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Redefining Amsterdam identity: An analysis of placemaking strategies for diversifying a destination beyond prostitution and cannabis.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis paper presents an overview of the image red light district of Amsterdam and its impact on the city and its image. It further explores the placemaking policies and strategies that are in place in the city to help diversify the tourism industry and policies that could potentially help shifting away the contested image of the city. Through the qualitative interviews, field notes, and observations, the study explores the problems at the ground level in the red-light district as well as its influence on Amsterdam's reputation on its overall tourism landscapes. The findings highlight the issues at the community level in red light districts, security issues, and also identifies the positive economic aspects as well as tourist's satisfaction which presents the challenges in enacting the placemaking policies to improve the quality of life and gradually shifting the perceived image. This research contributes to the tourism destination management and provides practical insights to the policymakers who seek to redefine the identity of contested image of the destinations.

## **Keywords**

Red light district, Amsterdam, impact, placemaking, sex, cannabis, tourism, image

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## 1. Introduction

Amsterdam is the capital and largest city of the Netherlands. It is in the province of North Holland and is known for its rich history, vibrant culture, and beautiful canals. This city is home to over 880000 people with an area of approximately 219 square kilometers (Statista, 2022). The Amsterdam city is also the most populated city in the Netherlands with a diverse demographic as it has people from all over the world contributing to a multicultural atmosphere (Amsterdam Advisor, 2022). Amsterdam is also known for its lively nightlife, with numerous bars, clubs, and

restaurants (Hou, 2021). In addition to this the city is a hub for both business and tourism attracting millions of visitors each year with its stunning architecture, waterways, and rich cultural heritage. This can be seen from an example that in 2016, almost 14 million stayed in Amsterdam which is 31% percent of total stays in the Netherlands (Noordeloos, 2018).

Amsterdam is a major economic center with a thriving port, a stock exchange, and many international companies based in the cities. It is also a major tourism destination attracting millions of tourists every year with its rich cultural heritage, history, and many beautiful sceneries. The city is famous for its canals, which have been designated as UNESCO world heritage sites, and its historic buildings and monuments, many of which are from the 17th century. Despite being a large city, Amsterdam has a compact and walkable city center which makes it easy for visitors to see and explore its many attractions on foot. The city is well planned and has the facilities of well-connected public transportation such as buses, trains and trams that makes it easy to travel in and out of the city (Buijs, Koch, & Dugundji, 2021).

In addition to its history, cultural heritage and economic significance, Amsterdam is also known for its progressive attitudes. The city has its own identity that is associated with the freedom of expression and the celebration of diversity and is famous for Red Light Districts, coffee shops and vibrant LGBTQ+ community (Kaygalak-Celebi et al., 2020) This city is also known for its efforts to reduce its carbon footprint promoting eco-friendly initiatives (Van den Dobbelsteen, et al., 2011). Furthermore, the city is also famous for its many festivals and events such as Amsterdam International Fashion Week, The Amsterdam Dance event, the Amsterdam light festival and others (I Amsterdam, n.d). These events attract visitors from all over the world and promote the city's cultural scene and innovative spirit. In addition to this the city is also the hub of innovation and

creativity as the city is home to numerous universities and research institutions (Yigitcanlar, et al., 2019).

With the major focus on the destination image, the image of Amsterdam as a tourist destination is based on two major themes. The first image is the city as being dominated by the urban town planning and design of the early modern age whereas the second is the current popular image of Amsterdam, which was formed in late 60's and is based on a youth culture of sexual liberation and narcotic indulgence (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001). Furthermore, in Amsterdam the commodification of the bodies has been perfected to the level of an art form. Internationally Amsterdam is perceived as a free-for-all zone of entertainment, a kind of 'Theme Park' for adult fun (Aalbers & Sabat, 2012). Moreover, the growth of such tourism activities over the past few decades has made it a leading force in the tourism industry of Amsterdam.

### 1.1 Destination image of Amsterdam

An image of a certain object or place is known through how people describe, remember, and experience it. That image is the result of interaction which is related to people's beliefs, impressions, feelings, and their expectations towards any destination. Similarly, when it comes to the context of tourism, Crompton (1978) explains that destination image is highly influenced by the experience and ideas of tourists about the tourist destination. He further added that the destination image evolves in two levels: an induced image and organic image. According to the Gunn (1989), organic image derives from history where much of the assumptions come from newspapers, reports from experts and analyst, broadcasted news, fiction, and nonfiction. On the other hand, the induced image of the destination is influenced by the marketing, publicity,

development process, advertising, and other headlines. As per the Deinema and Aalbers (2012), the history of prostitution in Amsterdam has gone through a very complicated time.

The definition of red-light district from Oxford dictionary states it as the place with several brothels, strip clubs, and sex businesses. The presence of adult entertainment hubs like prostitute's windows, sex theater, and strip clubs gives the area a meaning of red-light district. The Netherlands has many red-light districts and Amsterdam alone has several, from which the red-light district of De Wallen is one of the most famous ones worldwide and considered to be an important as well as defining part of Amsterdam (Sabat, 2012). The history of red-light districts in Amsterdam goes back a long way as it started from the 1600 century, however the Dutch government made prohibition of brothels in 1911 and legalized prostitution in 2000. The authors also argued that there are many popular red-light zones in the world in terms of size, facilities, and numbers of visitors, however the red-light area in Amsterdam had a unique global perception about the sex industry. Even though, prostitution has been established for centuries with an important social significance, it is not legalized in many countries in the world. Prostitution has spread significantly to other parts of sex industry apart from the red-light district which includes sex shops, strip clubs, sex related businesses in hotels, bars, shops, residential buildings, and even online sex trade in recent times (Deinema and Aalbers, 2012).

Ncose (2019) explains that legalization of prostitution has completely failed in Amsterdam after the mayor of Amsterdam admitted the situation of the red-light district has gotten worse. Apart from this failure, such a policy has opened a new market for international human traffickers where they exploit vulnerable women from poor countries by justifying that they are working under the regulation set by the government. On the other hand, physical and sexual violence to women seems

very familiar in legal prostitution. As per one of the Dutch study reports more than 50% of the women in legal prostitution are assaulted where some major risks are also involved to their life (Jared Justice, 2019). Further, he also talks how men and women have a high possibility of being victims of dangerous diseases from sexual contacts. These kinds of circumstances can have a negative impact on the destination image which influences the decision-making attitude and behavior of travelers.

On the other hand, Amsterdam is one of the most well-known cannabis tourism destinations in the world due to its reputation for being easily accessible for commercial cannabis (Wonders & Michalowski, 2001). As per the BBC News (2012), the easy consumption and availability of cannabis in the city attracts 1.5 million tourists per year. Most of the cannabis-oriented tourists travel to other countries due to strict prohibition of cannabis in their home country, whereas overseas destinations such as Amsterdam are tolerated under specific regulation (Goffman, 1963, 1967; Shields, 1992). According to Rojek (2000), development of tourism is generally accepted and encouraged, while cannabis consumption is seen as a deviant leisure activity in society.

The use of cannabis which is usually supplied from coffeeshops in Amsterdam can have major health issues and addiction for both tourists and local residents. For example, a study published in the international journal of drug policy revealed that the neighborhood of coffee shops has frequent ambulance calls due to involvement in drug related incidents (Pardal, Wolff & Schrijvers, 2020). Duyne & Ruyver (2016) revealed that organized crime, production, distribution, drug trafficking and money laundering activities have also increased over the years due to an increase in the cannabis tourism industry. Moreover, overcrowding and noise pollution are also the major issues around the coffee shops which have brought quality of life issues for residents in those areas. The

kind of reputation Amsterdam has as a cannabis hub could negatively affect the city image, in fact it could be less attractive to other types of tourists who are looking for more family friendly or cultural destinations (Koteyko, Jaspal & Nerlich, 2013). Furthermore, cannabis tourism has its contribution to the city economy, but it also has a negative impact on the cultural and city tourism industry which might be more sustainable in the long term.

The destination image of Amsterdam tourism has largely been influenced by cannabis and prostitution and the city council has made some key steps in overcoming such an image with policies on minimizing or banning these activities. Over the past decades, several policies had come into play in order to close down coffee shops that do cannabis dealings and restrictions have been put on the number of such shops that could operate. One such proceedings was presented by the news media in the city which mentioned the banning non-residents from cannabis purchase from the coffee shops (Boztas, 2020). Moreover, the law on drugs was made strict back in 2013 with residents-only rule implemented to bring nuisance to the city. Similarly, the rule to ban tourists in these coffeeshops was proposed after the local citizen's petition resulted in bringing back the ban on foreign visitors up for debate again. Furthermore, the local bodies in the city of Amsterdam plan to close these coffee shops to tourists and want to make it an option only for the local residents (DutchNews, 2022). As mentioned by the DutchNews, the mayor of Amsterdam Femke Halsema stated to the city councilors back in 2022,

*“Many of the major problems in the city are fueled by the cannabis market: from nuisance caused by drug tourism to serious crime and violence. Banning sales to tourists is a necessary intervention and a first step towards regulation.”*

Apart from the cannabis activities, the local government in Amsterdam has made some approach in the past to reduce or eliminate the sex trades in the red-light district of the city. Back in 2019, the approach to close down brothels and several options were considered which included removing the windows display, creating an erotic city zone with clear entry gate, and so on (BBC News, 2019). The focus of stakeholders and local government bodies in Amsterdam is to reduce the red-light district activities seemingly visible through different policies to ban the root of such activities. However, the concern remains on not losing the tourists attraction as these red-light activities are the major force in the tourism industry of Amsterdam. Placemaking strategies and policies could play an important role in diversifying the tourism industry of the city beyond cannabis and prostitution while also retaining the significant number of tourists and creating balance in the tourism activities.

## 1.2 Placemaking

The research aims to focus on the placemaking strategies and policies that are in place and that could be established to redefine the tourism activities in the city of Amsterdam. The concept of placemaking focuses on creating public spaces which aims to meet the needs and desires of the people who use those spaces (Schneekloth and Shibley, 1995). The purpose of placemaking is to create spaces that are functional as well as attractive and reflect the uniqueness in character and culture of the community. Schneekloth and Shibley further describes the concept of placemaking as a collaborative process involving different stakeholders which includes the businesses, community organizations, local people, and government agencies and through such collaborations

placemaking seeks to address the socio-economic as well as environmental challenges facing the community by creating a more sustainable destination.

Lefebvre (1996) mentions Placemaking at an individual level is a way of affirming our claim on everyday life. The everyday activities that we engage in reflects who we are as an individual, like the way we arrange our furniture and so on (Marcus and Francis, 1998). On the other hand, Harvey (2003) brings an argument to the claim that the space shouldn't just be at the individual level but should go beyond it and be a collective exercise in reshaping the space. In the context of the tourism industry, placemaking plays a significant role in shaping the image as well as an identity of the destination. A properly designed and planned public space could serve as a portrait of the values and characteristics of the destination, providing a memorable experience for the travelers (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000). The collaborative effort in placemaking helps the stakeholders not only in creating the space but also reflecting the destination's traits and also the important aspect of responding to the needs and desires of the community. This process showcases the integration of the destination's cultural, historical, and environmental elements into the design of public spaces in an effort to create an authentic and meaningful experience for the visitors.

Mentioned by Nijman (1999), the city of Amsterdam is quite famous for its liberal policies towards cannabis and prostitution which led to the city being reputed for such tourism activities. The local government neither condones it nor promotes or openly advertises these activities. However, placemaking strategies and policies could play a significant role in redefining the tourism identity of Amsterdam as the city seeks to transform its tourism offerings and move away from this image. Through placemaking and creating a public space signifying the city's richness in cultural heritage, arts, and architecture, Amsterdam could position itself to be a destination known for culture and

heritage tourism rather than a place for drugs and sex. The need for redefinition of Amsterdam's tourism identity can be seen as its richness in historical and cultural heritage is overlooked by other aspects of tourism activities. The city's' tourism industry is thriving mostly of negative aspects like cannabis and prostitution which has led to define tourism in Amsterdam as such in the eyes of many visitors. This only leads to the need for the stakeholders to diversify the focus towards other offerings rather than these negative associations. The role of placemaking in such destinations is key as it is a tool for cities to reappraise their identities and attract a new type of tourists. Creating an attractive and sustainable public space, placemaking helps in establishing a new image of the destination which reflects its culture and historical heritage (Calthorpe, 1993). With placemaking, the destination could turn out to be diverse and more appealing to the new type of visitors.

In conclusion, placemaking plays a vital role in shaping the identity of the tourism industry in Amsterdam and could help move away from its current image that is associated with the tourism activities like cannabis and prostitution. Moreover, the research aims to investigate several placemaking strategies and policies that have been implemented by the destination and also analyze their impact on diversification of tourism offerings. There could be several tourism activities that could be promoted over cannabis and prostitution in the city. Also, Amsterdam could position itself as the destination for culture and heritage tourism by shifting their focus on creating a public space which reflects the cultural heritage, art, and architecture of the city. Such a shift in focus of tourism identity could help welcome new types of tourists to the city. Besides, the research will also contribute towards understanding the significance of placemaking in the tourism industry to attract the new type of visitors to redefine the identity of the destination. The findings from this

research will have implications for other similar tourism destinations looking to diversify their tourism activities into rather more sustainable and responsible tourism. Furthermore, this research also aims to provide valuable insights on different challenges and opportunities that the cities face while pursuing to create a positive image and build a new tourism identity. To further focus on the research, the problem statement is prepared which highlights the key aspects of this study. The ethnographic fieldwork focuses on these problems and its consequences on the stakeholders in the city of Amsterdam, especially in the red-light district that is influential to the identity.

### 1.3 Problem Formulation

The city of Amsterdam has a reputation of being a liberal destination with sex and cannabis tourism and has become a niche market in the competitive tourism world (Nijman, 1999). Nijman further mentions that Amsterdam's present-day image as a city with very liberal attitudes towards sex and drugs emerged under the influence of global mass tourism. However, such an image of the city has led to the tourism industry being unsustainable which results in negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts (Hall, 2005). As per Nijman (1999) and Hall (2005), the presence of mass tourism in the center of the city has brought in crowding, environmental impacts, as well as social tensions resulting in the need to diversify Amsterdam's tourism offerings beyond its traditional focus of cannabis and prostitution. Shifting the focus from cannabis and prostitution to other tourism activities is a complex and challenging task given the large number of tourists visits each year. With these tourism activities history with the city and consistently attracting a large number

of tourists, the idea to shift the focus and promote other types of activities to attract different types of tourists requires a high degree of focus on strategies and policies.

This study looks into the complex nature of redefining the city's tourism identity for creating a sustainable and diversified tourism industry that could overcome it and be consistent over time. To address this issue, Amsterdam municipality has implemented different placemaking strategies in order to redefine the tourism identity of the city. Nevertheless, the scale of success of this effort and its implication to the future of the city is unclear. This research provides insight on these problems and identifies the placemaking strategies and policies that are in place in Amsterdam. To understand the problems and to analyze the findings generated from the study, research questions are put together. The aim of these research questions is to get the understanding of the key issues and to guide and drive the research process.

## 1.4 Research Question

This research seeks to analyze and explore the existing image of Amsterdam being preliminary associated with cannabis and the red-light district. The research question will briefly look into the so-called negative image of the red-light district and try to understand its impact on the local neighborhood from various perspectives. The question will also address the positive and negative impact of the red-light district from a tourism perspective. Apart from that, research questions will look into the role of the existing placemaking policies for enhancing diverse tourism activities. Moreover, it will also discuss potential placemaking strategies and policies which could play an

important role to tackle the challenges associated with the red-light district and help to shift its image away from prostitution and cannabis tourism.

**How placemaking strategies and policies could diversify Amsterdam tourism away from its contested image of prostitution and cannabis?**

**Overarching question**

- 1. How has Amsterdam's reputation as a tourist destination centered around prostitution and cannabis activities and its impact on overall image?**
- 2. What placemaking initiatives have been implemented for diverse tourism in Amsterdam?**
- 3. What placemaking policies could be implemented to shift Amsterdam's contested image of prostitution and cannabis?**

As previously mentioned, the city has an image of redlight district and a favorable place for cannabis and other drug users. There is a need to study and explore the use and implication of the placemaking strategy in order to redefine the existing image of the Amsterdam city. To help our study and to answer our research questions, we believe that it is necessary to portrait the destination reputation and to explain how the image has been seen and its impact on the overall tourism mentality. So, we created an overarching question as: **How has Amsterdam's reputation as a tourist destination centered around prostitution and cannabis impacted its overall image?**

This question focuses on understanding and studying the elements of the red-light districts and its tourism activities that gives this place a contested image. The characteristics of these activities and

its impact on the community as well as the on the city as a whole. Furthermore, this question explores the issues and challenges in place at the red-light district and provides the basis to identify the placemaking policies to address the issues. This leads to the second overarching question that encompasses the policies in place at the destination. The question asks: **What placemaking initiatives have been implemented in Amsterdam for diverse tourism?** This question helps to find out what sort of initiatives have been taken in Amsterdam from different authorities in order to tackle the issues faced by the community from the tourism activities in the red-light district. The policies in place and desired outcome are identified through the fieldwork and secondary form of data collection. It is sought to be essential to study the role of placemaking strategies and their importance to minimize the impact of these contested activities in the red-light district and also possibly to foster cultural and historical image which could add value to city diverse tourism through those policies. We will also be looking at the impact of such policies on different stakeholders, such as local residents, tourists and local businesses like coffee shops, the local handicraft shops, and different outlets. To explore potential policies and strategies, the third research question was prepared: **What placemaking policies could be implemented to shift Amsterdam's contested image of prostitution and cannabis?** After studying the placemaking initiatives that are being implemented or have been implemented, we wanted to study the possibilities of further placemaking strategies that can be implemented in Amsterdam which could possibly be used to shift the image of prostitution and cannabis in Amsterdam. Moreover, these potential policies are viewed in regard to improving the quality of life at the place, reducing the contested activities, enhancing alternative tourism activities and its impact on the community as well as the city's image.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Amsterdam's Tourism Industry

Tourism industry has become one of the major driving forces for the global and regional economy. The travel and tourism industry has contributed around 8.8 trillion dollars and more than 300 million jobs were provided to the world economy in 2018 (World Travel and tourism Council, 2019). According to the Loon and Rouwendal (2017), Amsterdam is one the most popular tourist destinations in Western Europe and a major tourist city of the Netherlands. Amsterdam is also considered as an old city from the Middle Ages with various cultural heritages. Van Der Ark and Richard (2006) explains that the culture of Amsterdam has been a driving force for the urban tourism development in the city. He also added that the city's canals, architecture and heritages from the 17th century adds huge value to city image, and some of city cultural heritages are also listed in UNESCO heritage list. Apart from that Amsterdam tourism offerings includes museums, events, theme parks, exhibitions, conferences, canals, culture, and many others. The structure of the city was formed based on the world-famous canal structure of the 17th century which was used later to build the tourism sector (Gerritsma, 2019). The beauty of waterways in the city are very attractive to the tourist where traveling through canal cruise is the main activity among tourists. According to the Statista (2023), the country received around 18 million tourists in 2017 and around 40% of those tourists went to Amsterdam and the number of tourists visiting Amsterdam keeps growing each year. Tourism industry generates huge revenue to the economy of the

Netherlands. The tourism industry of Amsterdam has earned a direct economic value of 2.7 billion euros which is about 4.5% contribution to the economy of Amsterdam (Pieters, 2017). Moreover, more than 70000 jobs are associated with the tourism industry of Amsterdam which also brings additional investment in the city every year.

According to the Gemeente (2018), Amsterdam has opened its tourism and traffic office together with the first official canal cruise in 1914, by the end of year 140000 visitors were received. The number reached 1.5 million visitors by 1956 with 37 cruise ships which was a big boost to the tourism industry. At the end of the 19th century, different groups were fighting for rights which also included the gay rights movement, leading Amsterdam to a prime gay destination (Gerritsma, 2019). The tourism industry of Amsterdam is still attracting a huge number of Lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender tourists which brings tourism diversity in destination (Hodes et al., 2005). The red-light district of Amsterdam has a significant contribution to the tourism industry of Amsterdam. The red-light district of Amsterdam is very famous among the domestic and international visitors because of its windows brothels, sex workers, strip clubs, sex, and cannabis museums, and selling legal marijuana in “coffee shops” (Capello, 2011). Bachelor (2022) reveals that around 10% to 15% of the tourism industry is associated with the red-light district, whereas cannabis tourism has also high influence among the bag packers and overnight visitors. In addition, it is also estimated that Amsterdam will exceed 18 million overnight visitors in 2023 which can reach up to 23 million overnight visitors by the end of 2025.

Over tourism has become a huge challenge for Amsterdam as the number of tourists visiting the place has increased in the past many years (Dickinson, 2018). Moreover, it also causes increasing

waste and different kinds of environmental pollution which can create many problems for tourism destinations like Amsterdam.

The rapid growth of Airbnb, booking.com and other rental platforms causes a shortage of space for local residents in the city (Zwam, 2016). He also explains that tourists tend to pay high prices for overnight stays therefore hosts prefer to rent their apartments or home to the tourists rather than to local residents. As a result, locals are pushed out of the city center and tourists centered buildings and shops are opening in such places. CNN covered the news on 18th December, with the title “Overrun Amsterdam targets sex and drugs tourists with ‘Stay Away’ campaign” (Bachelor, 2022). This campaign was held to reduce rowdy behavior from visitors and improve livability and safety for residents. On the other hand, the price of remaining apartments is too expensive for residents. In order to tackle with such challenges in the tourism industry, the new city council has taken some additional measures, for example a decrease in the capacity of vacation rentals (Airbnb) from 60 to 30 nights per year and forbidding some rental platforms in most crowded areas (NOS, 2018; Weezel, 2018). The city is putting a lot of marketing efforts in tourism particularly to attract higher paying cultural tourists to reduce the low budget backpacker tourists to counter the negative effect the over tourism and negative aspect of city image (Aalbers&Sabat, 2012; Kavartzis& Ashworth, 2007). City of Amsterdam (2016) and Amsterdam Cruise Port (2015) also argued that to make a diverse and livable city for residents and travelers, the tourism industry needs to attract cruise tourists which are considered as higher paying cultural tourists because around 31% of their expenses are spent on tours which also include ground transportation. This kind of focus on cruise tourists will also bring diversity and generate much more income to city tourism. By reducing the number of tourists and incline on the quality or high payer tourists, city and

residents can keep the welfare of each other which would be a very good initiative for sustainable, cultural, and urban development (City of Amsterdam, 2016).

