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# MA TOURISM DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

Today there are several different drivers that inspire travelers to seek and explore the unknown and destination image especially takes important part in the destination decision-making. The projected image of a destination maybe less realistic in cases, after all marketers have the power to emphasize or hide details that are considered more or less desirable. To understand the destination image as a whole and find out the real strengths of a place it is locals and residents of the area that can contribute to the discovery. The main objective of this paper is to find out how is the image of Aalborg as a tourist destination perceived by the residents of the city.

For this purpose, several relevant literatures and theories were reviewed to find the most suitable techniques. The research was carried out in two phases, including qualitative and a quantitative phase. First of all, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with four individuals that have been residents of Aalborg for at least a few years. The interviewees are not Danish citizens, to provide an extra dimension to the object of the research – looking at the city as a vacation destination. The interviews were transcribed and content analyzed for the relevant constructs that were transformed into scale items, prepared for the second phase of the research where a quantitative survey was helping to better understand the collected data. In this survey the aim was to access an evaluation of the scale items from two aspects: the evaluative preference of the destination – meaning how much the specific scale item is relevant or applicable for the city, and the second aspect was the construct preference or importance, to recognize how important role each of these scale items in general to the respondents in their personal destination decision-making.

The results of the survey were reflected on empirically, derived into a discussion. As the main goal of the research was to find out of the image of Aalborg as a tourist destination through the eyes of its residents, this discussion reflects on the scale items that prove to be strongly perceived by the locals and residents, and emphasize the aspects that actually play an important role in their destination decision-making, so these can serve as an inspiration for destination marketers to focus on the strengths of the city with steer attention to what information is really important for the potential travelers.

The scale items that were strongest perceived and also showed to be important to the respondents were the city's good location, thus to access other destinations; the feeling of safety; it is easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels; there is high standards of cleanliness; there are many places of historical interest; there is interesting architecture; there are local, Danish dishes to try, restaurants; opportunities for nightlife; the presence of beer and drinking culture; limited or no crowdedness; plenty of parks and green areas; a general green image to the city and nice scenery. The findings include as well the accessible transportations and that the city is considered accessible for English speaking people. It also showed important and present that the weather is often windy and cloudy, however the atmosphere is chilled, quiet, relaxing; as well as the coziness and feeling of "hygge" is also present. The city is agreed to have lower prices than other cities in Denmark and the goods and services are affordable. Finally, there are no language barriers, the locals understand and speak English, and this appeared to be also strongly applicable, as well as an important aspect for the respondents.

In regards of the specific attractions in the city, the five most recommended are the fjord/Havnefront, the Tall Ships Races event during the summer, Aalborg Karneval, the heart of nightlife – Jomfru Ane Gade and finally Vestre Fjordpark, the outside pool. The following six attractions also gained quite positive feedback – the colorful houses in the old city, Musikkens hus, Aalborg streetfood, Salling rooftop, Fredagsfest Karolinelund/ Friday concerts in the park and the beaches that are easy to reach nearby.

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## Introduction

Destination image is a widely researched topic in the tourism field and a traveller's image of a destination can be built on several sources of information, or on - as Gartner (1994) refers to them - image formation agents. One of these important sources is the image that is projected by marketers through several different shapes and forms of media, especially in the changing media landscape with the introduction of the World Wide Web providing space to mass marketing.

What image the marketers intend to showcase through marketing materials can heavily influence the provisions of potential visitors in regards of the destination choice process (Mayo, 1973; Compton, 1979) and certainly impact their pre-visitation experience, where they develop their expectation in regards of the potential travel. (Dinnie, 2008)

Images, projected by marketers through marketing materials do not only and exclusively enhance the awareness and communicate information of a destination, but also aim to convert potential tourists into actual visitors of the area. (Jenkins, 2003) Lichrou, Patterson, O'Malley & O'Leary (2017) also reflects on Turner and Bruner (1986: 144) when they address that “[n]arratives are not only structures of meaning, but structures of power” – explaining that the narrator has the power to emphasize or silence certain realities based on the prevailing concernment and this allows advantages for the marketers. Alberts and James (1988) also points out in their study that the depiction of a destination may contrast reality to the extent of projecting an inauthentic image. The reason behind is that travel information sources are recognized to be rather biased than objective in their communication (Nolan 1976).

## Problem area

Branding is “[...] a process of expressing core values through the use of persuasive stories” (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004:224) and the purpose of destination branding is to shape public perceptions of the place (Richards, 1992; McCleary & Whitney, 1994 in Can-Seng, 2004).

Even though place branding is primarily built by local authorities, marketing companies and internal stakeholders – this created product does not necessarily reflect the sense of place of the residents of the city and “[...]place branding has been criticised for not resonating with the lived realities of places” (Miles, 2010 in Lichrou, Patterson, O'Malley & O'Leary, 2017: 165). This proposes that locals are more prone to have a realistic perceived image, which was also justified by Hunt (1975) and Scott *et al.* (1978, in: Jenkins, 1999), finding that distance from the destination takes a great part in image formation, therefore people that live closer – as mentioned before – have a stronger image of the destination.

To approach the issue from a practical perspective as well, understanding the perceived image of Aalborg by its residents through this research may be relevant for tourist agencies and marketers as the finances purposed for marketing activities are generally limited and the results can help for better budgetary allocations as well as serving as a guide to the relevant attributions and imageries for the appropriate segments for effective marketing. (Crompton, 1979)

## Problem formulation

Based on the problem area, this research strives to find the answer to:

**How is the image of Aalborg as a tourist destination perceived by the residents of the city?**

## Literature review

The literature review will include both a theoretical background check over the topics of Destination image, destination image formation and destination image measurement. These will also include a couple of examples from connecting studies and research papers in order to gain a better understanding of the use of these theories and gain an insight on what might be the most suitable research techniques to product the most reliable findings.

### Destination image

The importance and relevance of the issue has been revealed as part of the introduction, but one of the bedrocks of this paper is the understanding what is referred as “destination image” in the tourism arena. In order to have a grasp over the notion, in the followings there will be literature and perspectives addressed from relevant theorists and authors around the topic.

Jenkins (1999, 2003) expresses that it is challenging to form an understanding of tourist images due to the diverse approaches and understanding on the subject, however the topic has been widely disserted and several definitions have been publicised. One early and commonly cited definition of destination image is from Crompton (1979) according to witch image is *“a sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination”*. Baloglu and McCleary (1999: 870) suggested a similar definition which follows as *“an individual’s mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feeling and global impressions about [...] a destination.”* The word “impression” seem to appear in other researchers’ definitions as well, such as Phelps (1986), Dadgostar and Isotalo (1992) or Milman and Pizam (1995). Jenkins though argued for the following definition as destination image is *“the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional thoughts an individual or group might have of a particular place”* from Bovy (1977 in: Jenkins 1999: 2), as marketers channel the image towards a group of people, therefore it is important to gain an understanding of the aspects of image that are collectively perceived – this perspective also resonates well with the problem formulation, in an attempt to measure the collective image by a group of people.

### Destination image formation

In the area of destination image formation, there are three researchers being cited over and over again. First of all the model from Gartner (1993) offering three main dimensions of destination image, which are the cognitive, affective and conative elements. To understand their meaning, the “cognitive” dimension refers to a person’s knowledge or thinking of the object, while the “affective” component is a sum of the feelings related to this. Finally the conative component is responsible for how one intends to act on the object or information. (Gartner, 1993)

However Baloglu and McClary (1999) also develops and understanding together with a framework on how destination image is formed. According to them there are personal and stimulus factors and both will contribute to develop a perception of an image of a place. Personal factors may also have two dimensions as psychological (for example values, motivations or personality), and social (such as age, education, marital status). And the stimulus factors may also depend on information sources, previous experience or distribution.

According to Gartner (1994), - as mentioned in the introduction as well – distinguishes different image formatting agents based on three dimensions of effecting the agents, which are their credibility, their destination cost and their market penetration ability. The agents are shortly introduced as follows:

#### Overt included I

This category represents the agents applying traditional advertisement and the senders may be either brochures, TV, radio, literatures etc. The image to communicate is specific and clear and the identity of the sender of the message is not hidden. (Gartner, 1994)

#### Overt included II

These are talking about the tour operators and wholesalers/marketers that are advertising the destination – here it is always the interest of the agents to project the best image presentable and the displayed images are selected accordingly. (Gartner, 1994)

#### Covert included I

The trick to the covert included I agents is that that agents are picking spokesmen to communicate an image they want to project, trying to gain credibility when using this spokesman that is presumably trusted by the target audience. (Gartner, 1994)

#### Covert included II

These are usually agents where the audience do not necessarily realize that they receive the information through an arranged channel – these can be travel blogs or articles sponsored by the promoter. (Gartner, 1994)

#### Autonomous

These image formatting agents can be movies, documents, independent writers and blogs that are supposedly unbiased and present an image on their own terms. (Gartner, 1994)

#### Unsolicited organic

Unsolicited organic agents may be individuals that are presenting information that were not necessarily asked for however this source can be quite reliable at times. (Gartner, 1994)

Solicited organic

Solicited organic is similar to the previous, except that these agents are asked by the perceiver to forward information on their experiences, therefore the receiver hears exactly about what they are looking for. (Gartner, 1994)

Organic

The organic agent may be the agent with the highest reliability, as this is based on personal experiences. (Gartner, 1994)

### Destination image measurement

Perceived destination image can be researched for example through content analysis; this can include several different forms of communication, Jenkins (1999: 8) suggests *“Interviews where respondents discuss their image of a destination are taped and transcribed, and then the important dimensions, constructs or attributes are extracted.”*

The following is a model that offers a framework for destination image research, by Jenkins (1999). She suggests that the research should consist of two phases: a qualitative and a quantitative phase. The model is illustrated on figure 1. The Qualitative Phase may involve construct elicitation techniques, for example interviews, content analysis, triad elicitation or photo elicitation. The purpose of this phase is to find the most applicable constructs for the destination. The advantage of this approach for finding out of the attributes to focus on is that it *“[...] minimises the danger of forcing respondents to reach to a standardised framework that may not be accurate representation their image”* (Jenkins, 1999: 7) – the results will be more accurate for the specific destination.

