customers of the park (by loyal, we would define a long-term FaceBook followers as well as visitors of the park).

OMG Quality at its best, fantastic ride, grinning like a Cheshire Cat, my 13 year old was giggling with excitement. You sure know how to entertain well Done Efteling □□□□□
Every single ride was totally thrilling □
Consumer Comment 955

5.3.3.3 Constructing the emotional selling point

Emotional selling point (4.4 Social media marketing and USP) refers to the creation of the emotional connection between the destination and the consumer to increase the competitiveness of the location. This element is consequently intertwined in the marketing efforts of Efteling referring to it as a place for generations where grandparents visited the park as children and now they visit with their grandchildren 'reliving' the experience. Multigenerational element is visible through visual updates by the presentation of 3 generations but it is also reflected by the visitors of the park:

Was going this year with our kids who grow up with this park .now go with our grand kids .had to cancel .going book next year family hols xxx

Consumer Comment 924

My wish is to be able to bring my Grandson and his baby Sister one day.
Consumer Comment 855

Based on the above comments it is possible to notice that revisiting the park with grandchildren and children is not only actively performed but also can be considered a 'desire' to relive Efteling but in a different role. The feeling of loyalty is visible through the comments from the Facebook page:

Went to Efteling every year at least once or twice a year throughout my childhood, now I want to get married here ☺
Consumer Comment 1090

Strong emotional connection to the park expressed by the comments yet again correspondents with the brand identity and brand positioning of Efteling.

Efteling key promotional element, as mentioned before, is the family theme. However, taking under consideration already gathered loyal audience combined with the already existing loyalty and multigenerational aspect there is a need for a new, fresh content to showcase the parke from new dimension. The outcome of the survey highlighted the interest within themes that are not so widely covered through the Facebook page but also the web page. One of them would be the facilities within the park (rides) followed by promotions and events. All of the mentioned elements, potentially different, have a common factor - they are the experience for the visitors. Therefore, we can note, that more of an interest would be content highlighting what the visitors can gain from visiting the destination. Events and promotions moreover indicate more proactive approach that the loyal audience would be interested in. This refers to the fact, numerous updates on the Efteling Facebook page are more informative utilizing the same theme - family - over and over again. It is of course vital, to have a clear focus within the marketing efforts (Pike & Page 2014) in order to ensure successful branding however, the content

should be dynamic and offer new elements to ensure the engagement (Wang et al. 2016). As observed in the extracted comments from the facebook page, the central focus is the family element as it was in line with the targeted audience:

Spending 4 days with family for my daughter's 16th. Letting them experience the favourite place in my home country for themselves. A few years after my son in law asked my oldest daughter to marry him in the Efteling.
Consumer Comment 483

However to contrast this the survey findings reveal a need for more diverse messages based on presenting rides and attractions, as 60%of respondents would prefer to see more on the Facebook page when asked 'what type of info would you like to see more on the facebook page?' (Question 8).

6. Limitations and ethics

Each research is characterized by numerous limitations it can face (Polonsky & Waller, 2011), as was the case of our project. To continue we evaluate the challenges we encountered while conducting our research study, at the same time reflecting upon solutions for future research.

One of the most important issues was the lack of resources allowing us to conduct the research at the destination- Efteling Amusement Park in Netherlands. As mentioned in the problem statement, originally we have planned to conduct an active research at the location with the usage of observation and undercover interviews, where we would talk to random visitors of the park about their experience to gather the data. However, as that was not possible due to the financial limitations, we decided upon the usage of an online survey and scraping the data from the internet. The data gathered also includes the reviews and opinions of the visitors. It is however worth mentioning that due to the nature of our study, the online environment offers the most relevant opportunity to filter the desired sample: as we examined the marketing efforts on a specific market, it was

consequently the right alternative to use a dedicated social media page for that particular audience - the UK market.

The next challenge we faced were time limitations, as an extensive study conducted at the destination would require significant time resources and organisation. Adding to this was the location of the researchers, who at the time of conducting the study were living in different countries - Denmark and UK. Although a challenge this has strengthened our ability to organise our simultaneous work with the usage of available online platform contributing to new ways of conducting group research, as we made use of the advantages of the online scape for our study. Furthermore, working full-time has proved another challenge for the two researchers in terms of time resources and organisation.