The market position of Amsterdam which was based on the major international cultural center, landscape canal architecture and building, urban development of city was threatened by the competition within the cities of Netherland and other country cities due to its liberal behavior towards prostitution and excessive use of soft drug looked as negative sign for the city which eventually overshadowing the other desirable image of the city (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006). Both authors also claim that Amsterdam was looked upon as the city of problems rather than opportunities which also brought a lot of questions on the tourism image of the city. In order to bring positive change in terms of brand image of the city “I Amsterdam” was launched in 2004 in the city which serves as the brand for the city image and people of Amsterdam and indicates the change of brand identity in reaction to the negative perception and international benchmark (Amsterdam Marketing, 2015). It was part of the city's marketing plan to gain benefit in income, rise in visitor numbers, investment and to improve its market position in international lists. Among other many policies tourism was promoted through hospitality programs and events to bring positive change in the tourism industry in Amsterdam.

## **2.2 Brand image impact on tourism destinations**

Brand image can be explained as the consumer perspective of a certain brand which is reflected by the brand association in the consumer mind (Keller, 2008). Some of the scholars often consider the destination image and brand image of the tourism destination equate. According to Baloglu and Mc Cleary (1999), the brand image of the tourism destination emerged from the destination image which also introduced different concepts such as brand image, branding, brand identity and

their contribution and performance in tourism destinations. Martinez et al., (2010) defined that the brand image of tourism destinations are the mix of product and services as main attractions that travelers in a tourism destination can actually feel. The branding of the destination plays an important role in the success of the tourism destination and promotes the image of the destination. The brand image of a destination often works as a demand of tourism businesses and enterprises to meet the supply of tourists (Lijuan and Tianyuan, 2012). The positive brand image can be achieved through emphasizing the favorable, strong, identity and unique brand association which creates a favorable feeling among the tourists and differentiates itself with a unique image.

It has been argued that the destination brand image is not influenced by the destination selection policy and marketing but also determined by the tourist behavior in general (Ashworth and Goodall, 1988; Bigne et al., 2001; Cooper et al., 1993; Mansfeld, 1992).

Moreover, the intentions of the visitor to revisit the destination and spreading the positive word of mouth also contribute towards the fate of the brand image of tourism destinations. The customer loyalty in tourism destinations can be achieved by the retention of the traveler in destinations. Therefore, in marketing discipline, the concept of customer retention is highly valued because it is more costly to acquire new customers than retaining the existing customers (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1984). When it comes to branding the destination, some of the challenges faced by destination marketer are associated around political, environmental, and financial matters (Sonnleitner, 2011). On the other hand, inclusion, and active involvement of the local people in the branding process is very crucial for the successful branding of the place (Baker & Cameron, 2008). The destinations have gained importance from brand image due to the high competition and substitutability issues and its image is not only about the individual attributes, but also the holistic

imitation of the destination (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005). Also, the image of the destination is the significant part which comes to the choice or decision making of visitors. Elbe, Hallen & Axelsson (2009) explains that the destination can be considered as a brand depending on its image based on the available tourism services, cultural and urban experiences, and many others. Moreover, the authors have an opinion that different actors' contributions in the destinations are independent and the impression of any kind of activity during the process of brand making has an impact on individual brand image as well as the image of the destination.

Because of the huge competition in tourism marketing, the brand image of the tourism has a huge influence in the tourist's mind. According to Latif et al., (2015), such increasing competition has an advantage for tourists in terms of selecting a destination with various alternatives and greater value of money, whereas tourism destinations must shape their position and impression in a positive and diverse way. The red-light area of Amsterdam which is also known as a De Wallen is considered as a negative image for destination by the lot of tourism scholars and medias, even the huge number of locals residents in Amsterdam also shows their anger towards the dealing of soft drug and sex work which is tolerated by city (Liempt & Chimienti, 2017). According to the Quest, Gill & Appiah (2019), the city government of Amsterdam has shown huge concerns over the red-light district and plans to end the tours of red-light district because the sex worker and environment around prostitution are being treated as a tourist attraction. Koteyko, Jaspal & Nerlich (2013) also explained earlier that city tolerance towards the open use of drugs which is technically illegal and its liberal relationship with prostitution has brought a negative brand image, especially among the visitors who are looking for family oriented and cultural experiences. Keller (2008) argued that creating a positive brand image has a huge value in customer perception and can sustain for a long

period of time. The conceptual framework of brand image in the tourism industry has eight latent elements that includes brand awareness, corporate social responsibility, brand superiority, brand affection, brand awareness and brand resonance which are treated as antecedents, whereas advertisement and tourism management works as a moderator for the brand image of tourism industry (Latif et al., 2015). The below suggested conceptual brand image of the tourism industry would help to maintain a strong relationship between destination and customer. In addition, it will allow tourism marketers to create strong CSR and customer loyalty where advertisement and tourism management have an important role to play for customer-based brand equity.

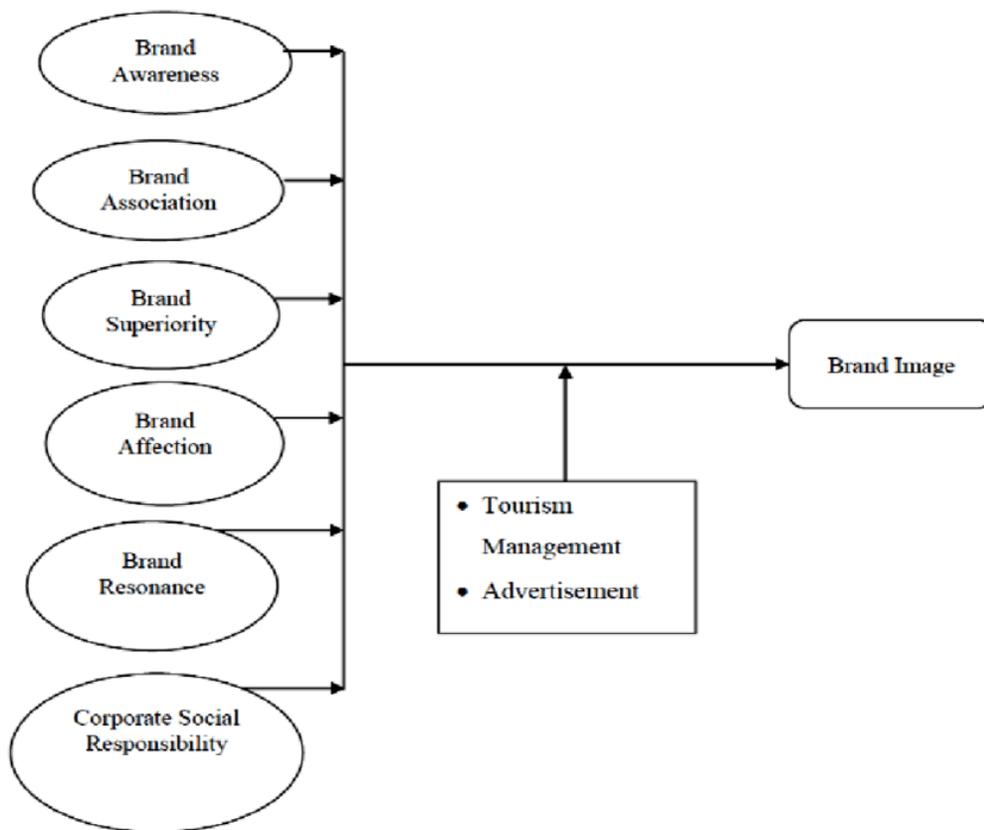


Figure 1. A conceptual framework of brand image for tourism industry

### **2.2.1 Brand awareness**

Brand awareness is a process of recognizing a brand which plays an active role in building brand image (Keller, 1998 & 2008). Moreover, it is the start of where customers, organizations and other stakeholders within the tourism industry are aware about the brand and have the opportunity to create a strong association with tourists. The main goal of creating brand awareness is to let customers know about the values, culture, and experiences within the destinations (Aaker, 1992). Also, it has the ability to rebuild relationships with customers in terms of quality, authenticity and diversity for a longer period of time.

### **2.2.2 Brand association**

Brand association works as a tool for marketers which helps them to differentiate their brand and position not only in the customer decision making process, but also in the tourism competitive market (Latif et al., 2014). Brand associations create and maintain positive relations, behavior and feeling towards the brand in the customer mind that enhance the image of the brand in the tourism industry (Aaker, 1991). It is also the second step of the conceptual framework of brand image in the tourism industry.

### **2.2.3 Brand superiority**

As per Keller (2009), brand superiority communicates on how customers evaluate brands where customers also have the opportunity to develop perception towards brand with the help of the evaluation process. Additionally, brand superiority can play a significant role to bring positive

perception in regard to brand which is also very helpful to promote a positive image of the tourism industry.

#### **2.2.4 Brand affection**

The affection and emotions of customers has a huge role to play in behavior and decision making. Bagozzi (1992) revealed that emotional perspective about the brand will increase the affection level of customers which also contributes towards perception level. Such a level of affection towards any kind of brand is a big boost for the tourism industry and its growth.

#### **2.2.5 Brand resonance**

Brand resonance works a final product with customers who are affected by the affection (Keller, 2003). It allows organizations to create strong brand loyalty towards the tourism industry. Apart from that it also gives them direction on how to build strong bonds with customers which is also key to retain the existing customer in the tourism industry.

#### **2.2.6 Corporate social responsibility**

In recent times the importance of corporate social responsibility and its impact on the brand image of the tourism industry is very significant (Latif et al., 2014). Corporate social responsibility does not only focus on brand image but also has a strong connection with societal wellbeing (Murali Raman et al., 2012). Implementation of CSR policy in the tourism industry would generate trust worth relationships among the local residents, tourists and different involved stakeholders which could lead to customer loyalty, sustainable development and investment in the tourism industry (Maheshwari and Kumar, 2013). Corporate social responsibility is a final antecedent of conceptual

framework and a great asset in order to achieve positive brand image through brand renounce in today's market.

### **2.2.7 Tourism management**

The meaning of the term tourism is related to various perspectives like marketing, economic, social, environmental, managerial and many others (Rashidul, 1998). The category of tourism is very broad which contains holiday travels, business travel, cultural tours, shopping, conferences, meetings, events, sports, and other kinds of travels (Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, 2004). The importance of a proper management system brings huge advantages and value in the tourism industry to handle the set of activities in the tourism market. Therefore, tourism management has a huge role to play as moderators to enhance the brand image of the tourism industry (Latif et al., 2014).

### **2.2.8 Advertisement**

Advertisement is a method of communication and marketing that gives information about a product or destination and helps to build an image in the market (Park et al., 2008). The author further explains that modern tourism marketing consists of different types of advertising media, such as billboards, newspaper, television, Facebook, online materials, internet, mobile network and many other forms of media. With the help of all those media, tourism marketer can provide effective and valuable information and knowledge to the customers. Additionally, advertisement works as a mediator to position tourism in a marketplace where tourists and tourism related stakeholders can access the position of the tourism industry. In this process, together with the

antecedents of brand image advertising work as a moderator to enhance the brand image of the tourism industry (Latif et al., 2014).

### 2.3. Cannabis And Sex Tourism

Prostitution simply means the sale of sexual acts. Jeffrey (1997), in his book says, Prostitution should be seen as an ordinary work, an example of women's choice and agency, even a form of sexual freedom. Meaning that prostitution is a form of employment where people (especially females) offer sex for money. Whereas many feminists and activists view prostitution as a form of violence against women and a manifestation of gender inequality. Workin (1997) defined prostitution as "a system of sexual exploitation that primarily targets women and girls, in which they are treated as commodities to be bought and sold for the sexual pleasure of predominantly male buyers."

Tourism and sex have always gone together (Yeomen, 2009). It is theorized that Columbus brought the sexually transmitted disease Syphilis to Spain in 1492 (Ford, 2003). One of the major causes for the prostitution is also the economic aspects as approximately 14% of the gross domestic of Thailand (US 27 billion dollar) was supplied by sex business (Lim, 1998). In 2000, an organization for prostituted adolescents reported that one girl was worth Canadian \$250,000.00 a year to her pimp (Farley, 2004). This shows that the prostitution has an undeniable economic impact. Although it has an economic impact, the deadly virus like HIV has grown in Thailand because of the increase of prostitution in the country (Leheny, 1995). In addition to this, prostitution has

also increased the trafficking of women from poor countries for the prostitution. This can be explained as 27 million people are estimated to be victimized by the human traffickers every year

(Lutya, 2012). According to the report published by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2016, there were 24.9 million people in forced labor among which 4.8 million people are victims of forced sexual exploitation and 99% among these statistics are girls and women and were victims of sexual exploitation (International labor organization, 2017). Prostitution and its legalization increase the number of trafficking of women in order to meet the demand of women to be used in legal sex service (Hughes, 2000). Furthermore, Farley (2009) suggests that “wherever the prostitution is legalized, trafficking to sex industry marketplaces in that industry increases”. Whereas others disagree and say that legalization of prostitution will improve the safety and environment of the sex workers, allows the sex business to recruit among domestic women who choose prostitution as their free choice of occupation. This turns the trafficking of women less attractive (Korvinus et al., 2005)

In the context of Amsterdam, the social and spatial realities of prostitution have been historically, intimately related to Amsterdam’s position as an important node in international economic networks as well as to its openness, with flows of people moving continually in and out of the city (Deinema & Aalbers, 2012). According to the report by the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children (2018), the estimated annual turnover of the prostitution sector in the Netherlands is around 660 million Euro with Amsterdam being the main cities where prostitution takes place.

Cannabis tourism has been transforming as a new need and choice for many tourists in different destinations all around the globe (Liu and Stronczak, 2022). The usage of cannabis is particularly emerging as type of tourism where visitors have opportunity to buy or consume cannabis from outside of their living or working place (Taylor, 2019)

Keul & Eidenhauer (2019) explains that cannabis is still illegal or heavily regulated in many parts of the world but cannot be denied its impact in the global tourism sector. The authors find studying and understanding the cannabis tourism market is necessary as well as important because of its significant economic and cultural impacts and its continued growth across the world. Claegen and Kraft (2018) indicates that tourism has a potential role for the growth of the cannabis industry. According to Claegen and Kraft, cannabis tourism also brought opportunities for local products related to cannabis and became a selling point to visitors in different legal states which benefits local people as part of their income. On the other hand, by looking at the nature of cannabis consumption in many communities, involvement in cannabis tourism is seen as a deviant behavior which is either illegal or socially not accepted in tourist home countries (Belhassen, Santos, & Uriely, 2007). However, in recent times, cannabis tourism is experiencing a rapid growth because the use of cannabis legalization is being promoted in many countries.

According to the research, a survey conducted by the Colorado Tourism Office in 2018, found that around 15% of visitors to Colorado cited cannabis as a primary motivator for their trip (Colorado Tourism Office, n.d.). Similarly, in Canada, which legalized recreational cannabis in 2018, a survey conducted by Statistics Canada found that about 646,000 tourists visited the country specifically to consume cannabis in 2019 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). In the context of Amsterdam, in 1976 Netherlands adopted a formal written policy of non-enforcement for violations involving possessions or sale of up to 30 gm of cannabis (MacCoun & Reuter, 2001). The cannabis industry in the Netherlands employs 3000-4000 and the workers have their own union (Beileman, Goeree & Naayer, 2005). And coffeeshops in Amsterdam sell 50- 150 metric tons of cannabis with the value of 300-600 million euros per year (MacCoun, 2011). The article furthermore says that almost

700 retailers of cannabis are there in the Netherlands which is about one per 2900 legally. It is estimated that quarter of the 4–5 million tourists who visit Amsterdam visit a coffee shop, and that 10% of them cite that as a reason why they came (DutchAmsterdam, 2022). From the above articles and examples, the positive impact of cannabis is highlighted, However, there are many drawbacks of the industry. For example, Van Ours (2003) explains that a lot of individuals with a greater susceptibility to consume cannabis also have a greater susceptibility to use cocaine. This might lead to a problematic phase to a city or even a country if the numbers of drug users increase. An example could be taken from the Netherland itself as the government of Netherland uses approximately €92000 per ‘problematic drug user’ on treatment (Reuter, 2006).

## 2.4 Placemaking Policies and Strategies

Placemaking is an approach that looks to create the most vibrant and sustainable urban spaces. It functions well through several strategies and policies with collaboration of different stakeholders including community members, government officials, as well as the private sector in order to transform the public spaces into attractive, functioning, and culturally rich. Derek Thomas (2016) explains the importance of end users like the communities while making the decisions regarding important placemaking policies. With community participation, an effective placemaking policy could lead to the capitalization of local assets resulting in creation of quality public spaces through placemaking projects. However, placemaking projects also need to overcome the problems of disagreement which happens often due to difference in visions and ideas among the residence, funding bodies, creator of the project and government bodies (Alfasi and Fingerhut, 2023). Such projects or implementation of placemaking policies may also encounter challenges because of the community and organization skepticism about the identity of the place.

Jacobs and Appleyard (1987) mention some of the fundamentals to the urban public spaces which includes livability, identity as well as control, access to opportunities, authenticity of the place, a social community, self-reliance, and an environment for all. Moreover, placemaking is an urban design strategy which focuses on two aspects; the built environment and the people who inhabit it. Promotion of sustainable tourism development has been another key foundation of the placemaking policies and strategies. Several literatures have researched on the concept of placemaking and its potential in diversifying the public spaces. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) highlighted the significance of place marketing and branding to attract the big investments, tourism industry, as well as tourism to cities, states, and nations.

Placemaking plays an important role in creating the virtual and physical identities which reflect the value of the community or a destination (Govers and Go, 2009). On the other hand, Richards (2011) argues that if the place or a destination is commodified, there is a risk of potentially losing the cultural diversity while the city becomes homogeneous. Thus, the concept of placemaking is a complex subject which needs a careful consideration of social, cultural, and environmental impacts of urban design.

Coates and Seamon (1984) explained place and place-making as two important notions presented by the literature and describes places in three elements which includes a sense of landscapes, a sense of human life, and experiences. This definition of placemaking crystalizes the natural phenomenon of the place like the villages in southeast Asia (Yea, 2002), and the cultural landscapes of the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau (Kolas, 2004). These are organic processes where societal practices in a community shapes the places and is regarded as a bottom-up approach

(Dyck, 2005). On the other hand, Lew (2012) offers the opposite approach to the organic one and it involves planned effort to have an influence on people's behaviors and thoughts to shape their perception of the place, which is a top-down process. The cultural essence of a place is preserved effectively through the bottom-up approach or organic placemaking rather than top down placemaking approach (Lew, 2019). Moreover, in order to encourage organic placemaking, some of the communities' planning and development approaches empower the local people to propose their participation in the development decisions through public participation and initiatives led by the community.

Urban design as placemaking has become the process of creating a place for people to live, work, play, and visit in a qualitative way. There have been several studies on placemaking strategies and policies to diversify the tourism offerings and to shift the image of the city away from red light district activities. The success of the placemaking strategies requires the balance in cultural authenticity and the commercial interest of the stakeholders (Getz and Page, 2016). The argument is made that placemaking could lead to transforming the urban spaces into diverse and authentic communities that gives a more meaningful sense of place that goes past marketing slogans. Placemaking is significantly important in creating a brand identity of a destination that could uniquely differentiate itself from others. However, if it is highly emphasized, the city's true characteristics could be overlooked and not reflected well by the cliched image brand (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Mehaffy (2020) pointed out that placemaking movements are also facing the issues of gentrification which can also lead to the self-destruction of diversity. He also explains that gentrification is a system which prioritizes the need of capital in a higher level than the need

of the people living there. As a result, existing locals might have to face issues like increase in housing prices, loss of diversity and opportunities and issues related to community engagement.

Amsterdam is rich in cultural and historical attractions and one of the important ways to make the placemaking strategies work effectively is to diversify the tourism offering that the city holds to these cultural and historical aspects. The policies not only include preserving and promoting the already existing cultural and historical sites but also developing new cultural attractions that show the art and history of the city. As argued by Govers and Go (2009), placemaking could help in building a sense of place rooted to the cultural identity of the local community. Furthermore, several strategies like developing the cultural districts, installing the public arts, and heritage trails promoting the city's heritage are some of the placemaking policies that could be implemented.

Placemaking strategies is a major component, but it alone might not be enough to shift the image of the city's tourism identity away from cannabis and prostitution. Comprehensive approach could be a necessity to succeed alongside placemaking policies like the involvement of several stakeholders. Multi stakeholders' approach is an important aspect to be considered for the sustainable tourism development of the destination. Multi stakeholders approach takes into consideration the social, cultural, and economic impacts of tourism which could lead to sustainable tourism development (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013). Furthermore, alongside implementation of placemaking strategies, developing the policies to support sustainable tourism practices with the promotion of alternative tourism activities within the city could deliver a more diverse and authentic experience to the tourists. On the other hand, the multi stakeholder approach is highly influenced by the power relationship among the stakeholders (Crepso, 2005; Edmunds and

Wollenberg, 2011; Leeuwia, 2000). The authors further explained that stakeholders with less power or influence are forced to accept the agreement due pressure from other stakeholders and majority counts which leads to the unfavorable results to them.

#### **2.4.1 Placemaking in Amsterdam**

Amsterdam is one of the biggest tourist cities in Europe with people from all over the world traveling for the experience. The city is known for richness in culture, but parts of the city is known for contested tourism activities like open cannabis and drugs consumption as well as sex tourism. De Wallen is a district in Amsterdam which is known for adult entertainment and is a place for fulfillment of sexual desire and cannabis consumption (Amsterdam.info, n.d.). Moreover, the city is liberal and tolerant to the prostitution and soft drugs activities with the legality of the services. In the context of Amsterdam, a successful placemaking requires a multi-dimensional approach that encompasses conceived, perceived, and lived aspects integrating physical, social, and cultural aspects of urban life (Pancholi, Yigitcanlar, and Guaralda, 2017). Public spaces provide a platform for social interaction and promote community engagement as there's a need to balance the needs of different groups including tourists, local residents, and businesses. The importance of the involvement of local communities in the placemaking process is key to ensure the aspirations are met. The collaborative placemaking approach integrated by Wonderful Copenhagen and its marketing agency declared an idea of "The end of tourism as we know it", focusing on local hood encouraging destination actors to consider tourists as temporary locals rather than travelers (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017). Moreover, the aim of this concept is to make tourists feel like home and build a personal connection to the place with shared experience and authenticity. Authenticity is a concept which works as a driver for tourists seeking the originality of the

destination (Maccannell, 1976) and considered to be tourist's evaluation of the place based on their expectations of the destination's true value and experience from their visit (Jain, 2014). Trilling (1972) mentions the original use of the term authenticity was based on the museum where mostly arts were valued as authentic and the terminology was extended to tourism with the products like arts, festivals, architectures, rituals, cuisine, and authenticity indicates the traditional culture, and the realness of the place (Sharpley, 1994).