When the relevant constructs or attributes are identified, the second phase is for the measurement of the destination image based on the relevant items. This requires two rating scales and a sample to both evaluate the preference of the destination based on the previously collected constructs and also the preference of each of the constructs so the results gain a dimension for importance.



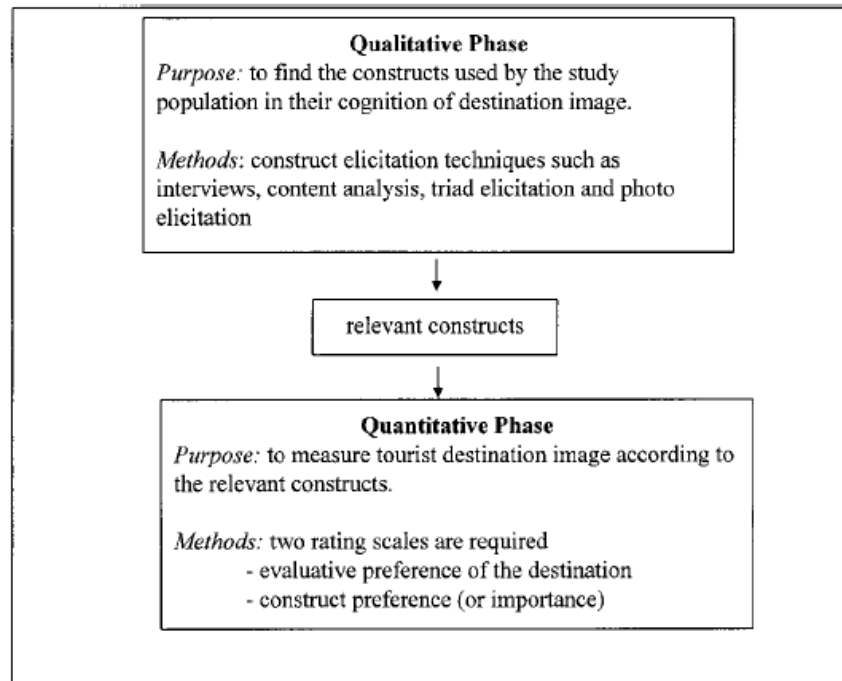


Figure 1 – A model for destination image research (Jenkins, 1999: 7)

The research required in the qualitative phase can be carried out by different techniques. Crompton (1979) made a study on the projected and perceived image of Mexico with the technique of construct elicitation and factor analysis. In order to obtain the most relevant attributes for marketing purposes, he carried out a content analysis on general reading materials on Mexico as well as of advertising brochures. These materials were published by the Mexican National Tourist Council. Then he extracted eight content areas that contained phrases to describe the attributes and finally these were expanded with the help of 36 unstructured interviews. Finally the transcripts were content analysed and Crompton (1979) carried out a factor analysis and the results were quantified on the previously mentioned two rating scales.

Jenkins (1999) conceptualized model of the destination image research and Crompton's (1979) even earlier exploration around the issue may be considered "old" reaching back 30-40 years in time where the tourism industry as well as global technology has evolved so rapid and advanced (Dahlén et al, 2010), why the followings will provide examples that the fundamentals of the research method has been repeated later on as well with success. Royo-Vela (2009) had a case around the rural-cultural excursion conceptualization in Spain, where one of the primary objectives were to conceptualize this service and tourism as well as finding the variables in terms of image formation of this type of destination. Just like Crompton's case, this study was also carried out in two phase, where the first – qualitative - phase the characteristics of rural-cultural excursion and tourism as well as the relevant variables on what might

influence destination image formation in this type of destination were explored. The variable validation and generation was executed through a focus group interview with 8 participants. First of all Royo-Vela (2009) collected a set of characteristics from 27 studies published between 1975 and 2004, however found that out of the scales used, there were only three reliable ones, which are the ones in Echtner and Ritchie (1993), Baloglu and MCleary (1999a and 1999b) and Beerli and Martín (2004).. However the found variables also had to go through filtering as some of the items were irrelevant for the subject of the research and only the final list of 32 items were introduced for the focus group, so that the participants can further eliminate or discuss the variables and their importance. In the second phase in order to accomplish quantitative results, tourists were surveyed, and finally these numbers were analysed and the image formation variables were empirically opposed.

## The qualitative phase

**TABLE 1**  
**PREVIOUS DESTINATION IMAGE RESEARCH**

Reference	Objective	Methodology
Hunt (1975)	To measure the images of four states: Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming	Structured: – 20 attributes – 7- and 5-point sem. diff. scale
Crompton (1977)	To measure the image of Mexico	Structured: – 18 attributes – 7-point sem. diff. scale
Goodrich (1977)	To measure the image of nine destinations; Florida, Hawaii, Mexico, California, and five Caribbean Islands	Structured: – 10 attributes – 7-point Likert scale
Crompton (1979)	To measure the image of Mexico in different states of the United States	Structured: – 30 attributes – 7-point sem. diff. scale
Pearce (1982)	To measure and compare the pre-travel and post-travel images of seven countries	Structured: – 13 attributes – 6-point Likert scale
Haahti and Yavas (1983)	To measure the image of Finland (12 countries included in the survey)	Structured: – 10 attributes – 9-point Likert scale
Crompton and Duray (1985)	To measure the image of Texas (while testing alternative approaches to importance-performance analysis)	Structured: – 28 attributes – 5-point sem. diff. scale
Kale and Weir (1986)	To measure the image of India	Structured: – 26 attributes – 7-point Likert scale
Phelps (1986)	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca	Structured: – 32 attributes – check list of attributes
Tourism Canada (1986-1989)	To measure the image of Canada in various major tourism generating markets	Structured: – 29 attributes – 5-point Likert scale
Gartner and Hunt (1987)	To measure the change in Utah's image over a 12-year period	Structured: – 11 attributes – 5-point sem. diff. scale
Richardson and Crompton (1988)	To explore differences in images held of USA and Canada between French and English Canadians	Structured: – 10 attributes – 4-point comparative scale
Gartner (1989)	To measure the images of four states: Utah Montana, Colorado, Wyoming (using multidimensional scaling techniques)	Structured: – 15 attributes – 5-point Likert scale
Calantone et al. (1989)	To measure the images of eight Pacific Rim countries held by tourists from various countries of origin	Structured: – 13 attributes – 7-point Likert scale
Reilly (1990)	To measure the image of Montana	Unstructured: – open-ended questions

In the field of perceived image measurement Echtner and Ritchie (1993) had a significant study. Figure 2 is illustrating the - to that point in time - published researches on the issue and the writers point out that most cases structured methods were used, which is a disadvantage as unique and holistic components are easily missed. For this reason Echtner and Ritchie also suggests the mix of structured and unstructured methodologies and open-ended questions to access more details. Scale items can very well describe the attribute-based and common components of perceived destination image and provide insight into the functional and psychological dimensions as well, however show a lack over the holistic and unique components of the image. For this purpose with factor analysis they created a total of 36 attributes (see Figure 3) that were filtered into scale items, which contributes to the structured research method. As for the unstructured methodology Echtner and Ritchie (1993) developed a set of open-ended questions. They emphasize that the questions were examined by expert judges also academics in areas of tourism, marketing and consumer behavior. The questions are as follows:

*“1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of XXX as a vacation destination? (functional holistic component)*

*2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting XXX? (psychological holistic component)*

*3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in XXX. (unique component)”*( Echtner and Ritchie 1993: 5)

Figure 2 – Table 1 –Previous destination image research (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 4)

### The quantitative phase

As mentioned previously – in order to as a quantitative dimension to the research and be able to describe with numbers and compare the different constructs, Jenkins (1999) suggests to carry out the evaluation from two aspects, firstly the “evaluate perception” and secondly the “construct preference”.

The evaluate perception means an actual evaluation of the construct, “(e.g. ‘How do you rate Hong Kong in terms of scenic beauty on a scale where 1 is “not at all beautiful” and 7 is “very beautiful”)’” (Jenkins, 1999: 12).