Another difficulty was the complexity of the extensive data and the issue of systematizing and organising in a logical way, not only clear and understandable for researchers but also able to convey the findings in a most accurate way to the reader. Adding to this there is the multidimensional aspect analysing both the business and consumer perspective which requires a clear structure of the interpretation, which was achieved by using the aforementioned branding model of Aaker 1991.

Ethics of research refers to the way research is conducting and to the set of principles applied through the research (Frechette, 1994, p.2). When it comes to research within the digital scape there are numerous ethical considerations to be taken into account as the boundaries between ethical and unethical behavior are very vague, for example while using the digital tool to scrape Facebook as we are dealing with the privacy issue (Russel & Purcell, 2009). One way to tackle this issue is to use tools that do not engage in any illegal action such as scraping more information than it is publicly available (Facebook, Lomborg et al 2014, Rieder 2013, Wilson et al 2012). In addition in order not to violate any privacy issues regarding the users that were a subject of the study and the content they submitted to the Facebook page, we decided upon not disclosing any personal information. However the online scape is a sensitive topic when it comes to the ethics, it was very well summarize by Neuhaus and Webmoor (2012, as cited in

Lomborg et al.): 'when users sign up for a social media service, they have to accept the terms of use, often implying letting the service provider use their information to improve and monetize their product'.

7. Conclusions

They key focus of this project is social media marketing and it's impact on the destination marketing strategy. With the rise of technology destinations have seen the need to adapt to the rapidly changing digital landscape. As a result, in order to achieve the competitiveness on the global market, destinations have started to use the various complexities of the online environment to their advantage. One recognized way to implement this is social media marketing which in the context of the tourism industry is argued to be a research field that remains unexplored (Mariani et al, 2014). As stated by the World Tourism Organization, 'the key of success in internet is the quick identification of consumer needs, direct communication, comprehensive presentation, customization and updating the information', the need for meeting the increasingly refined needs of the consumers calls for destinations to engage in more sophisticated brand initiatives. It is why we decided to investigate the case of an international tourism destination and its efforts to achieve the competitive advantage in the digital scape. In order to give the research structure and to convey the key aspects to the reader we have organized the research following the branding model of Aaker (1991) to answer the following research questions:

1. **What are the key elements of Efteling social media marketing strategy based on the Facebook page?**
2. **How are these elements used in Facebook marketing?**
3. **How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?**

As the research was placed in the digital scape, we used a range of digital tools and methods to support the findings. First of all, the data was gathered with the usage of

online tool Facepager and Netwizz, analyzed with netnography and the use of semiotics and supported by the word count tool in order to detect the most common words within the textual updates and customer reviews followed by the customer survey.

In the first part we identify the key messages of the Efteling marketing strategy based on the interview with social media manager of the destination A.B. . This step allowed to answer the first research question: 'What are the key elements of Efteling social media marketing strategy based on the Facebook page?', and it is consistent with the brand identity concept which refers to how the destination wants to be perceived by the tourist. In order to present the brand identity we analyzed the interview with the social media marketing manager responsible for the UK market. Our findings reveal Efteling desire to be perceived as family destination providing the visitors with unforgettable memories thanks to the magical setting of the park. Moreover, the marketing efforts are focused on the promotion of the multigenerational aspect of the park resulting in building the loyalty for the destination. However, there is a note to make about the pretesting the Facebook advertising campaign reflecting upon the fact that consumers are more receptive to the messages focused on adventure and discovery. This can be correlated with the survey results where respondents show increased interest on finding more information on the Facebook about rides and attractions. Although the social media manager acknowledged the possible need of applying different type of content, focusing on the areas of interest for the audience, no actions have been taken towards building on the rides and attractions type of content. This is in contradictions with the principles of branding recognized in the literature stating that there is a need to amend the content of social media channels in order to maintain the engagement of the profile (Govers 2011). From the desired brand identity we can recognize the brands attempt to rise the engagement by using competitions, a well known tactic in the marketing literature: 'Competitions, [...] can not only draw the attention to the Facebook page but also increase the interest in the destination (Abram and Pearlman, 2010).