Placemaking in the city of Amsterdam is not a new idea as there have been several placemaking policies in place at the urban spaces of the cities. The case of Parkhuis de Zwijger which is a nonprofit cultural organization in Amsterdam that hosts numbers of events every year with the collaboration to link the creative industries of the city with urban development professionals (Parkhuis De Zwijger, 2016). Another example of a placemaking policy in Amsterdam includes creating the public space in Lola Lik which is a creative hub established in the former prison in the city (Lola Lik, n.d.). As the crime rates in the city felt low, the requirements for prisons decreased and the empty space of the Bijlmerbajes prison was turned into a creative cultural hub with a plan to integrate networking of travelers. Another example of collaborative placemaking strategies up and running in the city of Amsterdam is the project of "Plein" where several stakeholders came together to work with the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) in redeveloping the 40-45 square Plein into a market (Project for Public Spaces, 2010). Moreover, the strategy was established to develop a square into a market for vendors to sell a diverse range of products which reflects the large community of Turkish and Moroccan people living in the district. Another example of placemaking policy and strategy in the city is the project of Buiksloterham, which is a place famous for its old industrial image. The plan for redevelopment began with transformation

into a mixed-use urban space organically and with interactive governance interventions (Dembski, 2013). The main aim was to cover the land with vegetation which gradually and naturally cleans the polluted soil placing old, discarded houseboats on those soils and also cafe and terrace to be included in the plan. The collaboration between the municipality, businesses, and the Amsterdam-Noord district drove the organic transformation coexisting with the residents and the industries over the period of transition. The placemaking approaches of the city of Amsterdam focuses on more of a city's planning development with several stakeholders involved and the bottom-up approach of involving the community people. Moreover, the municipality plays the role of a key actor throughout the process. Placemaking is a collaborative process which involves community members and stakeholders while designing and implementing the public spaces to help in promotion of social, economic, and environmental well-being (Carmona, 2010). Moreover, placemaking has a huge potential to contribute in terms of a positive, vibrant, and inclusive destination.

## **2.5 Sustainable Tourism**

Tourism is considered as the phenomenon of relationships arising from the interactions between tourists, business suppliers, the host government, and host communities (Tolkach et al., 2017). Currently rapid tourism growth has been occurring in many popular destinations across the world (Noordeloos, 2018). He further says that, in some destinations the rapid growth of tourism results in protesting residents. Meaningful places which are known for having a sense of place depend on achieving a balance between several criteria and not just on the physical design of the space but what happens in the space and how this leads to a set of memories that invest the space are also equally important (Ghavampour & Vale, 2019). To create the balance between the host

communities and the tourist it is necessary to understand and discuss the concept of sustainable tourism. UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and the host communities” (UNWTO, 2018). The English Tourism Council (2002) explains sustainable Tourism as “sustainable tourism is about managing tourism’s impact on the environment, communities, and future economy to make sure that the effects are positive rather than negative for the benefit of future generations. It is a management approach that is relevant to all types of tourism, regardless of whether it takes place in cities, towns, countryside, or the coast. Sustainability is a holistic principle of democracy which is necessarily a social democratic approach, based on a clear set of values such as social justice, equity, and environmental quality (Davidson et al., 2012). The concept of sustainable Tourism can be seen after sustainability as sustainable tourism can only be implemented when the holistic principle of sustainability is understood and integrated into the strategic planning of the industry (Brokaj, 2014).

The problem within tourism in the destination might arise due to the slow or over movement of the tourists. According to Kim (2017), as more and more visitors visit the residential areas, the real estate prices increase as well as the additional social cost increases. In addition, the local people may get annoyed as the high number of visitors visits and party in their peaceful neighborhood. The current patterns of tourism are not sustainable due to the growth in the number of visitors in some destinations causing not only environmental but also social damage (Oh, Assaf & Baloglu, 2016).

Although the awareness of sustainability has increased significantly among the governments, industry and the general public, the evidence from the climate change science, a decline in public health and an affordable housing crisis in several countries make it visible that the recent developments are not achieving the goal of sustainability (Myric, 2011). Despite scientific advancements, global governance and sustainable practices are still not capable of dealing with the climate issues and sustainable goals (Davidson, 2010).

Following the discourse of the sustainable development based on the UN committee on Environment and Development, sustainable urban development requires considerably more ambitious policies than today to limit energy (Naess,2001). The article further mentioned that the planning for the urban sustainable development must be oriented towards long-term goals and need to utilize the knowledge and information about environmental consequences of different solutions. Place- based engagement could be a way of managing global issues like global warming and the need to change energy use and generation (Reed, 2007). This puts the emphasis on working with locals so that making a connection with placemaking could be a significant opportunity for moving towards sustainability. According to (Ghavampour & Vale, 2019), both the term sustainability and placemaking are perhaps overused without being comprehensively understood. They further argued that the concept of sustainability has been revised through introducing the new models and promoting the integrated approaches whereas the placemaking has yet to respond in a similar way. Placemaking strategy is also criticized for being elitist and not being able to provide social equity and caused the gentrification by different views (Karacor, 2014). On the other hand, placemaking can be an approach from the sustainability point of view as a strategy for transforming cities or

public spaces based on the community assets, development goals and potentials, to promote well-being, happiness and overall health in local places, urban areas, or neighborhoods (Turvey, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

Methodology refers to the procedures, techniques, and tools to collect and analyze data in a research study (Creswell, 2017). It encompasses the overall research design, sampling strategies, data collection method, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. The study employs qualitative research design to analyze the contested image of Amsterdam based on the red-light district (sex tourism) and tolerance towards the use of cannabis and explore how placemaking policies and strategies could contribute to shift its image away from prostitution and cannabis.

One of the major aspects of this research is to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. For such, the data collection process has been directed by the principles of grounded theory that emphasizes on allowing the data to speak for itself and generating theories from the bottom-up approach. The fieldwork is one of the key parts of this research and the key informants were carefully identified based on their roles, expertise, and involvement in the city's tourism industry. Moreover, observations have been made on the ground level in the destination and various other public spaces, cultural institutions and community initiatives were taken into consideration. Besides, field notes are gathered to record the observations and insights obtained from the destination.

### 3.1 Research philosophy

The theoretical concept of epistemology and grounded theory has been used in this research to obtain reliable and trustworthy data. The concept of theoretical approach allows researchers to look into a given issue or situation from a different perspective while interpreting and analyzing the collected data. Research philosophy provides a framework on how research should be made depending on the ideas and nature of the research (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Apart from that, it also refers to the belief of developing new knowledge while analyzing specific problems. Similarly, this research has been looking into Amsterdam's negative image centered around the red-light district and cannabis tourism from various perspectives to get valuable insight on it, the study also explores placemaking potentials to tackle the challenges drawn from contested images. Epistemological philosophy has been used by the researcher to get a better overview of the research in terms of the negative image of Amsterdam and the importance of placemaking in order to shift its image away from red light districts and cannabis. Epistemology is the study which deals with how knowledge is gained and what sources it involves. In epistemological terms, collecting and interpreting data is influenced by how you interpret knowledge and truth (Gray, 2014). Knowledge can be explained as empirical or intuitive. For instance, empirical knowledge can be described as anything that is objectively described whereas intuitive knowledge is based on belief and faith (Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015). The given example indicates that the interpretation of knowledge gives indication towards the choice of methodology, and also has an impact on data analysis. Therefore, we as a researcher use this philosophy in this research to collect and analyze our findings in the correct and reliable way by using necessary methods.

The study of epistemology is categorized in two parts: positivism and interpretivism. According to the Scotland (2012) and Saunders et al., (2012), positivism study is more focused towards collecting pure data or facts without being affected by the bias of humans and it initiates based on the statistics and large number of participants which is influenced by the quantitative method. On the other hand, interpretivism philosophy works as the part of a qualitative method which allows researchers to interpret and analyze study from various perspectives by emphasizing qualitative analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, the philosophy of interpretive research is used in this research to gain important insights about the contested image of Amsterdam by talking to the related stakeholders in the red-light district which includes businesses, tourists and residents living in the area. Moreover, this approach allows researchers to focus on the problem in a specific way and gives an opportunity to work closely with participants in Amsterdam during field visits which helps to understand what they think about this so-called negative image and its impact on their daily livelihood. Therefore, this research is based on Interpretivism philosophy.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

Research approach is basically a process by which a researcher intends to make the study and it outlines the procedures used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data alongside the theoretical framework of the research. Qualitative, quantitative, mixed research, and case study research could be considered as the approach of research. Moreover, inductive, deductive, and abductive are three different bases that could be considered as a research approach for qualitative research.

Basically, inductive research is a bottom-up approach which comprehends specific observations and data that develops broad generalizations or theories based on those observations (Woo, O'Boyle, and Spector, 2017). Such approach is key to the qualitative research methods with

ethnography and grounded theory where the aim is to understand the phenomenon based on the collected data. Deductive approach on the other hand is a top-down approach to research where the study begins with the hypothesis or theories, which are later tested through the collection of data and its analysis (Hyde, 2000). This approach is more suitable and used on quantitative data collection methods that include surveys and experiments where the main aim is to test a specific hypothesis. However, the abductive approach is referred to as a hybrid approach of research which combines an aspect of both the inductive and deductive reasoning (Lipscomb, 2012). This approach begins with an incomplete set of data and conclusions are made based on the best explanation among the number of explanations which are often incomplete.

This research follows the grounded way of gathering the data while the analysis is done on the inductive reasoning as the gathered data derives the theory. However, the data also goes back and forth with the literatures in a constant circle while analyzing the data which makes it an abductive approach. During the analysis and discussion of the collected data, the data were correlated and triangulated with the existing literature to develop the academic argument which makes it a flexible and holistic process by using abductive approach.

### **3.3 Grounded Theory**

According to the Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2012), grounded theory works quite opposite to the traditional way of research and looks to contradict scientific method. Moreover, this approach offers a systematic process of data collection and analysis where research problems or phenomena can be studied in great depth. In grounded theory, researchers gather the data initially which systematically develops the theory from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is frequently used in inductive research which allows researchers to develop theories which are

grounded in data. This approach has been used in this research because most of the data collection and observation has been done in a grounded way which generates fresh data and this method also allows researchers to work systematically, yet flexible while collecting data. Through grounded theory-based analysis, coding has been done by analyzing the data where themes have been identified from the codes. More data were collected during the analysis where different visuals, photos and events and other happenings were taken into consideration for analysis which will also ensure the reliability of data.

### **3.4 Data collection**

Data collection is the process of gathering information or data from various sources for the purpose of research, analysis or decision- making (Bryman, 2016). He further states that there are various data collection methods, and the choice of the methods depends upon the nature of research, availability of the sources, and the desired outcomes. There are several ways of data collection such as surveys, interviews, experiments, observations, discussions, focus groups and many others which are the part of the qualitative and quantitative methods (Mkandawire, 2016). Selecting the correct method for data collection is an important part of the research. Therefore, a qualitative method has been used as part of data collection in this research. According to Hennink, Bailey & Hutter (2011), the qualitative method allows researchers to identify the issues in a given situation from the perspective of participants of the research, and understands their motive, interpretations and ideas regarding the event, destination and behavior to certain objects. Moreover, the qualitative researcher also needs to be curious, open minded and ready to listen to the story of people and their problems for the deep understanding of research. This research is based on analyzing the negative image of Amsterdam based on sexual activities as well as the use of soft drugs such as

cannabis and the importance of placemaking strategies to shift its image away from it. Therefore, data collection has been done in the red-light district to understand the opinion of the business and local people living in the neighborhood. On the other hand, placemakers organizations and people who are involved in placemaking policies in Amsterdam were also selected to find their involvement and strategies to shift its image away from prostitution and cannabis tourism. The collection of data has been taken in the form of interviews from related participants in the field and via online interviews. Field observation, field notes and experiences of researchers were also taken into consideration for analyzing the data. Semi structured questions were prepared in advance differently depending on the character of participants, however necessary changes occurred in questioning during the interviews depending on the situation and explanation of participants. In this way, a qualitative method is used as a flexible approach for the data collection in this research.

### **3.5 Secondary data:**

Secondary data refers to the data that are collected and analyzed by someone else for other purposes and these data include the sources such as government reports, academic articles and journals, market research studies (Hair et al., 2019). The secondary data can be advantageous as these data are often readily available and a cost-effective means of conducting research. Secondary data used in this report are basically from different news articles, media coverages, blogs, academic literatures, and different governmental websites that are related to impacts of sexual activities, uses of cannabis and soft drugs as well as placemaking and tourism in Amsterdam.

### 3.6 Primary Data:

Primary data refers to the data collected by the researchers or fresh data for the research (Babbie, 2020). The article further says, it can be collected from various methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, experiments etc. and is often used to answer specific research questions or test a hypothesis. The primary data collection for this research has been done by the qualitative method where online interviews as well as physical interviews were considered for data collection. Apart from that, field observation was considered by analyzing photos, visuals, and observing activities of tourists and local residents in the neighborhood of the red- light district. The field notes and personal experiences of researchers were also taken during the field visit in Amsterdam.

### 3.7 Interviews

Interviews are a common method of data collection in qualitative research. It involves the researchers asking a set of questions related to a certain phenomenon to an individual or a group of people to understand their opinion, views and perspective on that particular phenomenon and those questions could be structured, semi- structured or unstructured depending upon the flexibility needed in the research design (Varun & Clarke, 2019).

Interviews are one of the primary sources of data for this research. Therefore, it was very important to select appropriate participants and get the necessary information from them which is very crucial for this research. This research is about the redefining Amsterdam identity based on the image of Amsterdam based on the red-light district and cannabis and the role of placemaking policies to shift its image away from it. The participants were people or organizations who are involved or related with those areas and working with placemaking policies and the tourism industry of

Amsterdam. Firstly, local peoples and businesses from the red-light district and center area were taken into consideration for interviews. Because they are the ones who are very familiar with the area and affected directly and indirectly by its negative image of the red-light district and tolerance of cannabis. For example, local businesses like coffee shops, sex workers, prostitution agencies, souvenir stores, restaurants, bars, and other businesses. On the other hand, local peoples living in the area and house owners are other participants whose daily life is also highly impacted by the sex related activities and its reputation as well as the crowd created by such activities. Secondly, tourism organizations, such as city tourism office, municipality, Amsterdam & partners, I Amsterdam tourist information center, STIPO and other agencies or policymakers who are involved in placemaking policies and tourism industry in Amsterdam have been contacted to gather raw data regarding this research. The information from these authorities could give an idea of their perception about the negative reputation of Amsterdam's image and what kind of policies and strategies are implemented (or could be implemented) in order to shift its image away from cannabis and red-light districts. Furthermore, this study also focuses on gaining and analyzing the interviews from the tourist visiting Amsterdam. The reason is to know the tourist's expectations and realities they face during their visits in Amsterdam. This is important because there might be different tourists visiting Amsterdam with different purposes and expectations and the interaction with such tourists can give the insight of tourists' expectations, opinions, and their experience about Amsterdam. Furthermore, it will also help the researcher to explore different aspects of tourist's interests and other areas of Amsterdam beyond Sex tourism and soft drugs. The table below shows the name, role and discussed topic of interviews with the participants via online and physical interview during field visit.

Participant	Name/Identity of Participants	Role	Related topics for interviews	Nature of the interview
1.	Cikren	Representative of Souvenir Boutique	Importance / advantages/disadvantages of cannabis/	Recorded interview 30 min 26 sec
2.	Munna	Manager of Magic Mushroom outlet	Cannabis industry and its impacts on business	Recorded interview 5 min 39 sec
3.	Katerine	Employee of Red light secrets museum of prostitution (red light district)	Sex tourism and its impact	Recorded interview 35 min 18 sec
4.	Seif zamar	Tourists from Jordan	expectation/ realities/ opinion about destination	Recorded interview 13 min 21 sec

5.	Elderly Couple from UK	Tourists	Opinion, reasons for traveling and experiences	Unrecorded interview (notes taken)
6.	Frank & Rene	American Tourists	Tourists' impression of Amsterdam, travel motivation and experience	Recorded interview
7.	Street Artist	Local resident	Impact of tourism in day- to-day life style	Unrecorded interview (Note taken)
8.	Photo Booth owner	Local resident	Tourist's locals relationship	Unrecorded interview (note taken)
9.	Omar	Local resident/ restaurant workers in red light area (Cafe De Pool)	Impacts of tourism in local people	Recorded interview 17 min 2 sec

10.	Henny	Anne Frank Museum (local resident/Worker)	Tourism/ culture/ local resident	Recorded interview 14 min 50 sec
11.	Olga Sowa	STIPO/ placemaking organization	Initiatives and projects related to placemaking in Amsterdam	Recorded online interview 39 min 5 sec
12.	Jil	Tourist information frontline staff	Initiative to diverse the tourism	Recorded interview
13.	Isis de Vries	Amsterdam and partners	Campaign and strategies to diversify tourism in Amsterdam	Recorded interview online 40 min 49 sec
14.	Kathus	Placemaking foundation/Professor of University of Amsterdam	Placemaking strategies, initiatives in Amsterdam	Recorded online interview 35 min 37 sec

15.	Kalyan	Manager (Owner) of Yeti restaurant	Tourism encounters	Recorded interview 8 min 51 second
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Figure 2. Description of participants

### 3.8 Ethnographic field work

Ethnography refers to the research method used to study and understand the different cultures and social groups (Spradley, 2016). Ethnographic field work involves the researchers immersing themselves in the culture of the community and destination they are studying, and they study the culture, behavior, and day to day activities of the community. As this research is based on the different aspects of sex tourism, cannabis business and the placemaking strategy in Amsterdam, different media coverages, blogs, and different social websites from different authorities were taken into consideration from the secondary and desk research.

The ethnographic field work in Amsterdam was done for almost a week where all 3 researchers were physically present in the destination. Our plan for a week in Amsterdam was already discussed in a pre-visit discussion, however there were few things and activities which were instinctive as per the situation. The first ethnographic work started with arrival in the airport where we observed the logo of “I Amsterdam” which was the part of a marketing campaign done by the city of Amsterdam collaboration with its partners for supporting communities and prosperity of tourism in the city. The huge logo of “I Amsterdam” was placed in the Outside of the Schiphol

airport and can be seen as a tourist attraction where a lot of tourists were clicking photos with the logo. We also enjoy the impression and experience of the huge logo with photos. Then, our focus was to spend most of our time observing specific parts of the red-light district and cannabis area in the city. We have been to prostitution museums, erotic storage and nearby restaurants and local shops where we had a healthy conversation and interaction with the staff and owners who are locals living in the red-light district and nearby the center. The staff from cannabis outlets recommend tourists to buy soft drugs and promotion of soft drugs was done openly inside and outside of all shops via photos which basically indicates about the benefits of using cannabis. Some of the shop owners allow us to record conversation as part of the interview, whereas most of them didn't give us permission for recording due to the sensibility of the topic and as well as personal reasons where field notes were taken by the researchers. The red-light district was very crowded in the evening till late night as compared to morning. Most of the interviews have been taken during our visit with the participants mentioned above in the table who are either working or living in the red-light district and nearby. The process of interviewing participants at the destination was not easy because we had to chat with them during their working hours and some of them are very busy with the high flow of tourists in their shop. In that case, we waited for a long time around the shops and waited for the right time which was a good learning experience for us. With some of the participants, we asked for time for an interview and went there in their free time. We did talk with tourists from different countries and local people in the red right district, cultural places, cannabis area and outer part of the city center to know their perception about the contested image of Amsterdam based on the red-light district and cannabis tourism. We also discussed how locals, business, and destination itself are impacted by the tourism and tourist activities in the area.

On the other hand, we as a researcher have observed the red light where lots of banners were used in order to pass information to visitors and locals about regulation in the area by municipalities which includes the fine for violating the rules. We also got opportunities to observe tourist activities and their behavior in the red-light district and outside of the city center which was helpful for our research. On the other hand, we have been to a couple of museums which are very famous cultural attractions in Amsterdam, such as the Rijks museum, Van Gogh Museum, Moco museum and a few others. All the museums are very crowded, and tourists were waiting in long queues to enter in most of the places. We had a conversation with a couple of tourists who were enjoying their time in a park next to museums. We asked many questions on their purpose of visiting Amsterdam, image of the red-light district, tourism encounters, impact of tourism in local hood and destination, experiences and many other. Some of them have shared their opinions and experiences very openly as per their knowledge. The interesting part was cannabis and prostitution activities were mostly promoted in only the red-light district, however promotion of cultural attraction, canal tours, historical destinations and museums were promoted all around the city. It seems that the city is putting a lot of effort into promoting those attractions for the positive image of the city.

### **3.9 Data analysis (Thematic Analysis)**

One of the key parts of the data analysis in this research is thematic analysis. It is a method of qualitative data analysis which is accessible and flexible as well as provides researchers with the foundation to work with other approaches in qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

There are several steps in pursuing the thematic analysis and they are:

### **3.9.1 Compiling**

The initial section of thematic analysis involves compiling where the data collected from different sources including primary and secondary sources are organized. The primary aim of compiling is to ensure that the data collected are in usable format and are properly categorized to make the analysis easier. The main process involves transcribing the recordings from interviews, arranging field notes, and collating data from other different sources.

The data and information on the problem of this research is collected with the field visit to the red-light district of Amsterdam and nearby attractions of the city center. Interviews with the local residents, local businesses and tourists were taken throughout the field visit. The reasons for selecting these participants are mainly because these are the people who are directly or indirectly affected by the activities in the red-light area of Amsterdam. And collection of data from these people would help to get insight of the research. Field notes were taken of the observations and short interviews which were taken through a casual conversation with questions asked about the area to those actors. Apart from the field visit, other stakeholders were identified, and interviews were taken which are then transcribed. Those stakeholders mainly involved placemaking organizations and professionals from placemaking in Amsterdam.

### **3.9.2 Disassembling or Reassembling**

After the completion of the compiling process, the data are further broken down to smaller parts to make it easier to work on and later combined into a large group, in regard to the research questions. It is an important step as it assists in identifying the patterns and themes within the data

as the disassembling is done through a holistic approach working on each piece of data individually. Likewise, the data could be reassembled by grouping them together in order to understand the larger picture.