According to the construct preference the respondent reflects on the importance of the construct to themselves “(e.g. ‘How important is scenic beauty in your personal travel decision- making? Please rate on the following scale where 1 is “not at all important” and 7 is “very important”)’” (Jenkins, 1999: 12)

### FINAL LIST OF ATTRIBUTES USED FOR DEVELOPING SCALE ITEMS

#### FUNCTIONAL (physical, measurable)



- Tourist sites/activities
- National parks/wilderness activities
- Historic sites/museums
- Beaches
- Fairs, exhibits, festivals
- Scenery/natural attractions
- Nightlife and entertainment
- Shopping facilities
- Facilities for information and tours
- Sports facilities/activities
- Local infrastructure/transportation
- Cities
- Accommodation/restaurants
- Architecture/buildings
- Costs/price levels
- Climate
- Crowdedness
- Cleanliness
- Degree of urbanization
- Economic development/affluence
- Extent of commercialization
- Political stability
- Accessibility
- Personal safety
- Ease of communication
- Customs/culture
- Different cuisine/food and drink
- Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness
- Restful/relaxing
- Atmosphere (familiar versus exotic)
- Opportunity for adventure
- Opportunity to increase knowledge
- Family or adult oriented
- Quality of service
- Fame/reputation

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL (abstract)

Figure 3 – Final list of attributes used for developing scale items – (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 6)

## Methodology

### Philosophy of science

Research philosophy is a set of assumptions in regards of the approach to reality and the development of knowledge which has an impact on several aspects of research, including the research strategy. (Saunders et al., 2009). Based on the nature of the research there are different philosophical approaches recommended, however it is rare that a research question will neatly fit into one specific philosophical domain, reflection on the philosophical choices may help embracing the selected direction. (Johnson and Clark, 2006 in Saunders, 2009)

The nature of researching perceived images talk about subjectivity and it is assumed that there is no single truth as reality is created through the interactions of social actors and different ways of speaking about the world. (Beck Holm, 2013) The aim of the research is to explore the perceived images of a destination and the reason why literatures also suggested to look for the initial constructs in an unstructured way is to let in all the different ideas and understandings that are related to when thinking about the city of Aalborg as a tourist destination. This approach to knowledge generation aligns with the ontological position, selecting the research paradigm of social constructivism, understanding that meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. (Saunders, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

Social constructivism suggests the continuous interpretation and revision of the reality to perceive and identify underlying meanings in actions. The epistemological consideration studies the nature of the knowledge (Saunders, 2009), and embracing interpretivist epistemology, interpretations of the social realities will be used through subjective measures. (Bryman, 2012)

### Research approach

The paper is followed through with the so-called deductive approach as the study is initially addressing general assumptions and the final product will serve with more specifics. The deductive approach however does not offer new theories, it offers the benefits of existing theories and literature, which is followed by empirical evaluation (Carson et al., 2001). Accordingly, this paper as well is first of all supported by the relevant theories and academic suggestions on research strategies, and followed by a structured methodology, which, according to Saunders et al, (2009) is describing deduction.

Furthermore this research is carried out in the form of an exploratory study, seeking how the image is perceived, the techniques are well based on already existing theories and literatures, however it is expected to be able to adapt to changes in circumstances if new data requires adjustments.

### Research choice

The research choice is assessing the qualitative or quantitative dimensions of the research and Saunders et al. (2009) The research choice was followed through with implementing both qualitative and quantitative technique after the suggestion of Jenkins (1999): using qualitative methods in order to find the constructs that are used by the study population in their cognition of destination image and

when the constructs are derived, these can be combined with quantitative techniques to be able to measure the perceived image. The qualitative phase involved the conduction of four in-depth interviews and the quantitative phase involved survey technique with two rating scales.

This is also referred as data triangulation, with Bryman's (2012) explanation, using at least two or more independent sources of data or data collection methods within one study. Using more than one methods is expected to result in greater confidence in findings, and can very-well be applied on qualitative research strategies as well. (Bryman, 2012) To be more precise, the research choice employed in this study is the so called multi-method that implies the combinations of more than one data collection techniques. Within this genre, the research was carried out with mixed-methods, as the qualitative and the quantitative techniques were used together, and to break it down more detailed, this study qualifies as a mixed-model research, as even though the final results are expected to appear in the numerical renders of the survey, their analysis is reflected on with qualitative terms.

### Techniques and procedures

There were two research techniques applied in the research process – as for the first part, four in-depth interviews were carried out and in the second part the findings were converted into a questionnaire to assess a quantitative dimension of study.

#### The in-depth interviews

First of all the interview was carried out with four interviewees, independently from each-other. In-depth interview is a commonly used technique in the case of exploratory approach to research, and even though Sanders et al. (2009) disputes that in case of unstructured interviews there is no predetermined list of questions, the topic has to be clarified on what the interviewer would like to hear in regards of. In the case of this study, three open-ended questions were used, but there served more as a guidance of direction – the interviewees were expected to use the opportunity to talk freely, express their own ideas and belief in regards of the areas of topic through personal experiences and stories – it is the interviewees' perceptions that guided the interviews.

The three questions that provided the main themes of the conversations were the same that were assessed in the literature review on Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) study on destination image perception. The below questions were formatted based on the mentioned study, where the questions were serving the same purpose as in the case of this paper: finding out of the relevant constructs that are used by the study population in their cognition of destination image.

The questions were as follows:

- 1. What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Aalborg as a vacation destination?*
- 2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Aalborg?*
- 3. Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Aalborg.*

The interviews were carried out with four respondents. What the four interviewees share in common is that either of them are Danish citizens, however all of them have been living in the city for a couple of years at least and all of them are in the age group of 20-35 years. Also all four participants have completed or are currently enrolled in higher education study programmes in the city of Aalborg. The reason for picking this population is that image perception is also biased by demographical and cultural background therefore this population is expected to have different perception on what are the dominant characteristics that describe the city, rather than citizens who have lived here their whole life and – as an example – may find specific construct “too natural” or “common” to mention. To conclude: since the object of the study is visual images that are projected towards the foreign visitors / potential visitors /audience, the respondents are residents that could easily fall into this segmentation, but have the advantage to have lived in the city for several years so had to chance to perceive it on the long run.

The experiences and impressions of the respondents were articulated within the one on one interview – the durations of the interviews were various, between 12:40 minutes and 43:43 minutes in length. The talking usually went smooth and if there were any clarification needed the interviewer asked questions similar to “can you please elaborate on...?”, “how do you feel about... ?”.

The interviews were then transcribed into written text to make the analysis easier. As found in the literatures, Jenkins’s (1999) model for destination image research suggests that the qualitative phase of research may involve elicitation techniques and other studies from Jenkins (2003), Crompton (1979), Royo-Vela (2009) both applied the construct elicitation method – finding the referred constructs within the texts.

The content analysis is carried out primarily with ‘in vivo codes’ which refers to the collecting of terms and expressions that are used by the participants of the interviews – working in a way that the researcher incorporates the used terms into their analysis. – However this type of coding is supported with the ‘sociologically constructed codes’ when the codes are formulated by the researcher based on relevant theories in the field. (Strauss, 1987). In the case of this paper this mix of types of coding will be simply applied by collecting the terms with the ‘in vivo’ technique and due to the often repeated

terms and use of synonyms, some of the codes will be adjusted into expressions that are similarly phrased as the terms used by researchers presented in the literature review, such as Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Jenkins (1999).

Bryman (2012) suggests a couple of necessary steps to consider when preparing and carrying out coding, including:

- Beginning the coding and transcription as soon as possible to sharpen the understanding of the collected data from the beginning of the research process
- Reading through the transcripts and collected documents to gain overview and notice interesting motifs
- Repeating the previous step with the difference of taking as many notes and remarks as possible
- Reviewing the codes and eliminate words/expressions that are expressing the same idea, as well as find the connections between elements that are associated
- Generating more general theoretical ideas based on the data
- One data may and can be coded more than one way
- Reflecting on the data and do the coding process in reflection of the research question and literature review

(Bryman, 2012: 577)

The main reason for using this unstructured methodology is because it was pointed out in the literature that structured methodologies, using scale items from existing studies can be used with survey strategy, because even though the attribute-based and common components as well as the functional and psychological dimensions of a perceived image can be revealed, this technique does not allow access to the holistic and unique components.

Before the final constructs list is created, the constructs derived from the interviews are being compared to the scale items from other studies, as - this has just been mentioned – these do still have their benefits of providing the attribute-based and common components and the functional and psychological dimensions. By comparing what is meant is to see if there are any of the attribute-based or common components that were not mentioned in the interview, though could be relevant to measure for the destination of Aalborg.

As the final step, the constructs are categorized similarly to Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) list of attributes under their '8 factor analysis' previously review in the literature section. However the factor "cultural distance" is converted into "cultural aspects" as this sums up the scale items more



appropriately. There were also added a few more scale items from other studies to complete the list with relevant viewpoints. The ones added are *“Easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels”* (Hudson and Wang, 2010: 182), *“Facilities for information/tours”* (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 6), *“Sophisticated”* (Jenkins, 1999: 9), *“Goods and services are affordable”* (Hudson and Wang, 2010: 183), and instead of *“Prices are low”* (Hudson and Wang, 2010: 183), it was transformed into *“Prices are lower than in other cities in Denmark”* to gain perspective, as the population of the survey also consists of residents of Aalborg.