In the second part we investigate how the company is implementing the desired messages on the Facebook page answering the second research question referring to

the concept of brand positioning 'How are these elements used in Facebook marketing?' With the usage of semiotics we analysed the visual and textual content on the Facebook page and divided the findings into four resulting categories: family theme, fairytale theme, attractions and facilities and seasonality. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the content was extracted from paid and organic posts and supported by detecting the most frequent words. The identified themes correspond with the brand identity overview demonstrating a cohesive strategy. Moreover, these themes are reflected in the paid Facebook advertising posts as the visuals used for paid promotion are selected from the same image resources. Despite the repetitiveness of themes within the paid and organic posts, the narrow focus of the family destination is more appealing to the target group - the UK audience. The first theme family describes the main focus of the social media marketing strategy and at the same time the primary audience of Efteling. Common elements that represent this theme are the family bonding element, multigenerational element and images conveying emotional attachment. All these predominant connotations are portrayed with the help of the emotional selling point described by Kotler (2005).

The fairytale theme, is not only one of the key messages in the desired brand positioning but also is a main feature of the park setting and attractions which is confirmed by the analysis of the most frequent words from the customer reviews and the consumer survey describing Efteling as a 'magical' place. This cohesiveness within the presentation of the park and matching experience enhances the trustworthiness of the marketing messages corresponding at the same time with the marketing concept where delivering consistent messages leads to consumers becoming brand advocates by sharing positive feedback on the brand (Ind 2003). Moreover, research argues for the importance of the overall services involved in building the brand perception (2011).

Attractions and facilities theme describes practical aspects of the tourism destination for example rides, hotels and other infrastructure. In addition, real life experience of the park suggests that the destination meets the marketing expectations thanks to the attention to the details through all the elements of the park enhancing the magic feeling

that was already mentioned upon in the previous paragraph. Despite the park equipped in several fast 'thrilling' rides, the marketing messages are focused more on presenting these in the context of family-fun rather than an exciting adventure. By analyzing the consumer feedback we detected the need for more informative posts about facilities available at the park. To give us an additional insight on the Facebook feedback revealed the connection between the destination and the overall national culture and heritage, consistent with the 'nation branding', a concept underlying early destination marketing research (Pike and Page, 2014). Moreover, marketing Efteling as Holland's hidden gem is also consistent with the strategy of turning liabilities into assets, where a destination uses the lack of familiarity to its advantage as is one of the findings resulting from our research.

The fourth theme detected was the seasonality theme, which indicates positioning the destination as an all-year-round attraction including the winter season, an aspect that provides part of the unique selling point of Efteling. Furthermore, for this theme we analysed the representative Winter Efteling video, which includes notes of the previous 3 themes such as fairytale, family bonding, rides and attractions, all within the 'magical' winter decor.

All the themes are cohesive with the brand identity key messages, with the focus on the family and fairytale, however small additions to the content are identified in the outcome of the survey consistent with the need for a more dynamic approach with varied messages.

At last, the analysis of brand identity and brand positioning allowed us to move on to comparing and contrasting the consumer perspective on the Efteling destination. This lead to answering the third research question, 'How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?'

One contradictory aspect noticed was the opposition between the companies desire to implement competitions and promotional activities in order to raise engagement.

However, as a result of the survey undertaken a percentage of the respondents requested additional competitions on the Facebook page indicating that there are still opportunities to be explored in terms of creating an effective strategy.

The last question 'How are these messages perceived and what is the consumer perception of Efteling amusement park?' allows us to measure the consumer perspective as a result of the above mentioned considerations. The most common words analysis allowed for detecting frequent words from the Facebook comments and reviews indicating the overview of the park from the customer perspective. The recurring words are 'efteling, 'family', 'adventure', 'world of wonders'. Although all the words correspond with the brand identity, there are some inconsistencies regarding brand positioning as the visuals do not focus as much on the adventure aspect. The main outcome of this chapter is the consistent and clear positioning, which is argued by scholars to contribute to achieving the competitive advantage (Pike and Page, 2014). This means that the destination brand image is largely in line with the desired positioning contributing to the trustworthiness of Efteling as the experience of the park corresponds with the marketing efforts.

Although the project is based on the example of Efteling, the findings can serve as a guideline for implementing destination marketing activities in the future and furthermore, contribute to the unexplored field of social media marketing in tourism.

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