The data compiled from the field visit and the online interviews involved several actors including tourists, local residents, local businesses, placemaking organizations, and so on. The data collected from the field visit were disassembled into several parts based on the findings. Observations, field notes, and interviews with the local businesses and residents provide evidence of the problems at the ground level in the red-light district of Amsterdam. This information was later categorized by forming themes and coding.

### **3.9.2 Coding**

After reassembling or disassembling is done, the data is then coded. Coding is a process of identifying the content that is a text or images that are linked by a common theme and assigning labels to the data. Moreover, the analysis of the data helps understand and identify these themes, patterns, and ideas. Codes could be generated either from inductive coding which is when codes are made out of inductive data, and deductive coding which means the codes are predefined on the basis of the existing theories. In this paper the codes are generated from the inductive data that are collected in the field of Amsterdam.

The codes are identified from the assembled data from the interviews, field notes, and observations. The data from the fieldwork as well as the secondary data are all grouped in different codes generated from the themes of the findings. The Technical website called Miro.com is used to code the collected data and to generate the theme from the collected data. The process of coding could be more visible in the following picture.

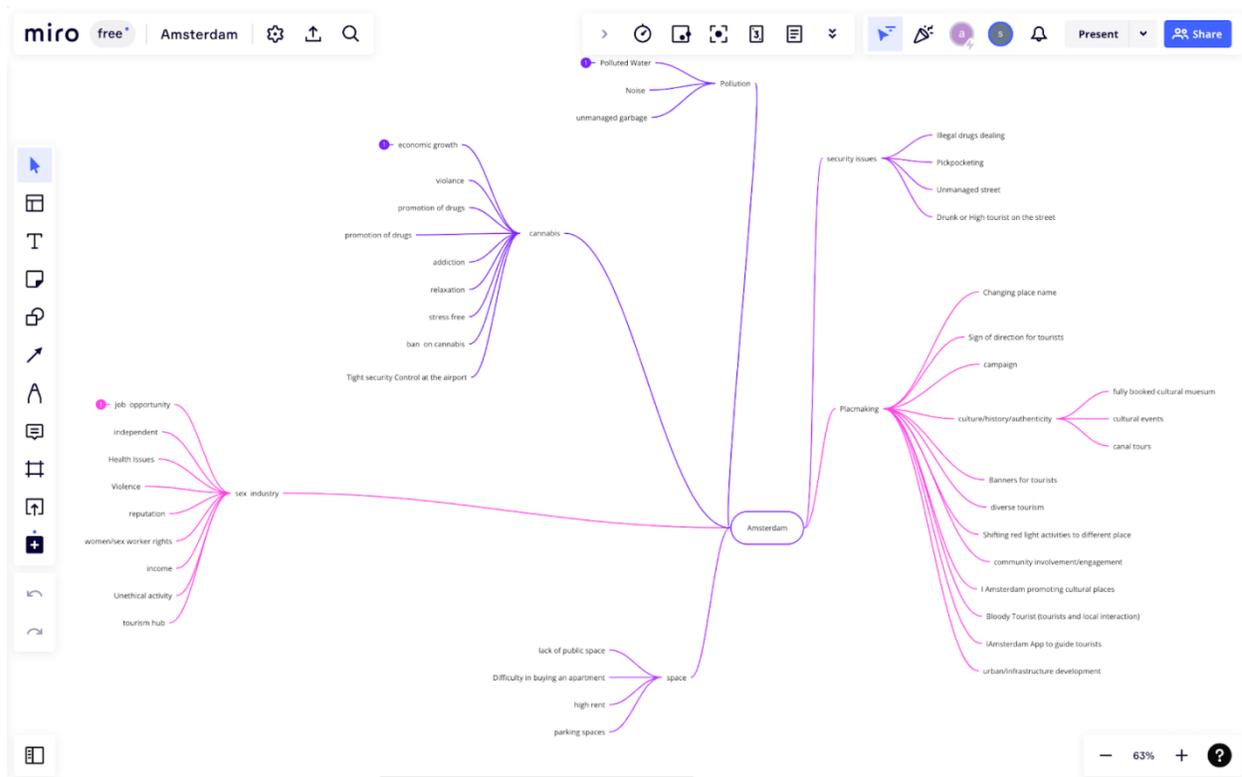


Figure 3. Screenshot of the coding process performed on Miro.com

### 3.9.3 Interpreting

The findings are then interpreted after the data are coded. It is the process where the data and its patterns as well as themes start to make sense through the analysis. Different tools could be used in order to interpret the data and information that are gathered. Visualization tools diagrams and charts can be of significant use to understand the relationship between themes and codes. Furthermore, interpreting is an ongoing process which may require the revisits of all the steps of thematic analysis time and again. In this report the collected data from interviews, observations and field notes are thoroughly reviewed to get the comprehensive understanding of the participation understanding and perception. After as mentioned in the previous part the data were coded systematically to emerge the theme and generate the concept. After the generation of the

theme and the concept, the pattern of the data that needs to be analyzed were recognized and the insight of such themes were derived and interpreted. The interpreted findings were integrated to form a coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives of this research.

### **3.9.4 Concluding**

This section of thematic analysis involves the summarization of the findings in order to draw a conclusion. Key themes and patterns that emerge from the analysis could be identified and discussion on the implications of the findings can be concluded. Also, another important area that can be alluded to in this section is the limitation of the study as well as the suggestion of the area to be researched further. In this research, through the systematic process of data immersion, thematic coding, recognition of the theme and the patterns and interpretations identifying the perspective of various stakeholders, the themes were created. The created themes were used to develop the conclusion to understand the comprehensive role that interplay between the placemaking and the perspective of different stakeholders.

In this study, the thematic analysis process was used in order to analyze the data collected through the fieldwork as well as the secondary sources in regard to exploring the placemaking policies and strategies that could shift the Amsterdam's tourism away from the contested activities. The use of themes and patterns in this research is important for qualitative analysis of the subject of the research. The data from the placemaking policies and strategies and the contested activities of Amsterdam has been compiled and disassembled or reassembled to identify key patterns and themes. Then, it has been converted from coded to categorize those themes and patterns. In this

way, thematic analysis provides a systematic method for analyzing the qualitative data collected in this study which helps in detailed exploration of the questions.

### **3.10 Reliability and Validity**

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, several measures were taken into consideration throughout the study. Reliability of the qualitative data collection can be determined by the detailed field notes, use of recording devices and transcription into digital files (University of Miami, n. d). The reliability of data collection can also be achieved by the research process visible where research methods and processes are clearly explained (Silver, 2006). To enhance the validity of the study, a rigorous data analysis process is used. The data are collected from various sources such as interviews with key stakeholders, tourists, locals and analysis of policy documents and official statistics. Then the thematic analysis process is used to identify the patterns and themes of the data which are used to refine the research finding. Furthermore, the collected findings are triangulated with the existing research and theories on placemaking, tourism and drug policies to validate the research and to provide a broader understanding to the finding.

Overall, the reliability and validity of this study are enhanced through the multiple sources of data, rigorous data analysis and triangulation of the findings with existing literature. We as a researcher develop this research based on the secondary and primary data where interviews will be recorded after asking permission from participants to validate the report, and if participants did not agree with recording, then notes were taken with permission. Apart from that, field notes and personal observation of researchers will be considered making it more efficient. These measures are taken to ensure that the research is credible and related to the research question

### 3.11 Ethics

Ethics refers to the principles that govern moral behavior and decision making (Beauchamp, 2003).

The article further says, in research, ethical considerations involve the moral values which guide the researchers in their interactions with the study participants, other researchers and the society as a whole.

As this research is qualitative research, the ethical consideration is an important aspect due to the close interaction between the researchers and the participants. The primary data for this research are collected through interviews, ethnographic field works and participants observation which could be highly sensitive and personal. So, it was ensured that the trust and confidence of the participants were maintained. The ethical consideration that was kept under consideration during the preparation of this report are listed as follows:

- The participants were notified about the purpose of the study.
- Participants were ensured that the participation is voluntary and does not have any compulsion. Furthermore, it was made clear about the privacy if they are not willing to provide any personal details.
- During the interview, researchers were transparent and notified the participants about the research process, including data use, access, analysis, and reporting.
- The destinations have their own rules and regulations such as no photograph on some of the places in the destination, about the safety measures in some locations and all the rules and regulations were taken into consideration about the destination during the collection of the data and field visit.

### 3.12 Limitations

This research is qualitative research. The qualitative research approach is an approach to social research that seeks to understand the subjective experience and perspectives of individuals and groups (Varun & Clarke, 2019). As this research includes in depth interviews, field visits which have many strengths, however this research also has some limitations as well. The limitations of this research are listed as below:

- The availability and the reliability of the data related to the Amsterdam's tourism industry might be limited.
- The success of the placemaking strategies and policies can be determined and is often dependent on the engagement of the various stakeholders including local residents, business operators as well as policy makers. So, it might be challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of all the related stakeholders that might limit the in-depth analysis in this report.
- The scope of this research might be limited due to the availability of the time, budget and the logistical factors which might limit the in-depth analysis of the report.
- The data and the findings of this report is based specifically on Amsterdam so that it might not be generalizable in other contexts and cities.
- As the report is based on qualitative data collection, the personal biases of the participants and the field researchers might limit the objectivity of the findings.
- The research focuses on red light, cannabis and placemaking which might limit other aspects of the tourism industry as the researchers focus on the dimensions of only these aspects in the Destination.

## 4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the report. Data were collected through different social and governmental statistical sites, different Academic articles, field observations, interviews that help to explore the impact of the redlight areas and cannabis use in Amsterdam tourism industry and its image created by these activities. Moreover, the role of placemaking in shaping the tourism industry of Amsterdam. The aim of the researchers during the entire course of action was to investigate the attitudes, expectations, experience of different related parties about Amsterdam as well as to identify the challenges and opportunities of tourism development and placemaking in the city. The findings of this paper explore the views of the different stakeholders in relation to tourism, local livability and shaping the future tourism of Amsterdam as a tourist Destination.

### 4.1 Perception on Image of Red-Light District

We have got a mixed opinion about the image of Amsterdam based on the red-light district and cannabis from our participants. Kalyan (owner of Yeti restaurant) said that in European context the image of the red-light area is not seen in a negative way due to existence from a long period of time and openness of prostitution brings a lot of people to Amsterdam. Similarly, the tolerance of cannabis is also beneficial to health as compared to alcohol as per a lot of research according to him. He also added that it might be negative from an Asian perspective due to the cultural difference, but they are not taking it in a negative way. Omar who is a local resident and employee in a restaurant in the red-light district explains that Amsterdam is very open minded about using soft drugs which is very true because it makes people relax and stress free, not all the people are drug addicted or drug addicted and involved in prostitution. He gave an example of one of the

Indian mushroom owners saying that even though he sells cannabis he doesn't smoke. He also added that judging Amsterdam based on cannabis and red-light district is not good. After all it is only business where people can come and enjoy the freedom of the place. After talking with the staff of Lost in Amsterdam Lounge and Cafe, we got to know that there are only limited coffee shops where people can buy hash and marijuana kinds of cannabis, but they can smoke in other normal coffee shops. She also mentioned that the image of the red-light district is positive for them but judging Amsterdam just based on it is not fair because there is so much more than this for tourists in Amsterdam. Munna from a cannabis shop told us that most of the young tourists visit the red-light district and are involved in the prostitution and smoking, however there are also Dutch people who come from other parts of the Netherlands to visit the red-light district. Therefore, it's good for business and 98% of their business depends on tourists. He also talks about the government is planning to put restrictions in the red-light district which will negatively affect the number of tourists coming to Amsterdam. One of the local people working in photoshop says that he hasn't been to the red-light district even though he was born in Amsterdam and lives his entire life close to the city. When we asked him his perception about the image of the red-light district from a tourist point of view, he would like to visit the red-light district.

We have been to the tourism information center to understand more about how the tourist information center looked to the red-light district and what kind of activities and destinations they recommend to tourists in Amsterdam. Front line staff of I Amsterdam information center who is also a local from Amsterdam said that most of the tourists who come to the tourist information center do not ask about the red-light district nor do they recommend visiting that specific area. However, she also said that red light districts have nice buildings, and a lot of people go there, and

those people often know the address that is the reason they don't encounter such tourists. She further explains that Amsterdam is trying to overcome the negative image of the red-light district by promoting the cultural places. We have also observed that the red-light district being such a famous place among other destinations of Amsterdam but there was no sign, picture or any other promotional activities of red-light district and cannabis in the tourist information center.

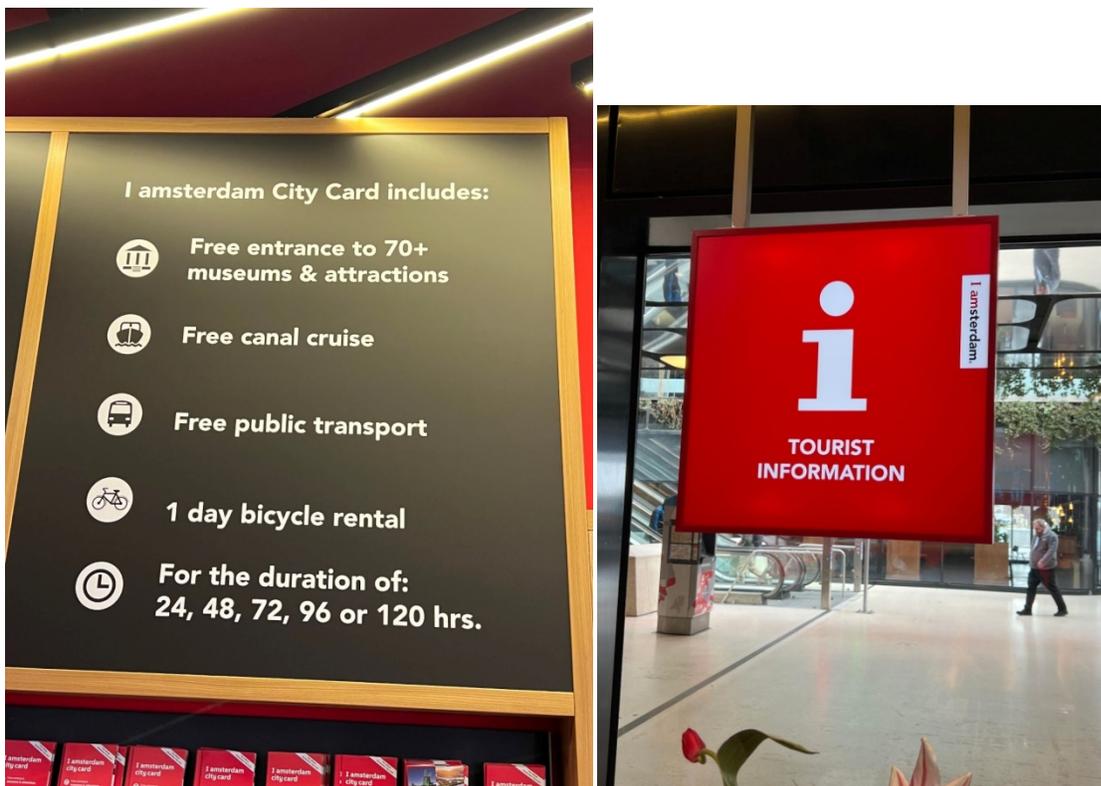


Figure 4 & 5. Amsterdam city card and tourist information center

The above picture was captured in the tourist information. It can be clearly seen that the city card also does not include the red-light district and cannabis as part of attraction or activities not even

in the city card which also gives an indication about how Amsterdam as a tourism destination wants to promote other attractions excluding the red-light district from their city card. Kathus who is also a professor in the university of Amsterdam said that the image of the red-light district is a big issue, and it has been there for a long period of time that is the reason why the government is also struggling with it. She further added that personally she doesn't like the activities in the red-light district because of how women's work is portrayed with the windows and lots of things have been done wrong with the sex worker. On the other hand, she also thinks that the red-light district brings diversity as a tourism destination which makes people go there. Frank & Rene, who are American tourists, tell us that they don't see the image of Amsterdam just based on the red-light district and they had no plan to visit the red-light district. Isis, who is representative from Amsterdam & Partners, told us that people of Amsterdam doesn't like the red-light district and Amsterdam & Partners also don't want people who just come to smoke weed and prostitution activities. These kinds of activities also hamper the environment of the local community. She also explains that the image of the red-light district is not the brand which represents Amsterdam, however a lot of people perceive Amsterdam just based on the red-light district and cannabis. She was very clear about not focusing on such types of tourists because they create a lot of issues for the local community living around the center area. Amsterdam & Partners is collaborating with municipalities to overcome the negative image by implementing different policies, for example tourists will not be allowed to buy cannabis which will decrease the number of tourists coming to the red-light district. The perception of organizations who are also closely working with municipalities is very clear that they not only want to get rid of the image of the red-light district but also don't want tourists whose main purpose is to be involved in red light activities. Even

though, city and the business generate money from prostitution activities, its impacts are not favorable towards the local community. Therefore, the red-light district area would have made good income just from locals without these activities. On the other hand, she also mentioned that the negative image of the red-light district is not going to change overnight, and they have been working to change its image for the past 20 years.

Therefore, they are working with a lot of campaigns which can be sustainable and help to spread tourists away from the red-light district. Zamar said from a tourist perspective that most of the people think of red-light districts and cannabis when they think of Amsterdam. He has seen a lot of people going to the red-light district on weekends. He suggested that moving the red-light district out of the city center might help to change the negative image of Amsterdam. Apart from that, he also suggests promoting other aspects of Amsterdam would help rather than protesting against red light through physical or social media. He also mentioned that when you talk about protesting and new regulation against the red-light district, it will make it louder. Therefore, it's better to focus on other attractions or aspects of tourism rather than talking about cannabis and prostitution. Cikren who is the manager of "Souvenir boutique" also a local resident thinks lot of people come to Amsterdam to experience cannabis and prostitution which is very important for tourism of Amsterdam. She added that cannabis is used by young and older people. She personally doesn't like how girls are portrayed in the red-light district because it has been there for a long period of time, nowadays most people just come to see and spend less as compared to past. Mostly, people like negative things such as sex, drugs, cannabis that's why the image of Amsterdam is very popular. We got an opportunity to talk with Katerina, who is working in Sex Museum, explained that prostitution being part of business is fine, but the problem is how visitors make fun of

prostitutes who are sitting behind the glass. Most of the prostitutes like what they do and the legal existence of the red-light district in Amsterdam is good as compared to back home (Portugal) where the situation of prostitutes is very bad in terms of safety, working rights, freedom, and money. Municipality and government put a lot of effort in safety measures, health checkup, frequent check up by police and many others. She personally thinks that reduction of the windows and prostitution activities and ban on weeds will not only affect business in the red-light district, but also tourism can also go down dramatically. She further talked about the new policy of the current mayor from Amsterdam who is planning to move the red-light district out of the city center in a brothel which is basically like a building where all the prostitutes can be allocated and allowed to work within the brothel. From our observation we can say that despite its controversial image, the red-light district was very crowded even on weekdays and on weekends it has a crazy atmosphere.

#### **4.2 Communities issue in red light district:**

Long and short interviews, as well as the informal talks are taken under consideration to know the impact of tourism in day-to-day life of the local inhabitants in Amsterdam. Majority of the participants living in Amsterdam and neighborhood of the red-light district have a certain negative thought of tourism as they mention they are dealing with overcrowd, as well as the tourists creating noise and disturbance in their day-to-day life for instance riding the bicycle in the city, drunken activities of the tourist creating the social disturbance etc. They accept the fact that tourism is essential for Amsterdam however they also mention it is too much for them.

#### 4.2.1 Community issues

It could be clearly seen in the field that the neighborhood of the red-light area and the area with the coffeshops are affected by the overcrowding caused by the tourists as many boards and pamphlets could be seen in different houses requesting tourists to behave themselves and enjoy as they do in their neighborhood.