The final list of scale items, listed under each of the factors that are being measured through a survey analysis in the quantitative phase of the destination image measurement.

### **Comfort/Security**

- Small in size, thus easy to discover
- Good location, easy to access other destinations/attractions nearby
- Inconvenient construction sites
- High standard of living
- Feeling of safety
- High standards of cleanliness
- Political stability
- *Easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels*

### **Interest/Action**

- Sport events
- Opportunities for festivals, events, music and concerts
- Many places of historical interest
- Interesting architecture
- There are local, Danish dishes to try, restaurants
- Opportunities for nightlife
- Shopping facilities
- Beer culture/drinking culture
- Beautiful sunsets
- Activities by the fjord/speedboat/water sports
- Beaches nearby

### **Natural state**

- Feel to industrialization
- Limited or no crowdedness
- Plenty of parks and green areas
- Green image to the city
- Flat surface
- Nice scenery

### **Touristic facilitation**

- Accessible transportation (/Aalborg airport/shared cars/bikes)
- Accessible for English speaking people
- *Facilities for information/ tours*

### **City atmosphere / climate**

- Chilled, quiet, relaxing atmosphere
- Boring atmosphere
- Cosy, feeling of “Hygge”
- Weather is often windy or cloudy
- Long sunny hours during summer and limited sunny hours during winter
- Young, youthful atmosphere
- Soft colors (/white/blue/nudes)
- *Sophisticated*

### **Cultural aspects**

- Locals/Danes are reserved
- Plenty of international people/students
- Locals are smiling, kind and helpful
- Easy-going lifestyle

### **Inexpensiveness:**

- *Prices are lower than in other cities in Denmark*
- *Goods and services are affordable*

**Lack of language barrier**

- Locals understand and speak English, no language barrier

**Attractions to recommend:**

- Aalborg Karneval
- The fjord/Havnefront - I recommend for visitors
- Viking cemetery/Lindholm Høje
- Colorful houses/old city
- Street art tour
- Aalborg Tower
- Jomfru Ane Gade
- Vestre Fjordpark
- Musikkens hus
- Student house
- Aalborg Streetfood
- Fjordbyen
- Gråbrødrekloster Museum/underground museum
- Singing trees at Kildeparken
- Zoo
- Limfjordsbroen/ the bridge
- Springerens marine museum
- Salling rooftop
- Utzon Center
- Fredagsfest Karolinelund/Friday concerts
- The Tall Ships Races
- Egholm by ferry
- Beaches nearby
- Adventure park nearby
- Shopping streets, unique small shops
- Summerhouses to rent nearby

## Questionnaire

As literature has indicated, using mixed methods can offer further reliability to the research of destination image perception, and following the model by Jenkins (1999) it is advised to add a quantitative phase after the constructs from unstructured methodologies have been collected in the qualitative phase of the research.

The population to this phase can be categorized quite similarly to the qualitative phase, as it consists of the residents of Aalborg between the ages of 20-35 years, however in this case the population may include Danish citizens as well to expand opportunity for collecting more respondents.

As suggested formerly yet again within the literature section, it is recommended to use two rating scales measurement of the collected scale items. These two rating scales are the evaluative and construct preferences. Both were measured with the help of a 5 degree Likert scale, however in two different ways.

The first “question” was always asking for the perceived presence or applicability of the scale item in the city of Aalborg, therefore the respondents had to respond to “In the city of Aalborg I perceive the presence of: \*scale item\*” and react whether they agree or disagree with this statement. This represented the evaluative rating scale. On the Likert scale from 1 to 5. 1 stands for “Strongly disagree”, 2 - “Disagree”, 3 - “Neutral”, 4 - “Agree” and 5 - “Strongly agree”.

To add the construct preference/importance scale, each of the statements were followed by the question “Is the above an important factor in your personal travel decision-making?” Similarly, this was also rated by Likert scale from 1 to 5, however here 1 stands for “Not at all important”, 2 - “Not important”, 3 - “neutral”, 4 - “Important” and 5 - “Very important”.

As the third part the unique elements – attractions – were measured with each of them formatted into a statement, just like as follows: “\*attraction\* - I recommend for visitors”. Just like for the evaluate rating scale, the respondents react whether they agree or disagree with the statement and replied with the help of 5 point Likert scale, exactly as illustrated before.

## Sampling

After designing the content of the questionnaire and articulated the desired target audience to the survey, a suitable sampling technique needs to be selected to reach out to the population. As stated before, the population for the survey is expected to be residents of Aalborg in the age group of 20-35 years, as the interviewees during the qualitative phase were similarly selected, therefore this can represent a segmentation the research will best fit for.

As for the sampling technique, a non-probability or judgmental sampling was applied. In non-probability sampling there are no specific rules for the sample size other than logical relationship. The population ended with 51 respondents, which appeared to articulate the preferences of the population. The exploratory research approach is supported by hand-picking the respondents that were also requested to pass on the survey to individuals that match the requirements, why this technique qualifies as a virtual snowball sampling (Saunders, 2009).

### Reliability and validity of the research

*“Various tests for reliability, such as Scott's pi (Scott, 1955) are available to measure coding reliability between individual coders on the team and similar techniques can be adapted for individual researchers.”* Jenkins (1999)

There are several other approaches to analyse the data that provide more sophisticated results, Jenkins (1999: 12) is mentioning *“Multivariate analyses using statistical packages, such as SPSS, which provide statistical procedures including cluster analysis, factor analysis, principle components analysis, and multidimensional scaling”* - when reflecting on the reliability of the model.

## Analysis

### Analysis of the interview

The role of this analysis is to first of all identify the relevant constructs of the interviewees and be able to derive these into scale items that can be later support a survey research for a quantitative dimension.

Accordingly to the methodological considerations, the analysis of the in-depth interviews will first of all involve the systemization of the responds into categories and be followed by the development of scale items for the survey.

First of all the in vivo codes were highlighted within the transcriptions of each of the four interviews. Hereby the collection of constructs that are being transformed into scale items, supported by a couple of quotes from the interviews. As explained in the methodology section, following the recommended procedure for coding, the below summary of constructs are the derived terms from the highlights within the transcriptions of the interviews, and the below terms and expressions are further transformed into the final scale items that are measured through the survey.

Below is a summary of the preliminary constructs based on the in vivo codes within the transcriptions of interviews. They are structured based on the interview questions.

1. *What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Aalborg as a vacation destination? (functional holistic component)*

Sport events; “whole experience that gravitates around sports is just like fascinating to me”

Festivals/events, music and concerts; “music festivals, there are so many of them”, “there is just like super cool concerts”, / you come for a sport event [...], you expect that crowdedness [...]people being like they're cheering for the same thing, enjoying having fun”

Historical; “the museums that usually have historical kinds of exhibitions”, “and it's quite historic. There are some, I don't know, Viking graves and stuff around it./ they have a lot of museums here about the history / it's quite historical city that there's those old buildings and stuff at the same time”

Interesting architecture, “the architecture in general is like, very interesting”

Reserved people; “you can see that the bit of reluctancy towards interaction with foreigners...”

Nice scenery; “you can enjoy some scenery as well”

Local/Danish food; “try some local food”, “There's of course, Danish food”, “I think a typical Danish thing that is also in Aalborg is the street food”, “– experience local food, whether it's like some dishes with fish or meat or whatever [...] you like. / maybe something which is called Stjernesud.”

Nightlife; “uh, nightlife also is a thing for itself in all Aalborg as there is like a thing called Jomfru Ane Gade”, there are a lot of different clubs and bars”, “you would like to see the main party street the Jomfru Ane, which for many people I think might be interesting”

Clean; “Aalborg is a really, really clean city.”, “it's a very clean and nice city to come to.”

Typical Danish/ Scandinavian city; “it's quite typical Danish city.”, “Scandinavian [...] city.”

Industrialization; “and there's a lot of students coming from abroad. So they are also building a lot of new architecture and not just the old one / the city is transforming and it's becoming more and more like attractive”

Not crowded; “never get into, like, insane crowds”, “there's not many people like...”

Summerhouse culture; “you can always take a summer cabin”

Shopping; “I would go shopping. They have a nice shopping mall. [...] they have some nice stuff there and fashion”, “Norway or Sweden, they typically come to Aalborg for like a day trip to go shopping / There are like different smaller streets with different shops / it makes it more personal. So it's not only like big chains everywhere”

Locals speak English; “Danish people speak good English”, “it was like the ease of communication / there are not really any language barriers here.”

International people/students; “-Lots of international people”, “Aalborg has a lot of international students”

Windy; “It's always pretty windy in Denmark”

Long sunny hours during summer and limited sunny hours during winter; “the winter when it's dark / when it's winter and dark and cold” , “as it gets like sunny and light, people are like outside”

Beer culture; “really cultural thing in Denmark”, “go and grab a beer. Yeah, I think it's very typical”, “drinking beer with and having fun / Like instead of let's go out and eat an ice cream, it's just let's go and grab a beer.”

Parks and green areas; “you have a lot of parks. You have a lot of natural spots.”, “Different parks, you know, like in Nørresundby, where if you see the whole city.”