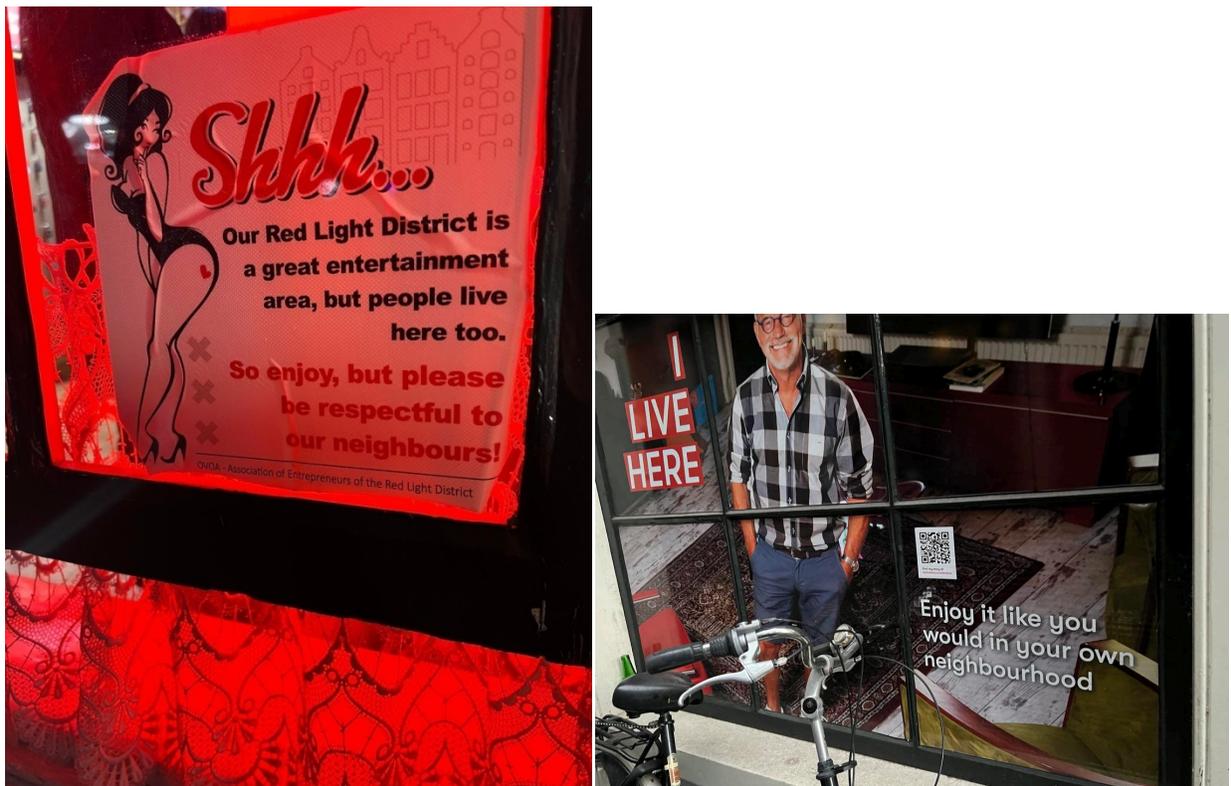


Figure 6 & 7. Banners on red light district



Figure 8. Pictures captured in the redlight area of Amsterdam

Although the majority of the local people that participated in the interview say that tourism is an undeniable source of income and most of the people visit to see and experience the cannabis and the redlight stuff, many of them feel they are tired of tourists. One of the locals living in Amsterdam for more than 15 years and working as a street artist says that he liked the tourists in the beginning and he himself was involved in consumption of cannabis for six years but now it is too much for him. He says that the rent in Amsterdam is increasing every year and the living cost has increased more than expected lately. He further says that he needs to work in two places, and it is only enough to live in Amsterdam, but he is not able to save money for his future. He also mentioned that several tourists create unwanted disturbance due to the consumption of cannabis, soft drugs, and alcohol. He also pointed to the police roaming in the street and says this is the reason why

police roam here and there in large numbers. Furthermore, he also has the negative experience of moving in the city. As per his experience as well as from our observation we could see that it was hard to move in the city due to the huge number of people in the street. Also, we could hear the horn of the car because people cross the road from random spots without the consideration of the traffic light. It could be easily seen that bicycles are struggling to move in the city due to the high numbers of tourists flowing in the city. In contrast to the Street artist, a 21-year-old lady named Cikren who is a local resident in Amsterdam and working in a cannabis outlet called “Souvenir boutique” said that:

*“Actually, I think there are too many tourists for Amsterdam, but I am used to it.”*

She further said that cannabis and sexual activities might not be the only thing in Amsterdam, but these are the most known things and most of the people come here for these experiences. When she was asked what kind of the changes you have seen in the tourism activities in Amsterdam she said:

*“Previously the adult people used to smoke but nowadays even the small children are smoking and that is not good.”*

This could be a serious issue as many media have covered the news that the Netherland government is trying to ban cannabis for tourists and open only for the people of Netherland. As per Cikren, many people in Amsterdam are on drugs (or cannabis) including herself. This could be a serious issue for the youth as well as to the society of Amsterdam. As per the personal experience of Cikren, people or even doctors think that the people are on drugs even if they are having some emotional problem. She said:

*“I was having a traumatic experience because of my own personal reasons but when I was taken to the hospital I was treated as if I was on drugs, and I had a terrible experience in the hospital.”*

The participants from the local people living in Amsterdam have some common opinion related to the problem in the street. As we can see Amsterdam is a small town with a compact living style. The streets in the inner part of the city are smaller and these streets are used by the locals, tourists, bicycles as well as the car. According to the Cikren, Katerine, Jil, and other participants, people in Amsterdam really struggle to reach their work or house and it could easily be seen. One of the participants, Katerine, says that people shout in the street. They don't realize that people also live here. She says:

*“Yesterday I heard one couple saying, oh there is a car going and I said, yes it's a street and people live here.”*

She shared an experience of her colleague that once her colleague was with his friends and they were buying the stuff and going to their apartment and people are following them to his apartment and they ask why they are here, and the people replied that they are just following them thinking her friends are also tourists and going somewhere. They even ask why they are here, and they replay what we are following and ask back where they are going. She thinks that when people are on vacation they do not care, and they do not have a notion of what is around them. People do not care. There are several banners saying that do not throw the garbage, not to pee, but people don't care.

Due to the large numbers of tourists, there are other social issues as well. The problem with the garbage is strongly visible in Amsterdam. As the street is small and compact the small vehicle to

collect the garbage can be seen struggling to reach every corner to collect the garbage. In addition, with the maximum number of people the business such as restaurants and bars are seen full of people which creates more garbage. As a result, the garbage is seen thrown in the street. Katerine who lives in the neighborhood of the redlight areas and is also working in sex museum says that the issue with the garbage is a major issue as she mentioned that people living nearby throw the garbage on the canal. And every Monday after the weekend the canal is full of trash. She even mentioned that she saw a man throwing TV in the canal.

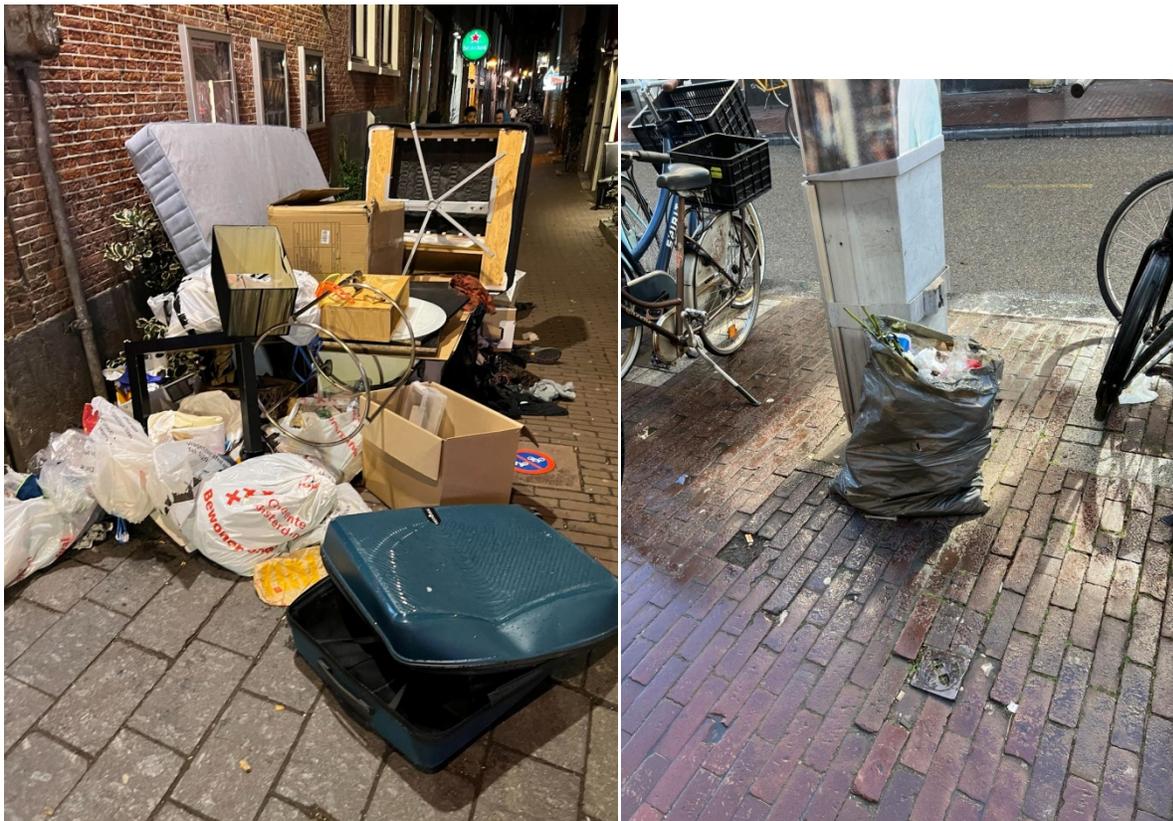


Figure: 9 & 10. Picture of garbage in the street

Not only the garbage there are other problems in Amsterdam due to the overpopulation of tourists. For example, according to the video Demonstration about Amsterdam more than 12000 bikes are

pulled every year from the canal. It can be seen in the following picture collected during the field visit in Amsterdam.



Figure 11. Bicycle being pulled from the Canal in Amsterdam.

Furthermore, this garbage has a negative effect on the beauty of Amsterdam. In addition to this, people peeing in the canal and in the street can be encountered in the city. There are posters saying not to urinate in public places as well, but people seem not taking the consideration of those posters. According to Henry, two weeks ago a tourist died. He says that:

*“One tourist was peeing in the canal when he was drunk and fell down and nobody noticed and was found dead.”*



Figure 12. picture taken during the field visit in Amsterdam.

#### 4.2.2 Security Issues:

Security issues is another major finding of this research. Amsterdam being a major tourist destination and being known as a hub of cannabis and red-light activities many security issues can be encountered. The problem of illegal drug dealing, human trafficking, and the problem with pickpocketing are some of the major security issues in Amsterdam. As per the staff of “Souvenir Boutique” people come and ask for the high dose drugs such as cocaine and brown sugar. She also mentioned that:

*“Some people are high on drugs, and I don't know where they get.”*

Awareness information was shared via different posters and pamphlets to tourists about not to buy the drugs that are illegal in Amsterdam. This indicates that there is use and dealing in Amsterdam. Katerine, living in Amsterdam and working in Sex Museum, there are a lot of dealers in the neighborhood. She mentioned that there are some security issues such as fights between the dealers, and the drunk people and so on. She says that sometimes, they need to close the shops and even the street because of such fighting between the different dealers. She further says that she had to call the police a couple of times due to the fight inside the museum. She shared the story that happened with her during the working hours saying:

*“Once a guy was stabbed and came to me bleeding and asked for the help and we called the police closing the museum.”*

Omar being a local and working in the restaurant in the redlight area supports the saying of Katrina and said that most of the fight occurs in that area because tourists inhale cannabis and mushrooms and he further mentioned that most of the cases registered in police is of tourists.



Figure 13. Picture taken during the field visit in Amsterdam

Security issues could be understood with the movement of police in the city. As per the secondary research it was found that the Dutch government is trying to discourage the use of cannabis and redlight activities and enhance the other aspects of tourism to make Amsterdam a peaceful destination. But according to Katerine, it is going to be an issue. She says that due to a lot of illegal dealers in the neighborhood, if the government tries to stop cannabis, then the illegal dealing will encourage and will be a bigger issue. She also mentioned that it is also not good for the tourism industry. She gave an example that when the government tried to ban cannabis and sexual activities in 2017, the tourism went down, and the tourism industry suffered so they had to open it again.

### 4.2.3 Other issues:

There are other issues in Amsterdam due to tourism. Beside the problem of overcrowded, drunk and high tourists there are other problems as well. The problem with housing and the rent is a major issue as per the majority of the participants. As per Katerine, many people do not want to live in the neighborhood of the red-light area as they do not receive the respect in their neighborhood. Most of the people living there are only the young people and basically working in that area. Furthermore, the people in the middle and old age as well as the people with good skills and with children do not live in that area. This creates the sense that those areas and the neighborhood areas are the place only for the tourists and the workers working there. In addition, this creates a shortage of the people to build the community as well as the people with skills. It can be seen that the majority of places such as local businesses, restaurants, cafes, coffee shops are posting the “staff wanted”, “we are hiring” on their door.



Figure 14 & 15. Picture of staff wanted information

The problem with sexual exploitation is another problem that we receive in Amsterdam. The IBIS Budget hotel where we live encountered a picture where it warned the tourist not to engage in sexual tourism involving children. The picture can be seen below.



Figure 16. Picture taken from hotel during field visit

We tried to ask the front-line staff about the picture. Although she didn't want to mention her name and did not allow us to record the conversation, she mentioned that this happened sometimes, especially on weekends. She says that during the weekend when tourists get drunk, they bring the ladies who are around 14-16/17 years, and the hotel didn't allow those ladies in the hotel with the tourists. Once they tried to shout and create unwanted drama and the hotel needed to call the police as well. She further mentioned that:

*“I think every hotel has this picture and this is because these kinds of activities happen sometimes which is the reason that they put the picture in the front face of the hotel when one enters the hotel”*

## 4.3 Positive Impacts

The findings gathered from the field work and the secondary sources of data not only shows the problems in the red-light district but also presents the benefits of these activities.

### 4.3.1 Economic Benefits

The major benefit from these sex and cannabis tourism activities includes the economic prosperity of the city at the local level as well as national level. It also leads to the financial stability in the area at the individual level. Tourism is one of the major industries of the city of Amsterdam as over 5 million tourists visit the city every year with over 1.5 million tourists visiting the coffeeshops each year and over 200,000 tourists visiting the red-light districts for prostitutes (Amsterdam.org, n.d.). Furthermore, the data also shows that the sales volume of soft drugs in the coffee shops is around the figure of 100,000 kilograms. There are over 5600 prostitutes every year in the red-light districts and the place also has some official sex clubs and theaters which generates high revenue from the tourists. With such high sales of the soft drugs and the higher visitors of the red-light district area, the city economically benefits highly from the tourist's flow. The economic importance of the red-light district can be felt when the windows were reduced in 2017 because of that the businesses went down and brought financial consequences (Katerine). Also, such policies and rules to reduce the sales of soft drugs would have a major impact on the tourism industry as the major consumer of such products are the tourists.

### 4.3.2 Job Opportunities

The city generating a high number of tourists year in year out presents an opportunity to earn income for the interested people in the red-light district. The area has all types of prostitutes including male, female, and she males. Katerine mentioned that the gradual decrease in interest and lack of visitors in the area of male and she-male prostitutes has left them to be mostly inactive. With such a high number of windows in the area and the process of becoming a prostitute being transparent and flexible, anyone who would seek interest in it has an opportunity to make a good income. Having emptied some of the windows, there is an opportunity for those who are willing to be a prostitute in the window.

The city of Amsterdam is known for the permissibility of sex and drugs, which is liked by the local people as well as the tourists that particularly visit those areas. The red-light district is quite busy even on weekdays, especially in the evening. From the field visit, we could observe that different groups of people would walk around the street including student groups, couples, adult families like cousins and siblings, and so on. Besides, the coffeeshops and business stores that sell soft drugs also see quite a lot of tourists just looking at the products. The employee working in the store; Magic Mushroom, mentioned that the tourists love to visit the coffee shops and buy soft drugs, and enjoy their vacation. Also, he mentioned that the most of his customers are tourists and largely the young people can be seen buying in these stores. Furthermore, he also mentioned that only the shops with licenses are allowed to sell these drugs. The tourists that visit the red-light district when asked, mentioned that they feel quite safe especially in these areas. Omar, a tourist from Jordan who had been there for a week at the time of interview said that he felt safe not only in the red-light area but also around other parts of Amsterdam.

### 4.3.3 Decrease in Crime Rate

It is generally claimed that the legalization of sex work and the cannabis has led to decrease in crime rates in the city of Amsterdam. Although this claim is not entirely accurate, there is some evidence that suggests that the red-light district has become a safer place due to the fact that the sex industry is well regulated. The sex business in the red-light district is very well regulated and there is a requirement and limitation in place to be one of the prostitutes in the window. Such transparency and regulation reduce the chances of sex workers being exploited. Katerine mentioned that the sex workers in the window mostly works for themselves independently, as they pay the rent for the window and pay taxes of the income they make. Moreover, they don't have to pay any hidden charges to anyone. Also, there is a limitation placed on the working hours for these sex workers as only one shift a day is allowed which helps to regulate the sex industry as well as take into consideration of the mental and physical health of these workers. Besides, the drug use and sales in the coffeeshops are well managed as the local government has put some restrictions and rules to sell and consume cannabis. The waiter from Lost in Amsterdam Cafe mentioned that the rules are in place in the area that the restaurants or cafes cannot sell both alcohol and cannabis in the same place. This means that the customer or tourist can only consume either of the alcohol or cannabis from one restaurant. However, she also mentioned that the interested people can purchase cannabis from a different shop and have it in the restaurant alongside alcohol. These rules and policies help in regulation of marijuana in the city and the legality of sales of soft drugs leads to reduction or elimination of illegal drug deals. Besides, the area around the red-light districts is well safeguarded by the securities and police as observed during the field visit.

#### 4.3.4 Improved Health and Safety Standards for Sex Workers

The openness of prostitution has not just helped reduce the sexual crime rates in the city but also helped in maintaining the good health of the prostitutes. During the fieldwork, several flyers were found in the red-light district that shows the regulated health safety measures in the area. Several assistances regarding health safety are provided to the sex workers in the red light district.

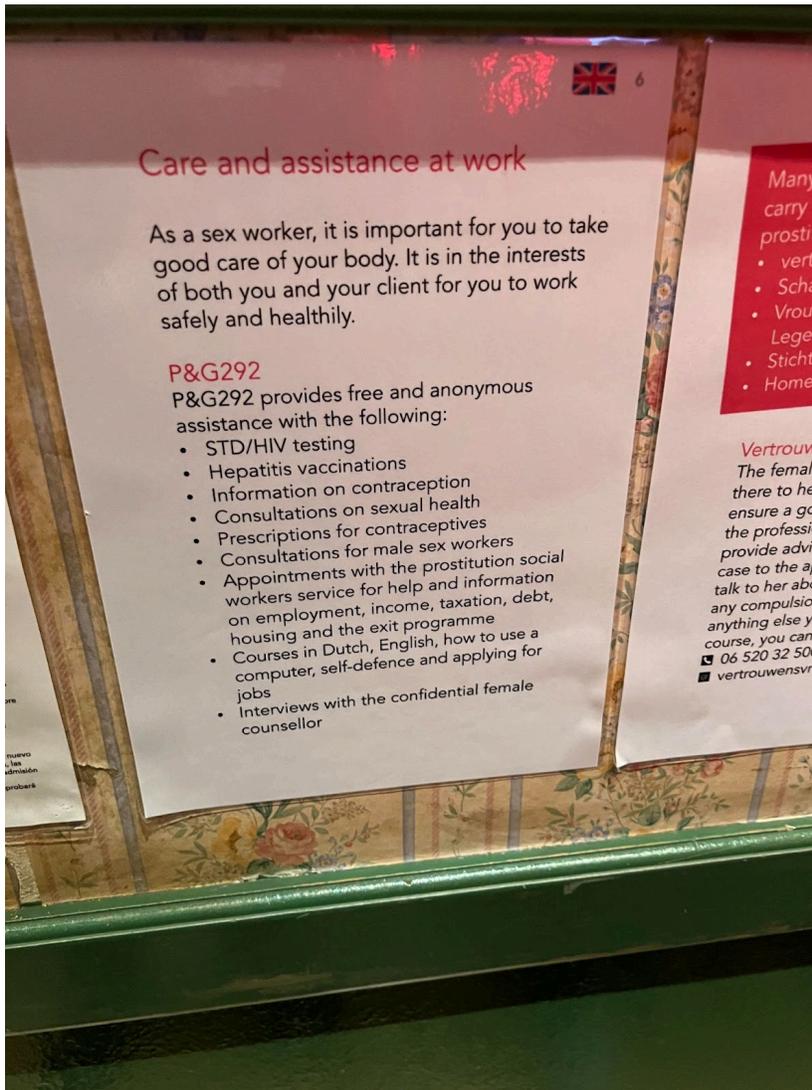


Figure 17. Information regarding sex worker health

P&G292 is an institution that provides information, advice, and support to the sex workers in the region of Amsterdam. As suggested by the flier from the red-light district, the prostitutes are assisted with the STDs or HIV tests, Hepatitis vaccination, consultation and prescription on several sexual health measures, and so on. As mentioned in the flier, it also helps sex workers with the courses to gain self-defense techniques to be prepared for a worse situation in their work. Moreover, the red-light district is well regulated as the business of prostitution could involve

exploitation. There is stringent inspection and supervision in the area to minimize abuse, violence, and primarily to prevent and eliminate forced prostitution. The privacy and secrecy of the sex workers working in the area is respected as taking pictures or videos of the prostitutes is usually forbidden.

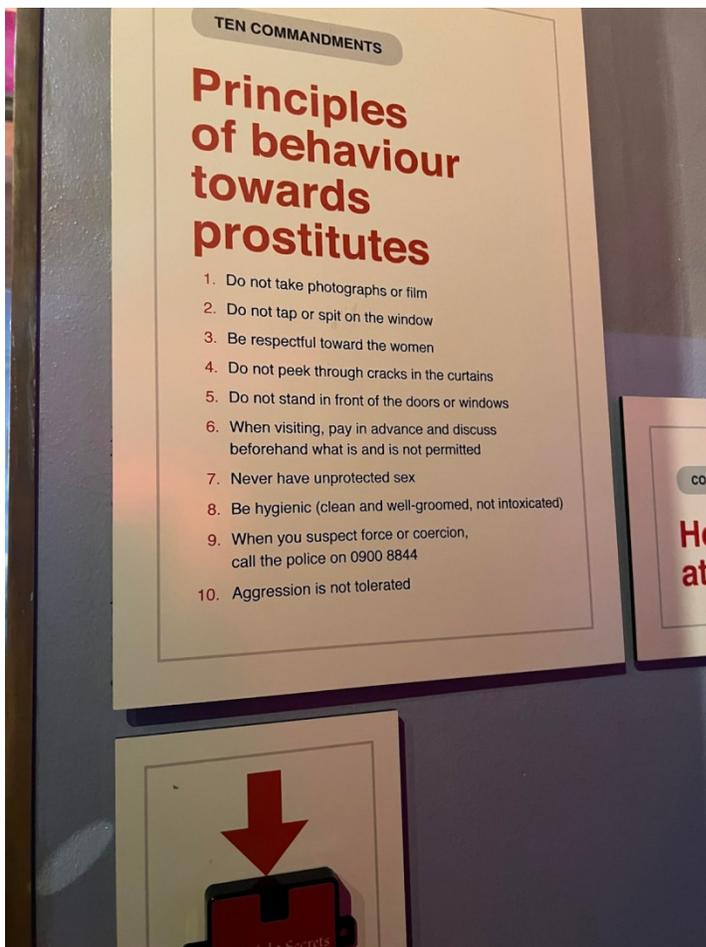


Figure 18. Information about red light district practices

Tourists visiting the red-light district and the prostitutes' windows are reminded of the rules they need to respect and not violate. As mentioned in the picture above, respecting privacy, avoiding the creepy behavior of peeking, hygienic practices, protected sex, unforceful and consensual acts are some sets of principles that the visitors need to follow. Besides, there are many care workers

in the city of Amsterdam that carry out the fieldwork in order to visit the sex workers in the red-light district to understand their situation, provide advice, and help present the case to appropriate authorities if necessary.

#### **4.4 Alternative tourism beside cannabis and sex tourism**

Amsterdam has been known for its liberal attitudes towards cannabis and red-light districts. However, Amsterdam has much more to give to the tourist other than these sexual and cannabis experiences. This was felt during the field visit and with the interactions with different people including locals, tourists, and other stakeholders in Amsterdam. During the field visit in Amsterdam the city was seen offering other tourism activities that offer a more diverse and authentic experience of the city. These services and activities serve different experiences to the tourists who are seeking to explore the unique historical and cultural offering of Amsterdam beyond the stereotypical attractions of Amsterdam. From exploring the vibrant street arts, visiting different historical museums such as Anne Frank, Rijks Museums, bicycle tours to the countryside, Amsterdam offers a variety of alternative tourism activities that provides the visitors with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the city and its people.