Accessible transportation/Aalborg airport/shared cars; “I also think about that the accessibility like travelling around within the city or coming from A to B”, “shorter direct flights from Aalborg Airport”,

Biking; “people here are using bikes”

Green image; “There are a lot of like new buses with like CO2 neutral”

Small in size; “you can actually see the whole city within a day or two because of its size”, “there is something to see, but it's not overwhelming”

Good location, easy to access destinations nearby; “it's very like in the middle and it's very good place like infrastructurally”

Beautiful sunsets; “I love like when the sun is going down / really nice reading a book down there and sitting there and seeing the sun going down.”

Danish people are welcoming and helpful; “Like, welcoming I think” , “, people are super helpful”

No language barrier; “/ there are not really any language barriers here.”

Accessible for English speaking people; “I feel Aalborg really makes an effort to try to be as accessible as possible for English speaking people / it tries to be really international and accessible for everyone”

Inconvenient construction sites; “the city has a lot of like is building a lot of new apartments and has a lot of like rode work stuff.”

Young image; “there are a lot of young people / So the whole picture of the city is like rather young.”

High standard of living; “I think the living standards are like pretty high. And that, again, is attached to the feeling of safety / I think tourists wouldn't see that picture or they would not remember seeing any homeless people”

Flat surface; “And usually Aalborg is rather flat”

Many small things instead of big attractions; “just there are so many small things that define”

Soft colors/white/blue/nudes; “But it defines it so very well anyway. It's, you know, the white and the blue like the the fjord. [...] almost like nude”

Activities by the fjord/speedboat/water sports; “that you can go like a lot of tours on the fjord / you can do paddle board”, “some speed boating and stuff”, “all the activities and the events that are happening there, like the Tall Ship Races or the speedboats / that you can go like a lot of tours on the fjord / you can do paddle board [...] noticed that a lot of people are talking about seeing some kind of dolphins in the fjord.[...] a small boat that just moves around. [...] You can actually dine on the fjord, there is a nice restaurant called the Princess Julianna

Beaches nearby; “also the beaches around, but you have to drive or take the bus to get there”

Smiling people; “you know, just walking around, smiling at you”

Moderate heat during summer; “it's like these light days of summer. It's not extremely hot. It's just like it's just good.”

Often cloudy “[...]always dark, always raining. / it's quite dark. Because of the clouds”

## *2. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Aalborg? (psychological holistic component)*

Chilled, quiet, relaxing atmosphere; “the atmosphere is really chill”, “the general atmosphere is just, you know, quiet.”, “I get a rather relaxing mood”, “people are so chill and you get chilled yourself / And also the people are making this moods. So the the city is like the people living in it.”

Boring atmosphere; “I find Aalborg boring”

International; “Lots of international people.”

Cosy, feeling of “Hygge”; “It's like this "hygge" like the Danish” “it's just cozy”

Safe; “- I always felt super safe. I never experienced anything like a weird atmosphere / like it's really safe here”

Relaxing; “I get a rather relaxing mood”

Young/youthful; “So the whole picture of the city is like rather young. / with very young people and a lot of baby strollers”, “



Positive vibes due to stable political situation; “you just feel safe also with the whole political background / And that gives me this atmosphere of feeling very welcomed and very like your ... hospitality? The positive vibes I think”

Easy-going; “like easy living. And people are also easy going”

Slow pace “it's like it's slow on the good way.”

3. *Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Aalborg. (unique component)*

Aalborg Karneval; “the Karneval in May. Tourists love that. / a lot of people coming to see it because it's very fun to see”, “because it's something unique for the Nordic countries and you know, it's like an interesting experience in itself.”

The fjord/Havnefront; “now that I think of it, that's like main attraction in Aalborg [...] there's some speed boating and stuff”, “it's called Havnefront. That is also something which I think is really nice / there are a lot of activities a [...]you can like go for like water sliding / the whole the whole promenade at the fjord,”

Viking demetery / Lindholm Høje, “first thing which comes up to my mind is like the Vikings cemetery - you can have the opportunity to really learn a lot about, like the Vikings culture” , “I don't know, Viking graves and stuff around it.”

Colorful houses, old buildings; “really nice like older houses. And there are a lot of colors. / tiny little sweet houses, which with, you know, with the different colors.”, “it's quite historical city that there's those old buildings and stuff at the same time”,

street art tour; “very interesting to look at. Like what artists are doing here.”

Aalborg Tower; “- You have the how is it called... the tower? Where you can dine, you know, and has like a very nice view over the city”, “well I guess Aalborg Tower as well”, “is also the Aalborg Tower. From there you have a really nice view. And I think that's kind of like a signature thing of Aalborg, the tower.”

Jomfru Ane Gade; “you would like to see the main party street the Jomfru Ane, which for many people I think might be interesting”, “There's a bar street, Jomfru Ane Gade.”, “ I think, uh, nightlife also is a thing for itself in all Aalborg as there is like a thing called Jomfru Ane Gade”

Vestre Fjordpark, “Like you can go for a swim outside”

Musikkens hus; “- they have some nice architecture like Music house.”, “because of its architecture [...], it gives a really special picture for the Harbourfront”

Student house; “you can go to student house, for example, and you can always meet people who are open.,,”

Aalborg Streetfood; “I think a typical Danish thing that is also in Aalborg is the street food”, “you can go there and you can still, like, choose from different cuisines, but there is still also like Danish cuisine”

Fjordbyen; “they have like super cozy tiny houses and like they made them all themselves. So they're really special. [...] you don't see that anywhere else” , “more like a retro [...]a hippie kind of self-made [...]part of the city.”

Gråbrødrekloster Museum/underground museum; “there were so many like the things that they found under the surface [...]Like what was in the place of Salling a thousand years ago.”

Singing trees at Kildeparken; “There is also something which is called the singing trees in the Kildeparken [...]I personally have never seen it before”

Zoo; The Tall Ships Races; “it really is attached a lot to the city. [...] you sometimes hear, like the lion roar from really far away, which I think is really cool.”

Limfjordsbroen; “the Limfjordsbroen, because it connects like Nørresundby and Aalborg. And it's just really nice to go with the bridge and walk over the bridge and something which maybe or like might be strange for tourists [...] that the bridge sometimes opens for, like, boats crossing that way.”

Springeren/marine museum; “that is actually like a Marine museum, kind of, which I think might be super interesting to visit”

Salling rooftop; “Salling rooftop from where you also can get a really nice view of the city.”

Utzon center; “the Utzon center might also be worth mention [...]the architecture might be really special”, “say I would go to the Utzon center”

Fredagsfest Karolinelund/Friday concerts; “Karolinelund, they have like this Friday concerts. [...]it's just like so many people and it's it's just super cool. [...]and there is just like super cool concerts”, “every friday in Karolinelund there is a concert which goes like 50 crowns.”

Egholm; Beaches nearby; “you can also visit the small islands. There is Egholm, near the city”, “also take a trip to Egholm by ferry”

Adventure parks nearby; “this adventure parks and Lego land in the all this and everything is close.”,

Shopping streets, “It's just more like a way of using time / it's like a lot of boutiques. / think a lot of Danish thing like handmade or local. Typical local thing like small things.”, : I would go shopping. They have a nice shopping mall. [...] they have some nice stuff there and fashion”, “Norway or Sweden, they

typically come to Aalborg for like a day trip to go shopping / There are like different smaller streets with different shops / it makes it more personal. So it's not only like big chains everywhere"

unique small shops "it's like a lot of boutiques. / think a lot of Danish thing like handmade or local. Typical local thing like small things."

The final scale items are listed in the methodology section, as well as can be found listed within the analysis of the questionnaire.

### Analysis of questionnaire

As explained in the methodology, firstly the respondents expressed either their agreement or disagreement of their perception of presence or applicability of each scale items in the city of Aalborg and reflected on the importance of each scale items in their personal travel decision-making. Secondly the recommendation of each attractions are measured.

#### 1. Small in size, thus easy to discover

The replies reflect that over 72% of respondents agree with the statement (31,4% agreed and 31,2% strongly agreed); 19,6 % stayed neutral when making the answer and 7,8% disagreed with the applicability of this scale item. However from the results on the follow-up question it appears that the size of a city destination and the opportunity to discover it easy is rather not playing an important factor in personal travel decision-making for this population. Not at all important and not important are taking up 41,1% of respondents, and only 19,6% hit the important or very important options and a huge chunk of 32,2% of respondents replied neutral about the importance of this scale item.

#### 2. Good location, easy to access other destinations/attractions nearby

The majority of replies are reassuring the statement with 43,1% chose to agree and 25,5% chose strongly agree. Only 23,7% decided to stay neutral about this scale item and 17,7% disagreed or strongly disagreed on this point. The results are quite favourable of, as the follow up question in regards of the importance of this factor in personal decision-making was quite high, 33,3% finds it important and 35,3% find it very important, meaning that over 68% of respondents find this scale item important.

#### 3. Inconvenient construction sites

The results here are quite in balance for each of the replies, however the most selected reply was number 4 – agreeing with this point, which covered 29,4% of the population, and the least selected

reply was to strongly disagree with 7,8%. To this point in time there are several construction sites and road works in several (and often very central) parts of the city, which creates inconvenience from the point of transportation and often a stressful environment – as found of from the interviews. Even though as a survey there was no option to elaborate on the answers – as a fellow resident of the city of Aalborg, on a personal assumption the ambivalent results on this scale item maybe as the phenomena of construction places has been appearing only during the last couple of months to conducting the interviews and surveys, therefore even though it is a very present situation at the moment, it is expected to be a temporary situation, which does not contribute vehemently to the perceived image of the city. The results on the follow-up question was quite similar and balanced – according to the strongest results, 25,5% of respondents do find inconvenient construction sites an important factor to consider, however 23,5% of the respondents find it not at all important.

#### 4. High standard of living

The feedback on the high standard of living see to be strongly perceived by the residents and 39,2% strongly agreed to the statement and 33,3% agreed. 19,6% stayed neutral and only 7,8% disagreed with the perception of this scale item in the city of Aalborg. This factor though does not seem to pay a big role in travel decision-making for the population of this survey as 29,4% found it not important and and 23,5% found it not at all important. Even though this is only slightly more than 50% of the answers, 17,6% stayed neutral, therefore only slightly over a quarter of the population expressed that this scale item is an important factor.

#### 5. Feeling of safety

The feeling of safety is perceived to be apparent in the city to 94,1% of respondents, out of which 76,5% strongly agrees with the application of this scale item on Aalborg. This is a quite strong result, especially as the follow-up questions showed that this is also an important aspect at the event of travel-decision making, where 37,3% finds it important and 41,2% finds it very important, 15,7% staying neutral in this question. This result is speaking that the feeling of safety is a strong suit for the city.

#### 6. High standards of cleanliness

The population agrees with this scale item over 84%, out of which 41,2% pressed on number 4 – agree and 43,1% pressed number 5 – strongly agree. The feedback on the importance of this scale item in the travel decision-making can be considered slightly more important than unimportant, but the results are quite balanced. 25,1% find it important or very important, 21,5% stayed neutral and 33,3% found it either not important or not important at all.

#### 7. Political stability

The perception of political stability is also strongly agreed by 39,2% and agreed by 37,3% which represents agreement of 76,5 % from the respondents. The responses in regards of the importance of this factors, however are again quite balanced, while 27,5% stayed neutral in this question, 35,3% found it important or not important at all, and 37,2% found it not important or not at all important.

#### 8. Easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels

The results yet again reflect on positive responded, where 45,1% agreed with the scale item and 29,4% strongly agreed. This is favorable, as the importance of this factor seems to be quite high. Apart from the 25,5% of respondents that stayed neutral in this question, the positive responses that find this factor very important is the same amount as neutrals, and 39,2% find this factor important to consider at the time of travel decision-making.

#### 9. Sport events

Considering the applicability of sport events in regards of the perceived image of Aalborg, a quite high percent – 43,1% stayed neutral and the rest of the respondents also reacted quite balanced, approximately the same amount agreed as disagreed with this scale item. The neutrality in this question also reflects on the follow-up question, as 45% do not find this aspect important at all, 19,6% do not find it important and the same amount stayed neutral, so it is a small niche that agree with the presence of sport events in the city and/or find this an important factor to consider.

#### 10. Opportunities for festivals, events, music and concerts

The results on this scale item are again, quite favorable, as 39,2% agreed with it and 27,5% strongly agreed. However in the follow-up question it appears that this is an important factor at decision-making for approximately as many people as many do not consider this to be too important and a quite high percent replied with nr 3 – neutral again, precisely 33,3%.

#### 11. Many places of historical interest

This scale item considered to be rather relevant for the city, based on the feedback, as 33,3% agrees and an additional of, 9,8% strongly agrees on its applicability. Even though the neutral responses are quite high again at 27,5%, the negative responses are at 29,4%. This appears to be also an important decision-making factor in their personal experiences, as 42% found it important and 20% found it very important. This represents a positive aspect to emphasize when thinking about the city of Aalborg.

#### 12. Interesting architecture

The respondents reacted positive in regards of the perception of interesting architecture in Aalborg with over 54% of the responses, out of which 33,3% agreed and 21,6% strongly agreed. The negative

replies take up only 21,6% as there are a couple of neutral responses as well, 23,5%. This aspect is considered important by 30% and considered very important by 28% of the respondents, which suggests that interesting architecture has a positive relevance image-wise.

#### 13. There are local, Danish dishes to try, restaurants

45% of the respondents agree that there are local, Danish dishes to try, as well as restaurant in Aalborg, and an additional 17,6% strongly agrees with this statement. This is quite a high positive response, compared to the 13,8% that disagrees with the scale item. Furthermore, the follow-up question shows also that 37,3% find this factor very important and 29,4% finds this important when at travel decision-making, so this serves as another strong point for the city image.

#### 14. Opportunities for nightlife

The response on this scale item was quite evident with 62,7% that strongly agrees and 23,5% that agrees, meaning 86,2% of respondents articulated their agreement with the perceived presence of opportunities for nightlife in Aalborg. Other than the again, rather high ratio of neutral responses of 29,4%, the rest seem to find this aspect rather important at travel decision-making, as 33,3% find it important and 21,6% find it very important.

#### 15. Shopping facilities

Shopping facilities also seem to be agreed to be a strong scale item in the perceived image of Aalborg, 74,5% expressed agreement, out of which, 39,2% pressed agree and 35,3% pressed strongly agree. However considering the importance of this factor in travel decision-making, the responses are quite balanced approximately the same amount of respondents expresses that it is important as the ones says it is not as important.

#### 16. Beer culture/drinking culture

The next scale item is in regards of the beer culture/drinking culture that is perceived of Aalborg by its residents. The results include strongly agree of 76,5% and agree of 17,6%. In regards of the responses on the importance of this factor, the part of population that finds this an important aspect is the double of the part that does not find this an important factor. However this is one of the scale items that do not reflect a positive or negative aspect of the statement. What is understood from this feedback is that the population prefers to have this information to use for their decision making, rather than knowing what the decision will be just based on this scale.

#### 17. Beautiful sunsets

Aalborg seem to be perceived to serve with beautiful sunsets, as 47,1% strongly agreed with the scale item and 29,4% agreed with it. However when reflecting on the importance of this aspect, the responses are in balance – a great chunk of 25,5% stayed neutral in reflecting on the importance and slightly more people responded to express it is important or very important, than the part that expressed it is not important or not at all important.

#### 18. Activities by the fjord/speedboat/water sports

Quite a big percent of the respondents agreed that activities by the fjord are relevant images when thinking about the city of Aalborg. 31,4% agreed and 33,3% strongly agreed. This aspect though is considered rather less important than too important when the time of travel decision-making.

#### 19. Beaches nearby

This scale item seems to be rather agreed about, forming this response of 51% out of which 23,5% agree and 27,5 strongly agrees, whereas only 25,5% responded with nr 2 – disagree. This seems like an important scale item to have measured as 68,6% of the respondents find this an important factor to consider when making travel decisions, and this is something that Aalborg is perceived to offer.

#### 20. Feel to industrialization

The responds arrived on this scale item are mostly neutral, which takes up 48%. The rest of the respondents perceive this construct rather relevant than irrelevant, as 23% agreed, 10% strongly agreed, 14% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. The follow up questions shows though this is either a neutral factor to consider – 44%- or not important – 22%, or not at all important – 24%.

#### 21. Limited or no crowdedness

The construct of limited crowdedness however is responded to with rather agreeing feedback – 36% agree and 26% strongly agree of the applicability of limited crowdedness in the city. This factor again does not necessarily hold a positive or negative undertone, as this depends on the individual preference, however the city is perceived in this certain way and the information appears to be rather important than unimportant as 45,1% of the respondents pressed either important or very important and 31,3% pressed not important or not at all important in this case.

#### 22. Plenty of parks and green areas

The scale item of plenty of parks and green areas are 86,3% perceived to be applicable for the city of Aalborg. 51% agrees and 35,3% strongly agrees with the statement. However when reflecting on the importance of this factor, 39,2% stays neutral, still 47% considers this either important or very important when the time of travel decision-making. Only 13,8% considered it unimportant.

### 23. Green image to the city

The city is highly considered to have a green image by its residents, based on the results of the survey. 47,1% agrees and 29,4% strongly agrees with the statement, and this also appears to be a rather important than unimportant factor when making their personal travel decisions, as 33,3% finds it important and 9,8% find it very important. This is still more than the 33,3% that considers this factor not important or not at all important.

### 24. Flat surface

The population see to agree or strongly agree on the flat surface scale item when thinking about the image of Aalborg, as 62,8% chose one of the options, however this appears to be a quite unimportant aspect when making travel decisions as 60,8% reacted with not at all important and 21,6% picked not important as a response.

### 25. Nice scenery

Nice scenery is also generally agreed to be part of the perceived image of the city of Aalborg, 56,9% pressed number 4 to agree and 13,7% pressed number 5 to strongly agree. This factor also appears to be quite relevant when travel decision-making: 43,1% agreed that this aspect is very important and 29,4% expressed that it is indeed important. It was only 7,8% that responded this aspect to be not important or not at all important. Therefore the nice sceneries are an advantage when considering the perceived image by the residents.