This section examines the various forms of alternative tourism activities available in Amsterdam and their potential to contribute to a more sustainable and socially responsible tourism in the city.

We went to the tourist information center which is in the central station of Amsterdam. A huge number of tourists were visiting tourist information centers in need of different kinds of information. This information center basically provides required information to the tourists and promotes cultural, natural, and historical aspects of Amsterdam. As per “jil” the frontline staff of Amsterdam & Partners as well as the information center, they provide the city cards that are for

the cultural things such as museums, canal tours and tours. When asked about the types of tourists who come to the information center to ask about the different destinations, she mentioned that:

*“I am pretty much surprised. I have been working here since September and people always ask me about the museums. I thought that people would ask me about the red-light district or the best coffee shop but that doesn't happen often to me.”*

This can be seen during the interaction with other tourists as well. An elderly aged couple were spotted in front of Van Gogh Museum with whom we had a short conversation where they said that they visit Amsterdam for museum and canals. They think that Amsterdam is a good place to spend a couple of days or even weeks with family and it's their 5th time visiting Amsterdam. When they think of Amsterdam, they never thought Amsterdam as a hub for cannabis or any redlight and they have never visited those areas. They further say that Amsterdam is rich for canals, Museums, churches, and flowers due to which it does not need any cannabis or sexual activities. However, they thought this time it was hard for them to come to Amsterdam because of Brexit.

Katerine, who is working in the “Red-light secret museum of prostitution” believes that the city has a lot of other things to offer besides prostitution and weeds. She gave an example of museums including national museums, old buildings, tulips, canal tours, biking and many other activities which are very attractive to the tourist all year depending on the weather. She wanted people to think of those attractions and activities when they think about Amsterdam and the city should shift its focus on cultural attraction, because Amsterdam is way bigger than prostitution and cannabis. She was very clear about the cultural heritages like museums should be preserved as it passes knowledge about Amsterdam history to the next generations, and it has become one of the major choices for tourists. We as a researcher have been to a couple of museums and all of them were

very crowded with tourists and there was a long queue of tourists at the entrance of museums. Museums were so busy that we were not able to buy tickets for the next 4,5 hours. Which means a ticket needs to be bought at least one day prior on a normal day and tickets for cultural events in museums were packed in advance a couple of months. When we asked the museum staff about the busy environment, he said that usually museums are very busy all day but, in this period, it is even more busy because of the cultural exhibition of “Veemer painting”. All the Veemer paintings were brought from all around the world for exhibition in the national museum of Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) for the first time and most of the tickets were sold out at the time of our visit. Out of 37 limited paintings 28 were brought to Amsterdam for a cultural event or exhibition which was started from February to end of June with limited opening hours. Amsterdam is very rich in history and culture also cultural tourism seems very famous among the millions of tourists all around the world.

During the field visit to museums, we encountered all age group tourists and mostly older peoples, also groups of students were seen visiting cultural destinations. We got the opportunity to talk with American tourists outside of the Rijksmuseum. Frank and Rene, who were American tourists, came to Amsterdam just to see the Veemer painting exhibition. Before coming to Amsterdam, they heard a lot about museums and canals and they have been reading a lot about it the last couple of days, but they were very amazed to see such large canals and different types of museums. Frank particularly said:

*“We thought Venice was the city of canals, but Amsterdam has even more canals than Venice.”*

They said they have no plan to visit the red-light district and they are kind of tourists who are mostly interested in art, history and museums. Rene further added that Amsterdam seems to be a

very rich city with all those attractions and the city would have been more beautiful in summer with flowers around the canals. The manager of Yeti restaurant Kalyan believed that most of the domestic tourists coming to Amsterdam are interested in canals and museums which is also very good in terms of tourism in the city. Similarly, Omar who is a local resident and working in Restaurant in the red-light district also thinks Amsterdam has a lot of old museums, churches and canals which are very famous, and most people come to see them because of the information and history it provides. We visited the Anne Frank Museum which is located in the city center. The museum was very busy with a lot of tourists. We couldn't buy the tickets instantly because all the tickets were sold out in advance. One of the security workers from the Anne Frank Museum revealed that few hundred people visit this museum at a time and most of the tickets till June are sold out which was the reason for us not getting tickets to visit the Anne Frank house. From our personal observation and experience we can say that a huge number of people were visiting cultural destinations every day in Amsterdam, the history, architecture, canals, museums, churches, and city tours are the main cultural destinations. On the other side of the Anne Frank Museum, one of the canal tour employees, Joseph who is local from Amsterdam revealed that a huge number of people come to experience canal tours all year, especially in summertime it is one of the favorite activities which tourists love to do.

#### **4.5 Placemaking Initiatives and Regulations in Amsterdam**

Amsterdam is a widely popular urban destination that welcomes travelers from all over the world. The city is known to be famous for its canals, cultural heritages, and many other tourism activities. Likewise, the cannabis and red-light district is one of the aspects of popularity of the city to the young travelers. Having more to the city than just sex and drugs; the local bodies, major

stakeholders, and placemaking groups in the city have been working on the initiatives and plans to shift the image of such contested activities whether by physically reducing the distribution of those services or by strategically.

The impact of the sex tourism and cannabis use has been visible to the people of Amsterdam, for which the local government has taken some initiatives to minimize these impacts. There have been several appeals from the local level to the political level in the city to bring down the contested activities. A project was established over a decade ago named; Project 1012, named after the city's postal code. The project began with the aim to reduce and eliminate the coffeeshops, cannabis, and sex tourism from the city, targeting to attract a "better class" of tourism (Amsterdam Court of Audit, 2017). Moreover, the activities strictly carried out by the project includes closure of 112 windows which includes 9 exchange windows, and 48 coffee shops that sell cannabis were closed. The project aims to have a drastic impact on the red-light districts and coffee shops for which the city is widely known for. The city was viewed as tourist trash and the project 1012 had declared war on this aspect (Shaw, 2012). Former Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Lodewijk Asscher said in the context to eliminate the tourist trash from the city,

*"We are going to reconquer the heart of the city and give it back to the Amsterdammers."*

Mayor back then, Job Cohen said when talking about the legalization of prostitution:

*"It didn't bring us what we hoped and expected, we want in part to reverse it, especially with regard to the exploitation of women in the sex industry."*

The plan to bring down these activities also involves reselling the buildings in the area to large commercial developers. The local government approached the project to reduce those places and develop new residences, shops, restaurants, and luxury hotels.

There have been recent approaches made by the municipality and local government to promote strict regulation. One of the most recent rules includes the ban on smoking cannabis outdoors in the red-light district (Dutch News, 2023). The policy was announced in February of 2023, and the rules will begin from May 2023. In order to reduce the noise troubles faced by local residents due to the crowded tourists, the cafe and brothels in the city center are required to close earlier than before from April 2023 (Dutch News, 2022). The administration has introduced this rule which sees cafes and bars closing at 2 am instead of 3 or 4 am on Friday and Saturday, while the brothels will have to close at 3 am instead of 6 am. This is expected to directly affect 114 cafes and 249 prostitutes' windows.

Amsterdam & Partners is one non-profit organization that is involved with the tourism industry in the city and collaborates with the government, municipality, and other stakeholders to make the city of Amsterdam a better place for people to live, work, or visit. It plays an important role in developing placemaking strategies in the city and works to enhance the reputation of the city among the local people, visitors, and the companies. Isis de Vries, a representative from Amsterdam & Partners mentioned that the city card is one of the main tools to manage the tourism industry of the city. She further mentioned that they follow the United Nation World Tourism Organizations (UNWTO) strategies and measures in addressing visitor growth to manage the visitor flow in Amsterdam. The strategy covers different aspects of the tourism industry in the city, as some encompasses the promotion as well as management of alternative tourism activities like canals and cultural heritages while some incorporates a decrease in the sexual or criminal activities in the city. The city card area guide is used to promote the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond. Tourists get the tips mostly in the city card and the phone application that guides them on

time-based suggestions to visit different parts of the city. Museums are visited by the day followed by the canal cruises. Different attraction sites and itineraries are promoted through the entry point of the city; for instance, I Amsterdam promotes several sites through maps in the stations and airports. Moreover, through such promotion, tourists are spread to different parts of the city rather than just at the city center so that the local communities and businesses could benefit from the tourism. Mentioned by the Amsterdam & Partners, they look to create city experiences to both the tourists and local residents. There are a lot of promotional activities for tourists as mentioned; for local residents, 24-hour initiatives are encouraged where locals get to discover their own city with some museum opening for 24 hours. For instance, the museums and cultural sites on the northern part of the city are open for a certain period of time and are free of charge at times. They also brought a 1+1 campaign where two residents could visit the museum or theater with one ticket. For a healthy and sustainable tourism industry, they also host network meetings twice a year involving several stakeholders and offer different opportunities of advertisements. Social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the organizations websites are always working to communicate and engage with the visitors. Besides, monitoring and measuring the responses is done through the Amsterdam city card. As mentioned by the representative of the organization, they focus on the strategies on red light district areas by not focusing or being less appealing to those groups of tourists. They enhance the segmentation of visitors by being less attractive to the partying tourists whose main goal is to get wasted and create unnecessarily loud noises. They rather target and market the city for Italian/French or other types of travelers who desire to visit the canals and culture.

The representative from the Amsterdam & Partners, Isis de Vries stated in the interview that the organization is not a municipality, but it collaborates with the municipality who approach them to solve the problem of this growth of contested tourists and activities. One approach they are working on is to ban the tourists from going to the coffeeshops in expectation to reduce the number of those types of tourists visiting Amsterdam. Other policies they have been working on are the banner campaigns and placing the postures in the metric boards which discourages people from visiting such places. One of the major strategies used by the organization is to name the different sites of the city differently to appeal to the tourist rather than having its original Dutch name which would be difficult to understand. For example, a city called Haarlem which is next to the beach is called Amsterdam beach; castles in Muiderberg are not a familiar name and are named as Amsterdam castle to attract visitors' attention; Old Dutch is a name for places like Volendam and Zaandam, just above Amsterdam and are known for cheese making and clogs.

Kathus who is a founder of placemakers foundation explains they are mostly working with urban development through different projects by collaborating with local stakeholders. She said that their main motive is to work with public space, community participants, park, events, however they have been involved in some of the tourism projects. For example, "Bloody tourists" project has been initiated because a lot of the streets in the city center are crowded with a lot of tourists which makes locals feel that their streets are taken over by the tourists. So, they wanted to change that perspective by involving tourists and locals with different questions or small gatherings with few drinks or coffee. They have been experimenting with a few policies on spreading tourists from crowded places. They have made a few big signs as part of a direction to spread tourists in little quieter places with a canal and nice buildings. They are also involved in doing place branding

through content led activities through promotion of camping sites which also introduce a new neighborhood to tourists which can be seen as place branding of destination. She also said that it is difficult to change the image of the red light district through placemaking because of its history and involvement of different factors. But what placemaking can do is to see the needs of locals and the impact of cannabis and red-light district on local community.

We as researchers talked with Olga who is an urban geographer and advisor for an organization called STIPO who works in urban development and placemaking in Amsterdam. According to her, STIPO being a placemaking organization, they do not only take the classic participation in placemaking rather they listen to the people and filter with their knowledge and expertise to make the city a better place to live and visit. They also do some placemaking activities together with the people in the neighborhood and they work on guidelines and future strategies for the neighborhood. According to Olga, the placemaking they carry out is not only about the physical appearance or structure, but it is also about how the people use the physical structure as well as how the different stakeholders see it. She says:

*“Placemaking is a way more than just making a nice place for the people but rather making the place with people so that it functions well not only looks well.”*

Although she was not involved in tourism, she tried to explain the experience of placemaking from her previous project that she operated in the neighboring city of Amsterdam called Hague. She talked about the inland water project where they created the walking space to make the place around water walkable. And they did it by making the place car free. After that in order to make the walking space more enjoyable they also made the Dutch painter route and make it more enjoyable for the tourist.

When asked if placemaking from your experience could be used to shift the image of the city to other aspects, she said that it is very important to understand what kind of tourists the city needs in order to apply placemaking policy to shift its image. People can be shifted or involved to some kind of other activities, for example visiting cheese factories, windmills and creating 1900 cultural experiences, on the other hand creating clear routes and direction to other famous destinations for tourists would help. It will also separate tourists depending on their interest.

## 5. Analysis

The analysis of the data collected from various sources demonstrate the important findings in relation to the impact of tourism in Amsterdam. Through the interviews conducted with tourists, locals, business and other different stakeholders as well as from the self-observations it is somehow clear that there are several problems and challenges that Amsterdam is facing due to the negative impact of tourism on the locals, environment. However, it is also an opportunity for the city to overcome these challenges and create more sustainable as well as more responsible tourism that benefits both the city's residents and tourists. This section explores the key findings of the data analysis and discusses their implications for the future of tourism of Amsterdam.

### 5.1 Living in Places

The analysis is based on the community of the red-light district and an overview of the place at the local level. The understanding of the problem and the consequences faced by the residents of the city's red-light district is explored through this section.

### 5.1.1 Local Perception of Red-Light District

The collected data from field research and certain secondary research shows the impact of tourism on local people in the redlight area of Amsterdam. Majority of the findings shows that the impact of tourism is inclined towards the negative impact rather than positive on local people. As per different sources and per the personal experience in the field, the tourism density on the redlight area could be seen very high. As per Bachelor (2022), 10% to 15% of the tourism industry of Amsterdam is associated with the redlight and cannabis has also a high influence in the tourism industry of Amsterdam. He further mentioned that it is estimated to cross 18 million overnight stays and will reach 23 million by the end of 2025. There are different positive aspects of tourism in Amsterdam such as job opportunities, economic development, increase in foreign currency, exchange of culture etc. Tourism industry in Amsterdam is huge as it contributes 4.5% of the economy in Amsterdam (Pieters, 2017). He further says 70000 jobs are associated with the tourism industry which brings additional investment in the city. This is supported by the Manager from Magic mushroom outlet Munna, who said that:

*“We sell the product from the Netherlands. Our suppliers are the companies that are from the Netherlands and the cannabis products that we sell in this area are produced in the Netherlands.”*

According to MacCoun (2011), coffeeshops in Amsterdam sell 50- 150 metric tons of cannabis with the value of 300-600 million euros per year. The article furthermore says that almost 700 retailers of cannabis are there in the Netherlands which is about one per 2900 legally. This can give an idea about the economic flow inside the country due to cannabis. In addition to this some of the locals and the cannabis related stakeholders are seen positively towards cannabis.

Furthermore, the manager from Yeti restaurant, Kalyan mentioned that his business is running because of the tourists. He says that:

“90% of the customers that come to this restaurant are tourists.”

In addition, Cikren mentioned that most of the people including young and old people visit the area to taste the cannabis and have the experience of redlight. These examples show that economic flows due to tourism in Amsterdam is undeniable and businesses are making money out of it. If the business makes money, then they pay the tax, and the money goes to the government. With this logic, if the government gets the money, then ultimately that money can be used to uplift the living standard of the people living there and make the place livable.

However, the area of Amsterdam is 219 square kilometers (Statista n.d.). With an area of approximately 219 square kilometers and approximately 872575 people, the added number of tourists is already much in the case of population density which causes the over tourism in Amsterdam. This can create certain problems like lack of public spaces, overcrowding of people etc. and this can create the anti-tourism sentiment to the people living in the city. Such sentiment can clearly be seen in Amsterdam through different posters and pamphlets posted in the neighborhood of redlight area as well as with different protests from the local people living in the area.

The tourists flow in Amsterdam is somehow because of the redlight districts as well and there are several problems due to this flow of tourism. Taking an example of housing and rent for the locals. One of the street artists living more than a decade in Amsterdam mentioned:

*“Because of tourist flow in Amsterdam the rent has skyrocketed, and we are unable to afford in the city, so I live nearby which is around 30 minutes from the city.”*

Zwam (2016), mentioned in his article that due to the rapid growth in Airbnb, booking.com and other platforms create a shortage of rental space in Amsterdam. He further mentioned that it looks that tourists tend to spend more than the locals, so the hosts want to rent their places to tourists rather than locals. And this can cause hate towards tourists because local people cannot afford the place or need to adjust themselves in a small area with the high rent. Furthermore, environmental damage is another finding that can be analyzed. Katrine says:

*“People don't care.”*

She further mentioned that when the people are on vacation, they forget the notion of being a social being. This statement was made from her experience as she sees the environmental damage on redlight district. The activities such as peeing on the street, throwing the garbage here and there in the city by the tourists walking randomly can be seen as unpleasant as well as these activities could have a bad impact on the beauty of the city. The problem of the garbage created by tourists is not the only problem. Due to the overflow of tourists in the redlight area, the garbage from restaurants also increases because if more people visit the place more people eat and if more people eat more garbage is created. As the area of redlight is small and compacted with the narrow roadways and are full of people most of the time. Because of this, garbage trucks may not be able to collect every time, which are the reasons for local businesses (like restaurants, cafes) throwing the garbage in the street. These garbage bags can be seen in the streets of Amsterdam. Katrine, Cikren and other local people agreed as well, saying tourists are one of the major causes for the garbage seen in the

street. In addition, tourists involved in disrespectful behavior such as littering, being loud and disruptive and even engaging in illegal drugs could bring tensions between the host community and the tourists. Therefore, locals were protesting via “Stay away campaign” against tourists to show their anger and to improve livability of the Amsterdam (Bachelor, 2022)

It is normal that people do not live in places which lack peace and harmony. Red light area in Amsterdam is a busy and crowded tourist area. For the tourist, these can have a less impact as they are for a short period of time. However, it would be hard for the people living there and dealing with this every day. So, it can be seen that most of the people don't like to stay in that area. Which could be a reason for lacking the working manpower in Amsterdam. This can be seen with the notice posted in the door of many shops, restaurants and coffee shops mentioning the requirement of staff.

With the analysis of the data collected from the field work and with the interactions with different local people, although tourism in redlight areas has many positive sides, however, the majority of the people seems to have a negative perspective of the tourism due to redlight and consumption of cannabis activities. Because of this, many participants mentioned that they encountered the people of Amsterdam protesting with banners in the street frequently. Many news articles also cover the news about such protests. Taking an example of the news report BBC (2019), the Dutch government approached to close brothels and several options were considered which included removing the windows display, creating erotic city zone with a clear entry gate. Analyzing the perception of local in Amsterdam related to red light and cannabis usage the mayor of Amsterdam Femke Halsema stated to the city counselors in 2022:

*“Many of the major problems in the city are fueled by the cannabis market: from nuisance caused by drug tourism to serious crime and violence. Banning sales to tourists is a necessary intervention and a first step towards regulation.”*

The cannabis market of Amsterdam is highly influenced by the flow of tourists visiting the place. Tourists are their main buyer, and a lot of their products are tourist oriented in a way. A huge number of tourists also like to consume soft drugs such as marijuana, hash, and other kinds of drugs. The effect of these drug makes them do unusual things, such as from making loud noises to violence in the street which can be seen in the findings as well. The tourism organizations including the municipality also believed that putting restrictions on cannabis or banning it for the tourists could stop such kinds of tourists coming to Amsterdam. It could also contribute towards the livability of the place by minimizing the actions which are caused by cannabis.

In addition, professor Kathus during the interview mentioned:

*“I feel most for the position of the women or like the people working there. So, I personally do not really like it. I worked there for a long time when I was in my studies. I worked there in a restaurant, and I liked the place because it's close to the university, also close to the red-light districts. A lot of people live there, so I like the diversity, but really the red-light district itself with all the windows, I feel it's a bit, Unpleasant. I feel for the women who work there because I think there's a lot of things wrong with this. But I do like the diversity of the city center. Being one dimensional, I don't like it as much.”*

Prostitutes are displayed behind the window to attract the customers openly which is very unique and rare in the case of Amsterdam. People have different opinions about the showcase of prostitutes on windows. Some people see it as very attractive and its part of their job, while others criticize it for showing women in inappropriate ways and as they are forced into it for different reasons. There are a lot of cases where women and girls are forced to be part of the sexual industry by taking advantage of their family and financial issues which is the reason why a lot of people do not like the showcase of women in the red light. Hughes (2000) argued that the legalization of prostitution tends to rise in trafficking of women to meet the demand in the sex industry. Therefore, the activities in the red-light district brought a lot of challenges for locals instead of municipality efforts to make it livable for everyone. Furthermore, Katrine also agreed that tourism could be boring only if it is focused on particular aspects of tourism as she said:

*“Sometimes I feel dumb tourism. It's only sex and weed.”*

She says that the tourism in the red-light districts is only focused on prostitution and weed although the city has many things to offer.

## **5.2 Tourist perception of Red-Light District and local community**

The findings gathered from the field research showed a degree of challenges that a destination like Amsterdam faces due to the high reputation for cannabis and sex industry. The red-light district of Amsterdam can be identified as different types of tourism by the tourists.

### 5.2.1 Place Identity

Analysis can be made from the perspective of place identity which is a notion of a place constructed to differentiate from one place to another (Antonsich, 2010). Moreover, the differences between places could be observed by not only the people residing in the place but also the people away from the place like tourists and travelers. The concept of place identity is in a way a subjective social construct based on the objective physical settings. The red-light district can be seen as both unique as well as a controversial aspect of Amsterdam's culture as it is seen as an entertainment hub with adult fun but also stirs discourse on cultural globalization and skeptics on morality of the prostitution in the center of Amsterdam (Aalbers and Sabat, 2012). The city of Amsterdam is globally famous for having progressive policies and practices like urban planning, sexuality, gay rights, drug use, and prostitution (Aalbers, 2010). The idea of place identity gives meaning to the place based on the individuals' subjective perception based on their experiences, memories, and cultural background. The red-light district's identity could be viewed as a complex and contested concept for some people while for some local residents, the area represents a meaningful part of the city's history and cultural heritage that shows the liberal and tolerant values of Amsterdam. Besides, another outlook on the place's identity can be drawn upon from different groups of tourists. For instance, the openness of the red-light district and the sex industry as well as soft drugs legality makes it an attractive entertainment destination for young groups of travelers. However, travelers who seek to go on a vacation with their family or an elderly tourists could see the destination as a source of shame and embarrassment. Kalyan who is originally from Nepal and has been living in Amsterdam for over 20 years said:

*“It is about peoples’ mentality. Asian peoples’ thinking is different from that of European or Western. The people coming from Asian countries like Nepal, India, and other countries take this activity negatively. Public display of affection between men and women is normal over here while in those countries there are mostly only men visiting any such places like the red-light district and men and women visiting these places together is highly unlikely.”*

The difference in culture and lifestyle of people in developing countries and in Western countries makes the red-light district a place with a contested image. Thus, the red-light area and its sex industry as well as cannabis consumption could be seen as a liberal and tolerable activity from the European and Western context while it is considered to be a kind of a taboo in most parts of Asia due to the cultural differences. Sexuality is considered to be a taboo subject in most of Asian culture and people from such cultural backgrounds tend to have lesser sexual experiences as well as conservative sexual attitudes in comparison to people from other groups (Kennedy and Gorzalka, 2002). Hence, the identity of the city’s red-light district is unethical and subject of moral concern to the vast majority of the people around the world. However, it provides a more liberal aspect in the society and promotes an independent lifestyle for the women working in the red-light district.