### 26. Accessible transportation (/Aalborg airport/shared cars/bikes)

Next the access to transportation was measured and yet again the city is perceived to have this as a strong point – 35,3% agreed and 49 strongly agreed on this scale item. This is advantageous, as 43,1% considers very important and 23,5% considers it important to have accessible transportation when travel decision-making. Only 7,8% considers it not important.

### 27. Accessible for English speaking people

Accessible for English speaking people is a scale item that 60,8% of the respondents strongly agrees and 27,5% agrees with. This factor is also considered to be important in the process of travel decision-making, at least the replies of the population reflects that 41,2% finds it very important, 31,4% finds it important to consider. Negative responses were only received of 7,9%, as the last 19,6% were neutral in their reply.

### 28. Facilities for information/ tours



The scale item of facilities for information/tours was added as an extra item as it was not mentioned in the interviews, however according to the studies reviewed, can serve with relevant information. Unfortunately 52,9% replied neutral on this scale item. On a personal assumption, this may be due as the destination is being revised by residents that assumable do not need information proposed for tourists, therefore may not have an opinion in relevance. The follow-up question also reflected balanced replies, approximately the same amount of respondents find it important to have facilities for information and tours as the amount the do not find this aspect important when making decisions in regard of their personal travels.

#### 29. Chilled, quiet, relaxing atmosphere

According to the responses, over 90% did either agree or strongly agree that Aalborg is perceived as a chilled, quiet, relaxing atmosphere destination. This aspect if 29,4% neutrally assessed in the follow up question, however 19,6% find it important and 27,5% find it very important that they perceive this atmosphere when making ravel decisions, which serves as a strong suit for Aalborg.

#### 30. Boring atmosphere

A more pejorative word was transformed into a scale item, based on the interview to distinct from the previous scale item that has a more positive feel to it. 21,6% of respondents strongly disagrees and 33,3% strongly disagrees with the term to use on the city, however 25,5% do agree with it. The follow up question reflects that 33,3% of the respondents find it important or very important whether a destination has boring atmosphere, and 41,2% find this either not important or not at all important.

#### 31. Cosy, feeling of "Hygge"

The replies here reflect the common agreement on the presence of this scale item in the image of the city of Aalborg. 31,4% strongly agreed and 51% agreed at least, however the replies on the follow-up questions were quite neutral. 35,3% actually chose number 3 to stay in a neutral position, and there are slightly more replies that reflect that respondents find it an important factor when making their travel decision, than respondents that do not find it as important. The feedback is quite in balance.

#### 32. Weather is often windy or cloudy

The next aspect is in regards of the climate. 84,3% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that this scale item fits into the perceived image of Aalborg. There are respondents that disagree, but only 11,8%. This aspect also plays quite an important role in the travel decision-making, as 33,3% strongly agreed and a 15,7% additionally also agreed on this, meaning 49% of the population does consider this factor.

### 33. Long sunny hours during summer and limited sunny hours during winter

The responses show that this scale item is quite relevant for the residents in their perceived image of Aalborg as 31,4% answered to agree and 47,1% answered to strongly agree on this aspect being present in the city. However this does not appear as something overly important when making a travel decisions, a quite high percentage of 37,3% answered with the neutral choice, however the rest of the answer were reflecting that this is rather important than unimportant factor, altogether ,39,2%, while only 23,6% answered that it is either not important or not at all important.

### 34. Young, youthful atmosphere

This scale item also reflects on the atmosphere of the city – altogether 82,4% of respondents perceive the destination image to be young and youthful and the follow-up question reflects that this is not necessarily an important factor to consider when making travel plans and decisions. Even though 29,4% stayed neutral, it is still considered by slightly more respondents to be important.

### 35. Soft colors (/white/blue/nudes)

The scale item of soft colors received a big percent (41,2%) neutral feedback, and 41,2% of respondents agree that this fits into their perception on the city. However this aspect is considered not at all important by 41,2% and not important by 15,7% percent when making travel decision. 29,4% stayed neutral, therefore the replies suggesting it is an important aspect to consider is quite low, 13,8% altogether.

### 36. Sophisticated

The scale item on perceived sophistication of the city was also imported from outside literature, and as the replies also reflect, this is not necessarily construct the residents would think of about the image of Aalborg, as 51,9% replied with number 3- neutral and the rest of the replies also seem to be quite balanced on this scale item. Its importance seem to be insignificant for the respondents, as 41,1% responded that it is either not at all important or not important, and 35,3% stayed neutral in the question.

### 37. Locals/Danes are reserved

Responses suggest that the population perceives the locals/Danes to be rather reserved – at least since 43,1% agreed and an additional 35,3% strongly agreed with the statement. However this aspect does not seem to play a big role in travel decision-making. 21,6% find this not at all important, and 29,4% find it not important factor when travel decision-making occurs. The same amount also responded neutral to this question.

#### 38. Plenty of international people/students

This scale item is also perceived to be applicable for the most of the population, as 43,1% responded with agree and 35,3% responded with strongly agree – 21,6% stayed neutral in this aspect. The responds to the follow-up question suggest that having plenty of international people or students in a city is 31,4% not at all important and for an additional 19,6% it is not important, 25,5% stayed neutral. More than double expressed that it is not important that the ones expressed it is important to any extent.

#### 39. Locals are smiling, kind and helpful

According to the responses, 39,2% of the population strongly agreed on the statement and 29,4% also agreed by pressing for number 4. There were only 15,7% that disagreed pressing for either 1 or 2, strongly disagree or disagree. This is quite favorable, as the follow-up question shows that this is a quite important factor when personal travel decision-making, exactly so that 37,3% find it very important and 31,4% find it important.

#### 40. Easy-going lifestyle

The easy-doing lifestyle is also perceived quite well by the population, through 80,4% out of which 47,1% agreed and 33,3% strongly agreed with the statement. However this factor appears to be rather unimportant than important. 13,7% finds it not at all important, 31,4% finds it not important and 21,6% stayed neutral. Even though the difference is only 11,7%, this is not the primary criteria when personal travel decision-making.

#### 41. Prices are lower than in other cities in Denmark

This scale item is perceived rather applicable on the destination, even though 33,3% stayed neutral, the responses that included answer were 27,5% agreed and 27,5% strongly agreed with the statement and only 11,8% disagreed. The follow-up question reflects that 35,3% of the population find its very important to consider and 27,5% finds it important to consider when arranging personal travel decision-making.

#### 42. Goods and services are affordable

64,7% of the respondents agree with the scale item that goods and services are affordable when thinking about Aalborg, out of which, 49% agreed and 15,7% strongly agreed. 27,5% stayed neutral, whereas only 7,8% disagree with the statement. This aspect of the image seem to be also favorable as 70,6% responded that this factor is considered at travel decision-making within which 25,5% agreed and 45,1% strongly agreed.

#### 43. Locals understand and speak English, no language barrier

Finally the perception of the last scale item in the perspective of Aalborg, 62,7% of the respondents strongly agree and 31,4% agreed that thinking of the city, locals do understand and speak English, and there are no language barriers. This factor is also playing a relevant role in decision making, which reflects well in the responses. 39,2% says this factor is very important and 33,3% say it is indeed important. This also serves as a favorable element in the perceived image of the city of Aalborg.

In the followings the most dominant responds will be collected on whether each of the listed local attractions or special aspects are recommended for visitors by the population of the survey, who are current residents of the city of Aalborg.

##### Aalborg Karneval

58,8% strongly agreed to recommend.  
23,5% agreed to recommend.  
9,8% was neutral on recommending.

##### Street art tour

29,4% strongly agreed to recommend.  
23,5% agreed to recommend.  
41,2% was neutral on recommending.

##### The fjord/Havnefront

72,5% strongly agreed to recommend.  
21,6% agreed to recommend.  
3,9% was neutral on recommending.

##### Aalborg Tower

19,6% strongly agreed to recommend.  
39,2% agreed to recommend.  
27,4% was neutral on recommending.

##### Viking cemetery/Lindholm Høje

29,4% strongly agreed to recommend.  
19,6% agreed to recommend.  
41,2% was neutral on recommending.

##### Jomfru Ane Gade

56,9% strongly agreed to recommend.  
27,5% agreed to recommend.  
5,9% was neutral on recommending.

##### Colorful houses/old city

43,1% strongly agreed to recommend.  
31,4% agreed to recommend.  
17,6% was neutral on recommending.

##### Vestre Fjordpark

52,9% strongly agreed to recommend.  
27,5% agreed to recommend.  
11,8% was neutral on recommending.

Musikkens hus

37,3% strongly agreed to recommend.  
35,3% agreed to recommend.  
23,% was neutral on recommending.

Singing trees at Kildeparken

23,5% strongly agreed to recommend.  
41,2% agreed to recommend.  
17,6% was neutral on recommending.

Student house

15,7% strongly agreed to recommend.  
27,5% agreed to recommend.  
27,5% was neutral on recommending.

Zoo

33,3% strongly agreed to recommend.  
19,6% agreed to recommend.  
27,5% was neutral on recommending.

Aalborg Streetfood

41,2% strongly agreed to recommend.  
29,4% agreed to recommend.  
21,6% was neutral on recommending.

Limfjordsbroen/ the bridge

17,6% strongly agreed to recommend.  
21,6% agreed to recommend.  
37,3% was neutral on recommending.

Fjordbyen

39,2% strongly agreed to recommend.  
23,5% agreed to recommend.  
25,5% was neutral on recommending.

Springeren/marine museum

13,7% strongly agreed to recommend.  
19,6% agreed to recommend.  
52,9% was neutral on recommending.

Gråbrødrekloster Museum/underground  
museum

9,8% strongly agreed to recommend.  
33,3 % agreed to recommend.  
39,2% was neutral on recommending.

Salling rooftop

27,5% strongly agreed to recommend.  
41,2% agreed to recommend.  
19,6% was neutral on recommending.

#### Utzon Center

24% strongly agreed to recommend.  
26% agreed to recommend.  
32% was neutral on recommending.

#### Beaches nearby

41,2% strongly agreed to recommend.  
25,5% agreed to recommend.  
19,6% was neutral on recommending.

#### Fredagsfest Karolinelund/Friday concerts

37,3% strongly agreed to recommend.  
29,4% agreed to recommend.  
23,5% was neutral on recommending.

#### Adventure park nerby

21,6% strongly agreed to recommend.  
37,3% agreed to recommend.  
33,3% was neutral on recommending.

#### The Tall Ships Races

64,7% strongly agreed to recommend.  
23,5% agreed to recommend.  
7,8% was neutral on recommending.

#### Shopping streets, unique small shops

17,6% strongly agreed to recommend.  
41,2% agreed to recommend.  
27,5% was neutral on recommending.

#### Egholm by ferry

37,3% strongly agreed to recommend.  
17,6% agreed to recommend.  
33,3% was neutral on recommending.

#### Summerhouses to rent nearby

31,4% strongly agreed to recommend.  
31,4% agreed to recommend.  
31,4% was neutral on recommending.

The top 5 attractions that appeared to be most recommended by the visitors are

1. The fjord/Havnefront - 72,5% strongly agreed to recommend.
2. The Tall Ships Races - 64,7% strongly agreed to recommend.
3. Aalborg Karneval- 58,8% strongly agreed to recommend.
4. Jomfru Ane Gade - 56,9% strongly agreed to recommend.
5. Vestre Fjordpark - 52,9% strongly agreed to recommend.

The followings are 5 more recommendations that did not make it to the top 5, but summing the responses of agreed and strongly agreed, these received the most positive ratings.

1. Colorful houses/old city – 74,5% including agree and strongly agree.
  2. Musikkens hus – 72,6% including agree and strongly agree.
  3. Aalborg Streetfood – 70,6% including agree and strongly agree.
  4. Salling rooftop – 68,7% including agree and strongly agree.
  5. Fredagsfest Karolinelund/Friday concerts – 66,7% including agree and strongly agree.
- Beaches nearby - 66,7% including agree and strongly agree.

## Findings and discussion

In the followings the findings of the survey will be interpreted and discussed to gain an overview over the details of the quantitative feedback.

The questionnaire has two dimensions implemented, the different scale items has to be reflected on from the point of evaluation and also from the point of construct preference. The aim of the first questions was to access how the respondents perceive the presence or applicability of the specific scale item on the destination of Aalborg as a tourist destination. The second dimension was to measure whether normally the respondent would find this point an important factor in their personal travel decision-making.

The research question was asking how is the image of Aalborg as a tourist destination perceived by the residents of the city, and this question was asked in the context of a problem area, where the reliability of marketing materials is questioned due to the general tendency of projected image mismatching the perceptions of residents that live and perceive the destinations on site on a daily basis. The suggestions following the assessment of the results are expected to benefit both marketers to be able to provide a more accurate marketing strategy and also visitors and potential tourists to have a chance to gain a more realistic communication of the destination image, making their decision-making process easier, as well as their during and after experiences of visiting less disappointing.

First of all the sector of **Comfort/security** will be discussed. Generally it appears that Aalborg has a strong perceived image of comfort and security, based on the ratings of the scale items. All the questions were rather agreed on, sometimes quite strongly agreed, so what makes difference is how important these aspects are in practice. It appears that the **good location, easy to access other destinations** scale item was popular, as it has strong positive response, as well as favourable rating on the importance of this factor, which would therefore be assumed to provide a good content in marketing materials. Another favourable response was received on the scale item of **feeling of safety**, as this appears to be also strongly perceived by residents and feedback shows this is also a quite important factor when making travel decisions. The only negative scale item was the inconvenient construction sites, which is also rather well perceived when thinking about Aalborg, however the response was quite balanced and as explained during the interpretation of the graphs, this may be a temporary condition in the city. It is also quite much agreed that it is **easy to get good service in restaurants and hotels** in the city and the second scale proves that this is considered to be a quite important viewpoint. One more scale item may be important to consider as a strength in the image, which is **high standards of cleanliness**. The responses were very much positive and the importance of this factors appears to be also rather important.

The next group is the **Interest/action** factor. One of the first outstanding scale items is the **many places of historical interest**, as the responses reflect that this is a quite well perceived construct in the city of Aalborg and also appears to be a quite important factor at the time of personal travel decision-making.

Another considerable scale item is the **interesting architecture**, as this is also really highly perceived and the responses imply to be a very important factor to consider. The scale representing that **there are local, Danish dishes to try, restaurant to try**, is again, quite well perceived, which is favourable as this is quite important aspect to consider from the point of the respondents. **Opportunities for nightlife** also seem to be one of the strongly perceived scale items and it is also considered quite important, however **beer culture/drinking culture** is one of the protagonists of the results, it is really strongly perceived and fortunately also considered to be a rather important aspect. Finally the **nearby beaches** are also worth to mention, as it is rather well perceived, but has an even more important role at the time of personal travel decision-making.

In regards of the perceived **Natural state** of the city of Aalborg, it is worth to mention that the respondents rather well perceive the **limited or no crowdedness** when thinking about the city and this also appears to be a rather important aspect at travel decision-making. The scale item on **plenty of parks and green areas** is also really strongly perceived and for over 50% of the respondents it is an either important or very important factor – as well as the **green image to the city**, which again is also very strongly perceived by the population. The last scale item in the category that did well in this experiment is the **nice scenery** construct, which appears to be very well perceived by the respondents and it is even more important when making travel decisions.

**Touristic facilitation** as a category did only involve three scale items, out of which two proved to be quite relevant – interesting enough that these were the constructs derived from the interviews. One of them is the **accessible transportations**, which is extremely well perceived by the population and also proves to be quite an important factor at the time of personal travel decision-making, and the second scale item with positive feedback was that Aalborg is **accessible for English speaking people**, as this aspect appeared to be quite important as well.

The **City atmosphere / climate** category carries the scale item of **weather is often windy or cloudy**. This is emphasized as the population quite strongly perceives this construct when thinking about the city of Aalborg and almost 50% of the respondents find this an important or very important factor when the time of travel decision-making. However the **chilled, quiet, relaxing atmosphere** as well as the **cozy, feeling of “hygge”** scales items are also perceived quite strongly and they appear to be rather important for the respondents, so these will also need to be considered. The rest of the scale items received quite high percentages in neutral feedback or they were simply not too important.

In regards of the **Cultural aspects** one scale item appeared to be quite strongly perceived as well as responded on to be also quite important, which is that **locals are smiling, kind and helpful**. The item of **easy-going lifestyle** is also strongly perceived, however the response on its importance is quite ambivalent. The rest of the scale items were not pronounced to be quite important in travel decision-making.

Both of the scale item within the factor of **Inexpensiveness** did well based on the responds. The scale item **prices are lower than in other cities in Denmark** is perceived by over 50% of the respondents and the majority of respondents find this to be an important or very important factor. The **goods and services are affordable** construct did also prove to be very well perceived and appears to be also quite an important factor in travel decision-making.

Finally the **Lack of language barrier** category with the only scale item of **locals understand and speak English, no language barrier** proved to be extremely well perceived by the population and appear to be quite important when considering personal travel decision-making.



## Conclusion

Technological developments and globalization opened up several new channels and sources to experience more external stimuli that can affect one's image of a destination and marketers therefore also have the opportunity to format and project the image that can best capture the attention of the potential travelers, but who understand and perceives the strongest a destination other than its residents?

This research was carried out following techniques that are most relevant, and until today still cited in the field of destination image perception and measurement. In order to achieve the more trustworthy results the perceived image was measured in two phases after the recommended model of Jenkins (1999), whereas the qualitative phase consists of the conduction of four in-depth interviews to reveal the relevant constructs in the cognition of the interviewees when thinking about the city of Aalborg as a vacation destination. The data revealed several constructs that were derived into item scales for gaining a quantitative dimension to the research. This is talking about the quantitative phase of the research. The scale items were transformed into a survey that was forwarded to the chosen research population. The results of the survey can be applied for the specific population that the research was conducted through. The aim of this research is to understand how is the image of Aalborg as a tourist destination perceived by the residents of the city. The discussion reveal several strong suits of the city of Aalborg that are both perceived strongly by the population of the research and at the same time these are also considered important aspects when their personal travel decision-making is on the line. Have a better understanding how to city is perceived and what parts of this are something that other travelers may also consider are the recommendations towards destination marketers to focus on, saving resources, improving efficiency and offering a destination image to perceive that will affect their decision making process, during and after experience of their travels.

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