Environmentally friendly public space and safety standards are other factors that have an impact on tourists in the destination whether it be their desire to be in the place or their experience while visiting the place. Having a contested image and tourism activities like sex industry and cannabis consumption, the red-light district welcomes potentially high risk for anyone who is willing to visit the place. As mentioned in the findings, the issues ranging from pickpocketing to that of illegal

drug dealing and even human trafficking has existed in the area which could prove to be a red flag for the tourists. The people working in the red-light district mentioned the nature of danger in the area as people are seemingly high on drugs and could be a potential threat in the public space with a high number of tourists. Katerine mentioned an incident she dealt with while working in the museum:

*“Once a guy was stabbed and came to me bleeding and asked for the help and we called the police closing the museum.”*

The risk for the tourists is there when they visit such places where the probability to encounter danger is high due to the legality of drug consumption and the public space with a high number of young people with adrenaline rush. There could be a need to think about the health and safety of the tourists before visiting the red-light districts due to the nature of the tourism activities involved. Apart from the surrounding being unsafe, the growth of criminal activities could increase with such contested activities. Farley (2009) mentioned that the legalization of prostitution potentially increases the trafficking in the sex industry. However, the findings gathered during the fieldwork indicates otherwise, with people living in and around the red-light district claiming to feel safe in the area. Omar, who is a local resident and also a restaurant worker in the red-light district said:

*“The Netherlands is pretty safe. The Netherlands is safer than any other countries in Europe. I am telling you. It’s honest. You will not get things stolen from your house. In the village you will probably get things stolen. But in Amsterdam you cannot get stolen.”*

The thought provided by Omar and from the observation, the city of Amsterdam is quite safe despite the use of cannabis and prostitute work in the red-light district, walking around the street is safe. One of the main reasons being, high number of people in the street all evening and well-regulated security around the places as well as the street cameras that make people safe. The red-light district has a friendly atmosphere and is less dangerous than it used to be in the past with clusters of policemen as well as private bodyguards hired by the sex workers are always on duty (Amsterdaminfo, n.d.).

The hotels put up a picture indicating that it is strictly forbidden to engage in sexual tourism involving children and have had such incidents in the past that instilled the need to show the poster to eliminate such crimes. Alongside the security issues, the city also faces problems regarding the environmental pollution which mostly includes unhealthy surroundings with improper waste management and polluted canals.



Figure 19. Picture of water in the canal collected during field visit.

Observed during the field research, the waters on the canals were quite unpleasant for the eyes but also understood from the interviews that the locals as well as tourists carelessly litter the canals throwing the garbage and even peeing. The picture above shows the change in color of the water in the canals to greenish or brownish due to the consistent littering in the canals. Katrine mentioned in regard to the pollution in the red-light district:

*“There’s a lot of trash in the street and in the canal. After the weekend, you always see the canal is full of trash, yikes, and mess. Like yesterday I was at my friend’s place, and I was seeing all the trash in the canals. And I was like, they (Municipality) should have cleaning boats for example. I don’t know the budget but maybe they could actually have some boats running at least here in the center where it gets really really dirty and disgusting. Because you can see everything in the canal. Once I saw a person throwing a TV in the canal.”*

The lifestyle of people living in the area and the quality of life is being influenced by the growing tourism industry in the city. The value of the physical environment of the tourism destination is high in regard to the tourist demand as natural attraction is a part of a quality destination (Mieczkowski, 1995). Moreover, for the consistent and continuous economic gain, the environmental objectives as well as the practices need to be incorporated into the current attitudes, management strategies, and methods (Mihalic, 2000).

### **5.2.2 Cultural Differences and Tourist Motivation**

It is an important factor to consider as it could have an important impact on how the destination is perceived by the tourists. Tourists from the conservative cultural background more likely view the

red-light district as an immoral destination while the liberal cultural tourists view this place as an unique and exciting destination to experience (Reference). Apart from liberalism and conservatism, gender and sexual orientation plays an important role in defining the characteristic of the red-light district to the tourists as male tourists are more likely to view such place as a form of entertainment and be more interested in it while female tourists mostly prefer other source of entertainment (Henkel et. al., 2006). Moreover, such activities and the concept of displaying the female prostitutes in a window could potentially be offensive to the females by the sexualized nature of the red-light district.

Another key element that influences tourists' perception is the motivation to visit the red-light district. An example could be given as some tourists like to visit the destination out of curiosity and in search of knowledge about the local culture and traditions while some tourists might be drawn by the thrilling nature of the place that could provide them a unique experience (Craik, 2002). When asked about the type of tourists mostly encountered in the area, a cannabis selling employee from a coffee shop said:

*“Mostly the young people. They come to smoke this kind of stuff like marijuana and something like that.”*

The group of tourists visiting the city of Amsterdam for cannabis and soft drugs were observed to be young and lively tourists whose aim was to enjoy cannabis consumption and prostitution as mentioned by an employee from the coffeeshop. Similarly, a representative from the Amsterdam store which guides the tourists with maps and suggestions, mentioned that the tourists that come to the red-light district already know where and what to expect from the place, hence they seem to

find their way to the area themselves. Similarly, findings also showed that there are a significantly high number of tourists visiting the cultural places that are largely famous from Amsterdam with tickets to enter such museums being sold out a month prior to the visit. Gathered through the fieldwork, elderly group of tourists came to visit the city only for the museums like Rijks Museum, Van Gogh Museum and Anne Frank House, while being not quite aware of the red-light district and having no interest in visiting that part of the city.

### **5.2.3 Authenticity and evolution of red-light district**

The red-light district of Amsterdam is seen as the hub for prostitution and cannabis activities. The history of the red-light district has come a long way starting from the 1500 century. There was a time in the 16th century when politicians threatened their men visiting prostitutes in whose houses due to sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea and syphilis. Moreover, between the 16th to 20th century, there was a ban on prostitution work for a few times, also lifted on different occasions. In the second half of the 18th century, furnished brothels were opened where women can hang behind the door for customers. Then, a legalization process has been started where prostitutes have to report twice a week to the police station for medical checkup. Finally in 2000, brothels became legal, and prostitutes required permits. Nowadays prostitution is regarded as any other professional work and they must pay taxes and follow rules and regulations set by the government like any other job (Red light Secrets, n.d). During our visit to the secret museum, we got the opportunity to listen to podcasts where prostitutes have shared their experiences. One of the prostitutes said that:

*“There was a time when they had to experience physical violence and any kind of customer could walk in directly to the brothel. Some of the clients were rude in terms of physical and verbal behavior to them and did not show any respect to their work.”*

In the other video, one of the other prostitutes explains that in the last 10 to 20 years, many changes have been done to empower prostitutes. Nowadays, prostitutes have the right to decide what kind of customer walks inside the window and what type of client they want to let go. The perception of people has changed how they look and treat prostitutes in recent times. She also mentioned that they feel more secure at work compared to the past. During our field visit, we saw a lot of CCTV cameras installed on the top of windows for security reasons for prostitutes' workers. We also saw that prostitutes were dealing with clients outside of the windows before they agreed to let them inside the windows. It can be seen in the red-light district that the sex workers are empowered in terms of decision making and more secure due to cameras and police roaming around the street. We also observed from posters that municipalities and different other organizations are providing free assistance and health services to sex workers. Sex workers have to follow government guidelines, for example prostitutes are allowed to work only one shift a day up to 10 hours. Prostitution is seen as other normal jobs in Amsterdam and prostitutes have to pay €150 for 10 hours shifts at a time. The podcast also revealed that the starting price to visit prostitutes from €50 and price might increase depending upon the request of the client and duration of time. Prostitution work has changed drastically in comparison to the past in Amsterdam. In the past period of time, agents and brothel owners used to take huge portions on the income behalf of prostitutes. Also, freedom of prostitutes, choice of clients was not determined by the prostitutes and some of the prostitutes indicated their job as part of slavery in the past. On the other hand, regardless of such

activities, prostitution in Amsterdam has its unique history from a very long time is one the reasons why millions of people tend to go there.

Authenticity is another concept in tourism that plays a vital role in tourists' motivation to travel. It is one of the main drivers for tourists looking for an original and genuine experience of the destination and is considered to be the main purpose of travel (MacCannell, 1976). Moreover, it is seen as a key factor in fulfilling visitors' desire to encounter the real, genuine, and timeless experience. The destination represents itself to the tourists offering them the essential aspects of their travel and expectation from the place. Jacob and Appleyard (1987) mention the goals for urban life which includes key aspects like the livability, place identity and control, authenticity and meaning, access to opportunity, and so on for a quality urban environment. Furthermore, authenticity, livability, identity, and opportunity are some of the characteristics of urban cities. The red-light district of Amsterdam has a long history and shows the sex and liberal culture of the city. Amsterdam's contested image of sex and cannabis tourism in the red-light district which represents the local culture and its identity to different groups of tourists draws upon the concept of authenticity. The city's history of cannabis and coffeeshops goes as far as in the 1960s' when the hippy culture was booming all around the world as the coffeeshops selling cannabis grew along the time leading to over 500 coffee shops by 1990s' (CoffeeShops of Amsterdam, n.d.). Known for sex and drugs, the red-light district of Amsterdam with its history and popularity attracts a large number of tourists every year. The tourists that visit the red-light district in Amsterdam come upon to participate in the authentic experience that the place offers. The quality of the cannabis available in the region and the sex culture and lifestyle of the red-light district attracts people to the place.

The quality and the authenticity of the drugs available to the tourists can be interpreted from a seller, Munna's quote:

*"We sell the product from the Netherlands. Our suppliers are the companies that are from the Netherlands and the cannabis products that we sell in this area are produced in the Netherlands."*

The authentic experience that the red-light district delivers with its sex and drugs culture can be considered as an appeal for at least some group of people who have certain interests. Furthermore, authenticity in tourism is considered to be the expectation and true impression of the destination from the tourist's perspective (Jain, 2014). Thus, the decision makers have a role to play in representing the red-light districts' authenticity and to manage the city's policies to communicate the authenticity to the tourists. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the place and their culture has been at risk due to the commodification of the culture and standardization of the tourist experience (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). MacCannell (1976) presents the view of deception as an inauthentic aspect that has influenced authenticity with growing commodification and globalization destroying the local authenticity. Similarly, the authenticity of the cannabis available in the Netherlands is debatable due to the globalization of the cannabis product as the country gets the cannabis from faraway production sites like Turkey, Nepal, Morocco, Pakistan, and Lebanon (Veen, 2009).

Tourists visiting Amsterdam's red-light district who engage in consumption of soft drugs might seek out these experiences in the city for its perceived authenticity. On the other hand, these activities might also be considered as inauthentic or superficial by some groups of tourists or local residents as such tourism activities might not reflect the city's diverse cultural heritages. The city of Amsterdam is rich in cultural heritage and is widely known for its canal. The city has been

widely known to have cultural heritages and brilliant work of art with artists like Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Mondriaan, and so on. The city council of Amsterdam has been putting great effort on the promotion of cultural tourism from the early 90's with much emphasis being put on the cultural heritages from the 17th and 18th century (Dahles, 1998). The city of Amsterdam as a whole is authentic to the cultural and historical aspect of the country while the red-light district of the city represents the history of sex and drugs in the place. Thus, the placemaking plans and policies in regard to the concept of authenticity have a potential to gradually shift the image of the city through careful management of these different tourism activities.

### **5.3 Managing Places**

The contribution of the tourism industry has become very essential for the economy of many countries. World Travel and tourism Council, 2019 claims that the tourism sector alone contributed 10.3% of global GDP in 2019 and as per the report of (Statista, 2022), 917 million tourists travel globally. Tourism generates a huge amount of income, job opportunities, infrastructure development and brings many other opportunities for different cities and countries. On the other hand, due to the high flow of tourists many destinations have to face a lot of challenges, for example overcrowding, increasing waste, water, air and noise pollution (Koens, Postma & Papp, 2018). Similarly, Amsterdam as a tourism destination is tackling different kinds of challenges in terms of noise and water pollution and community issues in the neighborhood. Apart from that, the contested image of the red-light district and cannabis tourism are also considered as a huge problem for the tourism industry of Amsterdam. Managing the different places of the Amsterdam

city center which includes the red-light district as well is very important in order to handle mentioned challenges in Amsterdam.

### 5.3.1 Policy management in red light district

The majority of the participants talked about the environmental and social problems which were quite visible during our field visit. If we consider the argument of (Dickinson, 2018), the huge number of tourists visiting Amsterdam are causing an increase in waste and other environmental problems. The figure 6 also shows the mismanagement of waste in the street in the red light district. Waste was thrown in the streets in a very inappropriate way without separating different types of wastes. Such kind of mismanagement of waste not only sets bad examples among the tourists about city tourism offerings but also makes the streets very dirty for the local neighborhood. Katerine also mentioned that:

*“There are some banners, but people don't respect them. Those banners say don't drink alcohol, don't throw the waste in the street, don't pee but people don't care. It's like I have this sense when people are on vacation. They like to disconnect, they don't have the notion of what's around them. In Particular, lots of people are drunk and high and it's even worse. Yesterday, I was at my friend's place, and I saw all the trash in the canal.”*

The municipality has been passing information through banners on how a red-light district as a place or tourism destination can be livable and attractive for everyone which includes business, tourists and local neighborhood. But a lot of tourists tend to give themselves sense of freedom while being on vacation which leads them to do stupid things which have different consequences to the

place and people living around the destination. On the other hand, as the above quote mentioned, heavy use of alcohol made tourists aggressive and out of control on certain things which are often led by their actions in destinations. Throwing waste in the street and peeing in the canals, making noise and not respecting the certain rules and community environment were some of the examples can be seen in the findings. Tourists avoiding community practices and regulation set by municipalities by the influence of heavy drinking allows them to be involved in those activities which are often called deviant behavior in tourism contexts (Ryan and Kinder, 1996). Similarly, tourism expert Dr. Peter E. Tarlow revealed that some of the tourists are behaving out of character while in the new place due to the excitement and being unknown in some other places out of their everyday life (CNN travels, 2019). He further added that travelers tend to enjoy the feeling of being anonymous which is the reason they are more likely to engage in rude and unwanted activities at their destination.

According to the Waste Management and Research (2015), the impacts of environmental problems associated with waste generation include water pollution, emissions of air pollution, sanitary problems owing to the harborage of disease carrying vectors and other issues. On the other hand, plastic waste has emerged as a very difficult problem to solve because it can stay in canals and beaches for a very long period of time. The pollution in the street in the form of garbage, cans, plastic, paper and even furniture can be very harmful to people living and roaming around it. Apart from that, the canal's water also looked very dirty which can be seen in picture. Such visuals also set a bad example for the image of destination. There might be different reasons behind the generation of such kind of pollution in Amsterdam but at the end of the day, there will be a certain

group of people who judge or visualize Amsterdam based on those visuals which can have a negative impact on the overall image of the destination. Katerine suggested that:

*“They should have a cleaning boat for example, I don't know the budget. But they can have some boats running at least in the center where it gets really really dirty and disgusting. Once I saw a person throwing a TV in the canal. People should be fined often for that. Fines are written in the banner, but no one has ever fined. It's more like you cannot do this. I have never seen anyone getting fine actually.”*

Unmanaged waste in the street and pollution in the canals has been one of the biggest issues in the red-light district and Amsterdam city center. Canal tours have been done in huge quantities in Amsterdam, but its preservation and maintenance has been very poor. Municipality banners which contain awareness information and fines have not seen working so far on throwing garbage, peeing and water sewage activities in the red-light activities and city center. Putting only information about fine charges on the banners might not be enough to stop those kinds of activities in tourist destinations which are very crowded like Amsterdam. Locating tourists can be very hard in busy areas. Particularly, in the red-light district which is very crowded in evening and nighttime it is even harder. On the other hand, the red-light district is mostly known for sexual activities, cannabis consumption and drinking where most of the young tourists tend to get high and their actions are often influenced by alcohol and soft drugs. Therefore, immediate implementation of tax or fine on violating rule needs to be applied with strict information. More security persons in the ground can be distributed to prevent such activity, for example throwing bikes, tv or any kind of waste in the canals. Apart from that, awareness and implementation of sustainable practices can be done by

collaboration with business in destination so waste production can be minimized and travelers can be encouraged for the proper storage of waste in destination. According to the (Sustainable Travel International, n.d), waste control in tourism can be done by inspiring tourists to adopt eco-friendly travel habits, waste minimization policy for businesses and empowering locals and travelers to improve waste management processes. However, it can be very difficult to implement sustainable practices in the red-light district due to the high movement of tourists in the area and differences in the interest of stakeholders could be another reason. Myric (2011) and Davidson (2010) also believe that despite the increasing awareness about sustainability, sustainable practices and scientific advancement, recent developments are facing challenges to achieve sustainable goals.

On the other hand, English tourism council (2002) suggested that the concept of sustainable tourism is effective in managing tourism impact on the environment and community. Byrd (2007) believed that successful implementation of sustainable tourism in destination can be achieved by the collaboration among the local stakeholder, community members, business, and tourists. Similarly, the implementation of sustainable tourism in the red-light district can be very helpful to manage waste and reduce the tourism activities which are harmful to the environment and community. In this way, collaboration between the municipality, tourism board of Amsterdam, local business, residents from the red-light district and visitors could contribute towards sustainability of the destination. The implementation of sustainable tourism would lead to minimum harm to the environment and community. Therefore, minimization of pollution, waste and harmful activities to the environment will be one of the main goals of sustainable tourism in the red-light district. Crot (2013) argued that a top-down approach can be vital for governing sustainable tourism but its implementation also depends on the will of the state/leadership group.

One of the policies initiated by Amsterdam & Partners is to avoid backpacker tourists who visit Amsterdam just for prostitution and cannabis activities. The representative of Amsterdam & Partners Isis said that:

*“We are trying to be less attractive to the partying tourists, whose goal is to get wasted and make a lot of noise and pollution. We like to make more to the Italian and French, as far as I know they are typically come here to enjoy the culture.”*

Amsterdam and partners who contribute towards the livability, sustainability, and reputation of the city by collaborating with government, municipality and other stakeholders believe that the group of tourists who visit Amsterdam for cannabis and prostitution purposes are the ones who are creating disturbance, noise, and waste pollution in the street. Therefore, as policy makers, they are focusing on the other types of tourists who go to Amsterdam to enjoy culture and other city tourism offerings. It will also promote their cultural attractions and positive messages can be spread to the world about the image of Amsterdam. Similarly, Aalbers & Sabat, (2012), Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2007) also revealed that city is putting lot of effort to attract cultural tourist in the city, while they also want to reduce the number of low budget backpacker to counter the negative image of red-light district and cannabis which is influenced by such tourists.

On the other hand, Amsterdam is planning to the implement few policies to tackle the negative impact of red-light district which are as per the Katerina:

*“Since, there is a new mayor in the municipality. She has many ideas, and she wants to keep the prostitution inside the building like in Germany. And from the first of April, if I*

*am not wrong you are not allowed to smoke in the street. She wants to prohibit foreigners from buying weed in the coffeeshops.”*

Similarly, Kathus also mentioned:

*“Actually, there's a new proposal to move some of the prostitution to other areas, to the north of Amsterdam or to the south in the new Erotic centers. So, it will move part of the activities that are located now at the Red-Light District. So that might be interesting information for you as well, to know that they are trying to spread the activities.”*

These policies are particularly in process to minimize the negative image of the red-light district which has impacted the image of Amsterdam and locals living there. Amsterdam as a tourist destination offers a lot of tourism activities which also includes cannabis and sex related activities. The coming restrictions could affect the decision making of those tourists who particularly visit Amsterdam with the purpose of prostitution and cannabis. Once the prostitutes are taken out of the red-light district and moved out of the city center into brothels, either those groups of tourists have to go outside of Amsterdam to experience sex related activities or Amsterdam might not be their choice due to implementation of such regulation. In that case, the flow of tourists visiting the red-light district might not be the same as before. The proper implementation of these policies could limit people coming to red light districts which could help to minimize its negative impact. However, looking to the history of red-light district and involvement of stakeholders, it could still be challenge for municipality and tourism organization to implement such practices in the red-light district The majority of participants from the red-light district revealed that tourists tend to make noise most of the time. Omar told us that:

*“People living in the red-light district also smoke weed, hashish, and soft drugs but they never make problems here. But tourists are not used to smoking weed, so when they eat mushrooms or smoke, they get crazy and start fighting. Most of the reports in the police station are about tourists.”*

People living in the red-light district are used to taking soft drugs which they believe are good for health, makes stress free, relaxed and many other benefits. That's how they encourage tourists to take cannabis and promote many other soft drugs. The huge number of tourists visiting Amsterdam wants to experience cannabis which can be the first time for some tourists and for some it can be quite different than their prior experiences. Therefore, after having hashish, marijuana and other soft drugs tourists get high very quickly and start fighting and end up in different problems. If we look at the argument of Hunt (2017), that rapid growth in tourism development is a huge concern for locals as it is generating negative social impacts in the community. As a result, locals are protesting against the tourist behavior in many tourism destinations all around the world. These kinds of incidents are taking place in Amsterdam which causes local people to move away from the city center. Local people have shown their anger through protesting against tourists in Amsterdam. If we look at the example from literature where locals have been involved in protest via “stay away campaign” which was indicated towards the sex and drug tourists to encounter the rowdy behavior of tourists in Amsterdam (Bachelor, 2022). During our field visit to Amsterdam, we saw police roaming around frequently around the red-light district. It is because there is a high possibility of violence in the street. Omar revealed that:

*“The Netherlands is very strict with taxes and security. If you don't have a driving license, you will be fined by the police. If you violate any rules, police might not catch you, but you will receive a fine at the end of month because the camera will catch you. There are cameras all over the city. You have to be very careful with the rules in Amsterdam.”*

Such a famous and crowded destination like Amsterdam needs to be very strict with the security concerns. Especially, when the city has a way of tolerance towards sex related activities and soft drugs like Amsterdam. Most of the security cameras which we have encountered in the red-light district were installed on the top of windows where prostitutes were working. It has been done to give the sense of security to the women working behind the windows to restrict any kind of possible violence. At the same time, it's a message for tourists to maintain discipline or respect with the prostitutes and cameras also makes investigation easier if needed. Managing such a busy city like Amsterdam is very important from a tourism perspective. There are millions of tourists going to Amsterdam every year to experience the history of prostitution, authenticity, old buildings, canal tourism, cultural experiences and many others who just want to have a good time away from violence and unnecessary troubles. There were cameras and lights even in the late night in the red-light district which makes tourists relieved in terms of security during their visit. The implementation of such policies about charging fines and taxes on violating rules will also create awareness among the locals and tourists not to create trouble in destination in the name of tourism. As per WTO (1996), safety and security give an indication towards the quality of tourism in the destination. Secure environment for visitors will also determine the success of the tourism destination on many occasions which also influence the decision making of tourists. Therefore, a

secure environment is very important from a tourist point of view as well as locals to create peace and harmony in the destination.

The red-light district is located in the center of Amsterdam city. Some of the tourists tend to reach there just following the crowd. Tourists who are exploring the city would reach there at some point regardless of their choice as it is in the heart of Amsterdam. Some of the locals pointed out that there are lots of unique places and canals in the inner part of the city where tourists usually don't go, therefore those places and canals are not popular as compared to the red-light district. Kathus also said that:

*“Directions would lead to the nice streets with old buildings and canals. Because, more often people are led by their phone and the flow of the crowd. So, putting visible directions and signposting in the street will lead them to other nice places.”*

On many occasions, tourists are led by their phone to different places in their destination because tourists tend to prepare on their plan before arrival on which or what type of place they want to see. Some of the tourists tend to follow the crowd which also leads them to famous places. But installation of visible directions and signposts can be valuable to divert tourists to the new destination and the attractions which are not often explored by the tourists. Successful planting of direction would also help to spread tourists from the red-light district to other places. Spreading tourists from the red-light district can be very challenging due to their specific interests on sex related activities and cannabis. Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) suggested that public spaces in the tourism destination can be properly managed through placemaking where unexplored and new

places could provide different values and unique experiences to tourists. Therefore, the use of proper direction can be valuable to lead tourists to new attractions.

On the other hand, a lot of space from buildings is used by prostitution as part of windows, restaurants, souvenir shops, sex theaters, Airbnb and other renting companies, sexual activities and cannabis shops. The number of locals living in the city is way lower than the number of tourists visiting Amsterdam every year. The huge number of tourists brings a lot of challenges to the destination which is one of the reasons that locals are moving out of the city center as per our findings. As a result, city center shops are lacking the labor or manpower in the many of the shops around the city center. During a field visit to Amsterdam, we saw lots of banners where “staff wanted” information was written on the outside of shops which can be seen in the figure no. Some of the shop owners from the red-light district revealed that it is getting harder to find people who can work because a lot of locals are living out of the city center due to the increase in accommodation price and family commitment and they prefer to work close to their place which are the some of the reasons for lacking manpower in red light district.

### **5.3.2 Designs to Nudge Practices**

Throughout the fieldwork on the red-light district of Amsterdam, different semiotics including different color, architecture designs, signs, symbols, and banners were observed which shows the meaning of the place. Semiotics plays a vital role in influencing the tourists’ behavior in this area. The use of red lights in the area is a sign of a presence of semiotic features in the district. The color red is considered to be the color of excitement, strength, sex, passion, speed, and danger (Cerrato, 2012). Moreover, it is also known to draw attention and is considered to be the color that the human

eye looks at first. The attention of the tourists walking around the red-light district is drawn towards the windows by the red lights. Besides, the glowing red lights on the window indicate that the prostitutes are up for work and the red lights are turned off when the windows are not ready to invite customers. Also, the prostitutes in the window are not at work during the day thus the lights remain off. Use of semiotics helps in identifying the codes and recurring patterns and also to recognize how these signs and symbols construct and communicate the meanings (Fiol, 1991). Likewise, in Amsterdam the lights work as a guide to the tourists visiting the area. There are several signs and symbols placed in the area which indicate that taking pictures is not allowed in certain parts. Such rules and ethics displayed through semiotics helps maintaining a safe space for the sex workers in the area. Besides, this use of semiotics develops boundaries between the tourists and the sex workers while reducing the probability of unwanted incidence or inappropriate behavior.

Developed by Pierce, there are three categories in the types of signs which include icon, index, and symbol (Burks, 1949). All these signs give a meaning to the place as the icon is a pattern that physically resembles the thing, like a picture; index shows the evidence of the represented activity or behavior; and symbol shows no resemblance but needs to be learned culturally for example, traffic lights and flags (Bradley, 2016). There are several other designs in place in the red-light district of Amsterdam that could be observed and provide some kind of understanding to the tourists. One such important feature is the use of curtains in the area. The windows where the sex workers work has curtains closing the window all day when it's closed and opens as the prostitutes stand in the windows after they are ready to work. Moreover, another meaning the closed curtains in the evening gives is that the prostitutes are currently involved with the customer. The curtains

work as a visual privacy and their use in the red-light district creates a sense of secrecy. Curtains and windows act as a barrier between the sex workers and the tourists which helps in maintaining the distance between them. Nevertheless, it may not always be effective as some tourists peek behind and sometimes may enter the sex workers' establishment uninvited. To eliminate such activities, sex workers have begun to use signs and symbols to communicate with the tourists which includes "no photos" and "no touching" in the windows. Moreover, such signs and symbols have become a form of semiotic communication that helps to regulate the tourists' behavior and maintain a safe environment for everyone. Also, the posters were placed in places that says people live here and mention:

*"Enjoy it like you would do in your own neighborhood".*

With such posters and banners targeted mostly towards the tourists, the city is trying to communicate about the community issues to the tourists in order to manage the red-light district well. One of the common issues being addressed through semiotics is the use of banners and posters to draw tourists' attention towards the existence of local life in the area. Posters and banners in the form of language and images work as a social semiotics and multimodality which are socially constructed and are not exactly static as they are a subject to change when needed (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Such semiotics are required to be understood in certain social and cultural context as the meaning and rationale of these semiotics are shaped by the motivation as well as interest of the sign maker (He, 2017). Similarly, the banners and posters in the red-light district are specially designed with the motivation to involve tourists in responsible tourism and encourage them as well as locals to respect the local community and the natural environment. The tourists in the red-light

district are not particularly understanding of the fact that people reside in the area and are careless about the ethical considerations. Loud noises, overcrowding the street, and littering are some of the problems faced by the people living in the community. The local authority in the city (Gemeente Amsterdam) has placed some banners with signs and symbols not just to motivate and encourage but also to warn the tourists or anyone to not litter the area and put on fine if found doing so.

Another contested activity of the city that the semiotics, signs, and symbols promote is the use of cannabis. The sale and consumption of soft drugs is made possible in certain parts of the city with the tolerable policy under strict conditions. With such policies in place, there are several semiotics noticeable in the city and were identified during the field visit. The most common indication of drugs and marijuana is the picture of a leaf, which is a very well-known symbol associated with the use of cannabis and this symbol in the streets of Amsterdam lets tourists know about the possibility of purchase and use in that area. Alongside, the picture of a cartoon character smoking a joint is another symbol used by the licensed cannabis seller to attract the tourists towards their business. Coffeeshops, restaurants, and public spaces around the area have a sign for smoking rooms which clearly directs consumers with either a leaf or a wording that clearly communicates the rules.



Figure 20. Information about benefits of cannabis during field visit

Some of the shops that sell cannabis use sign boards like shown in the picture above, to promote the product they sell to the visitors. These boards work as semiotics to communicate with the customers as it provides detailed information about the quality of drugs available. The city is known for being liberal and tolerant towards drug use and proudly promotes the city as a cannabis hub. The souvenirs available to take home for the tourists include various signs that show the popularity of the city as a cannabis zone. Some of the most common souvenirs tourists take home include the cannabis leaf in a small handicraft, mugs, key chain, and so on. Furthermore, the

availability of a variety of such products that display the sex and cannabis culture of the city suggests that the Amsterdam city council, municipality, or other key stakeholders are accepting of the contested activities in the red-light district.

The semiotics tourism language has been developed in tourism marketing to promote the destination with the use of signs and images that generates a certain expectation from that place (Kolcun, Kot, and Grabara, 2014). Likewise, the city of Amsterdam, through the promotion of sex and drugs in the red-light district has made itself a popular destination for some groups of tourists. The use of semiotics in the red-light district is an important way to communicate between the local authority and the tourists. Placemaking policies designed and planned by the local authorities could practice the use of semiotics in different forms to manage the red-light district well and help gradually shift the image away from the contested activities. Kathus explained one of the placemaking projects done in the Dam Square which is just a kilometer away from the red-light district and said:

*“There we experimented with ways to do routing for people. People walking in the Dam Street are really crowded and the government likes to know how we can spread the tourists more. And we experimented with different kinds of signs. Big signs with selfie and hands pointing to another road. Another one was signing on the street. We painted from Dam Square to another direction, so we made really big signs on the street. And then we did something with the counter. It was counting how many people went straight and how many people went another way and then we also tested what kind of routing was better.”*

Mentioned by Kathus, semiotics already in place which directs the tourists using the signs to the nearest sites to visit for the tourists is one of the placemaking policies to distribute the tourists around the city. This placemaking strategy used in the city could be an effective way to distribute the tourists around the city but considering the high number of tourists that the city encounters it seems to be an ambitious task. Tourists' travel to a destination depends on several factors like destination choice, distance decay, time, and trip characteristics (McKercher and Lew, 2004). Also, there is a difference in tourists' behavior between first time traveler and repeat visitors as first timers are more likely to explore the destination widely and on the other hand repeat traveler are more of a passive traveler, less involved in activities, and looking for social experiences (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Thus, the strategy to direct the tourists to the nearby sites through the use of signs could be a challenging task based on the types of tourists and the behavior of tourists visiting the place. As different tourists have different motivations, influencing their interest of travel with routing and signs is a challenging effort.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 New placemaking potentials and the future of Red-Light District

The data collected from different sources and through the analysis of the collected data, Amsterdam continues to face the different problem which has been explained and analyzed in the above sections. So, the future of Amsterdam tourism is of great importance for discussion. Placemaking being the process of creating and enhancing public spaces to improve the quality of life and promote community engagement can play a crucial role in shaping the future of Amsterdam tourism industry which is discussed below.

### 6.1.1 Responsible Tourism

The concept of responsible tourism is concerned with the impact of the tourism industry on the people, the community and environment, and looks to improve these aspects with actions to benefit host destinations (Leslie, 2012). Some of the important considerations for responsible tourism include the involvement of the local community, promoting local culture, acknowledging the environmental concern, and so on. As the analysis has shown, the city of Amsterdam and the public spaces in the red-light district have faced significant ramification with high tourist flow resulting in pollution and carelessness from tourists. Plans and policies to promote responsible tourism in the red-light district could go a long way as the perceived responsible tourism in the host community has a positive influence on the quality of life in the community through the perceived sustainability (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). One of the main aims of responsible tourism is to make the place better for people to live in and for tourists to visit as it needs cooperation from the stakeholders including local residents, government, municipality and other tourism operators. Moreover, being accountable for the action leads to being more responsible in the destination and the behavior of the people in the particular place depends on the environment and culture of the place. Some of the fundamentals to placemaking and urban spaces include the quality of life, livability, authenticity, social community, and an environment for all (Jacobs and Appleyard, 1987). Thus, the policies and strategies to guide the behavior of the people in the public space of the red-light district creates the culture of responsible tourism in the place. Moreover, the role of the local community in making important decisions for the destination leads to effective placemaking policies as well as quality public spaces (Thomas, 2016). There are a lot of stakeholders involved in the red-light district where the local community might not have influence

on decision making and had to support other decisions which are not favorable to the parameter of responsible tourism which does not help to promote quality of life at destination. The distribution of power has huge role where multi-stakeholders are involved in the destination (Crepso, 2005; Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2011; Leeuwia, 2000).

The data and information gathered from, and analysis findings shows that the quality of life in the red-light district has been influenced due to the tourism activities and growing tourism flow. Promotion of environmentally friendly practices is one way of setting the culture of responsible tourism in the red-light district of Amsterdam. Although some approaches on environment friendly actions are in place, the regulation and management of it was found disoriented. Practices like banners on keeping the surrounding clean, awareness programs, possible fines on littering the place, and so on are seen to be in place in red light districts. However, the necessity for proper regulation is high as the effectiveness of these practices were not satisfying as found out through the fieldwork and interviews. Besides, the alternative forms of tourism in the area that are not solely reliant on sex and cannabis, could be promoted and minimize the environmental and social impacts of tourism on the red-light district. Another important strategy to improve the community lifestyle could be by managing the street with a well-established walking path and space for vehicles to move as this specific issue was identified by one of the local residents who resides in the red-light district.

Encouraging and practicing responsible tourism is an important factor to enhance economic, social, and cultural sustainability, the challenges and issues that come with it are substantial. In order to achieve sustainable tourism through responsible tourism collaboration between stakeholders is key as partners from tourism industry, local government as well as community, and

all the groups in the destination with divergent interest, goals, values, and ideologies needs to be participative and working together in tourism planning and development (Long, 1997). In the context of the red-light district in Amsterdam, the interests are divided between the municipality, local government bodies, local businesses that are concerned with cannabis, businesses with prostitution, sex workers, and local people living in the area. There is a potential challenge in identifying the common vision, possible disconnect between the policy and practice, and is likely to lack in integrated tourism planning in order to attain sustainable tourism development (Harrison, Jayawardena, and Clayton, 2003). Another important aspect that is of concern for responsible tourism is the tourists' role and behavior in the destination. Tourism's contribution to responsible tourism is mostly unnoticed as they are considered to be a major part of the problem in the first place as they are largely accused of taking a break while on holiday (Stanford, 2006). Also gathered from the findings, tourists in red light districts are seen as one of the major parts of the community issues and are blamed to be careless during their stay. It could turn out to be a highly challenging task to promote responsible tourism to the visitors of the red-light district as they visit the place for entertainment and are apparently naive about the existence of a community in the place. The nature of the tourism activities and the locals' attitude towards the tourists makes the prospect of responsible tourism a difficult project. Similarly, collaboration between multiple stakeholders and tourists behavior in the red-light district makes it easier said than done to promote responsible tourism in the destination.

### **6.1.2 Improving Social and Cultural Sustainability**

Amsterdam is a rich city with cultural heritage and a vibrant social fabric which make it an attractive destination for the tourists visiting from all over the world. However, with the increase in tourism and with the impact of redlight and the cannabis usages, it is important to discuss and consider the impact that can have on the social and cultural sustainability of the city. As discussed in many previous parts that Amsterdam is not only the redlight and cannabis there are other several aspects that Amsterdam offers to its visitors. But, due to the image of Amsterdam, somehow other aspects are neglected or seen less advertised. So placemaking concepts can be used to explore other neglected cultural, environmental aspects. For example, creating a cultural landscape that showcases local arts, traditions can celebrate and preserve the cultural heritage of the city. Presenting the art and culture which is already exciting in Amsterdam could encourage the exchange of culture between different communities as well. So, by providing the space for the people (artists, musicians etc.) could help in promoting cross- culture and increase the appreciation in order to gain cultural sustainability. Such placemaking strategy could be used as placemaking is a process of making foundational, functional landscapes where culture-nature plays integral, reciprocated and directly interfacing interaction (Singh, Niglio, &, Rana, 2023). Taking an example from Kathus who is working in placemaking in Amsterdam is working on a cross cultural exchange through the campaign called “Bloody Tourist” where they try to engage both tourists and locals in where they interact (for example singing together, having a drink together). With such activities the cultural exchange occurs as they believe tourists can also bring something to the city and the hatred towards them could be decreased. However, such campaigns may not only be enough to make changes in the sentiments of both the tourists and locals as the sample might be in a huge number. Tourists visiting Amsterdam are not only the tourists taking part in the

campaign meaning there might be a huge number of tourists that are unknown or might not be included and influenced by such campaigns. In addition, it is a very hard job to fit in all the tourists in such a campaign to change their perception and behaviors in the destination. Furthermore, by providing the venue to display the art and culture could help to preserve the culture for the future generations as well. For example, if the cultural activities such as arts, music, dance, performances etc. are performed in the public space then many people could attend it even the young people which help them to learn their culture and help the culture and traditions to transfer from generation to generation. Furthermore, these areas or venues could be used as the Heritage interpretation by providing the information on natural and cultural heritage to the people visiting the heritage sites and objects. (Nowacki, 2021) mentioned that these interpretations enable the tourists to understand the places, sensitizes the visitors with the surroundings and make them aware about the importance of the landscape, nature, and the monuments of the visited area. The article further mentioned that such activities enrich the visitors' activities by stimulating and triggering their leisure time activities. Meaning that the visitors visit the informed places in their leisure time which help to explore the least visited place and explore the new destination as well as it also helps in diverse tourism. Cities have long used mega events such as World Fairs, Expos, and sporting events as a means of revitalizing their economies, creating infrastructure and improving their image (Getz, 1991).

Discussion of social sustainability needs to be considered in the case of Amsterdam. Data collected from field visits shows that the people living there have some sort of negative impact because of the tourists visiting Amsterdam, especially in the red-light area. To eradicate such sentiment from the public living in the host communities, it is necessary for their involvement to create a pleasant

interaction between the host and the guest. As this project is related to placemaking and how it can be beneficial in changing the existing image of Amsterdam, it is essential in involving the host communities of Amsterdam in the process. Taking the saying of Kathus who a representative of the placemaking foundation in Amsterdam is and working on different placemaking projects. They ask the local people before starting any projects in Amsterdam. Meaning that the importance of locals in placemaking and hearing their voices is essential. This by involving the local communities in placemaking could help in certain ways to maintain social sustainability. For example, with the involvement of local communities in the placemaking process, the sense of belonging can be increased as it can address the needs of the local people. In addition, their voice is heard, and their requirements can be fulfilled. This empowers the local communities to have the say in their neighborhoods and created the sense of ownership and responsibility of their communities. Karacor (2014) mentioned in his article that people will maintain and adopt the places which are improved by common decisions. In addition to this when the local people are involved in shaping and designing their public spaces then they become more invested in the outcomes as well as in the protection of their spaces. Not only this, it can also create strong social networks, better collaboration and communication between the people living in the society and helps to develop a more inclusive society. With this strong collaboration and communication, the community could prioritize the needs of the people accordingly. Being a bottom-up approach, placemaking should make disadvantaged groups' voices heard connect them with each other in the society (Karacor, 2014). For example, the people with low-income, or even homeless etc. and the created place could be more beneficial to address the needs of those people. This could ultimately help to reduce the social inequalities and help in creating a socially sustainable community. However, the redlight

area has different stakeholders with their different requirements, different opinions, different interests as well as different resources. It is obvious in the real world that this might be a hard job to bring diverse people together to agree upon some common goal. As mentioned in the literature review section, placemaking strategy is also criticized for being elitist and not being able to provide social equity and causing the gentrification by different views (Karacor, 2014). The result of gentrification in Amsterdam city center can be seen in terms of rise in housing prices, locals moving out the city center, over tourism, lack of community engagement and issues related to affordability and opportunities for locals.

### **6.1.3 Branding as a cultural destination**

Amsterdam is one of the leading European tourism destinations in terms of historic buildings, canals, art, cultural heritages and famous museums. Amsterdam's cultural heritage, waterways and rich history has become attractions for millions of tourists every year. As per (Statista, n.d) report around 13.22 millions of people visited museums in the Netherlands and majority of most popular museums in Netherland were located in Amsterdam which includes Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Anne Frank Huis and many others museums. Apart from that, Amsterdam has 165 canals which is categorized as one of the main tourism activities in the city. Even though Amsterdam has established itself as a cultural hub from a tourism perspective, its contested image of the red-light district has had an influence on the image of Amsterdam. Amsterdam as a destination has been putting in a lot of effort in order to shift its negative of red-light district and cannabis from the past many years. Given the long history of the prostitution in Amsterdam, there are a lot of challenges to shift its image to other alternative tourism. If we consider the argument of Martinez et al., 2010, the branding of the destination could play a vital role in the tourism image of the destination.

The positive brand image of a tourism destination can be gained based on its identity, history and culture and unique brand association which tends to create positive bonds among the tourists towards the destination and establish itself with the unique image (Lijuan and Tianyuan, 2012). Branding the destination and its image are very connected to each other and can produce greater influence through content led activities. The role of placemaking initiatives is vital to preserve its authentic image. Placemaking policies could help to preserve destination identity, sense of the place based on culture, art, and history. One of the policies of placemaking is to work constantly to preserve and rebuild heritage sites and old buildings which reflects the culture, history, and sense of place for the local community (Global Heritage Fund, 2018). Our findings also show that municipality and tourism stakeholders are working via different campaigns, cultural events, promotion and preservation of existing cultural heritages. Placemaking policies tend to work very closely for the welfare of the local community and are committed to create an environment livable for locals which also contributes to the image of the city. Derek Thomos (2016) also talked about the placemaking policy can be very effective with the community participation and involvement of communities in decision making would help to capitalize local assets to increase in quality of life. Therefore, implementation of placemaking policies not only make Amsterdam livable for locals but also contributes towards the quality of life in the place for tourists where they can spend time with a sense of security, quality and make beautiful experiences from city attractions. In this way, placemaking policies could be very helpful to gain a positive image for the city where the destination can be branded based on its cultural perspective. Some of the placemaking policies could include promotion of existing cultural destinations, development of new cultural districts, place branding, community engagement with tourists and many others.

Amsterdam local community and tourism representatives are also very proud with its cultural image as a tourism destination and want to promote and brand Amsterdam based on the cultural attractions as per our findings. For example, the “Veemer painting exhibition” which was a cultural event seems to be very successful, which was happening during our visit to Amsterdam. Lot of tourists were visiting Amsterdam from all around the world just to experience that exhibition and their perception of Amsterdam is solely based on its cultural diversity and museums. More cultural events can be organized frequently to draw attention of other groups of tourists. The cultural events represent the uniqueness of the place and its atmosphere (Getz, 2008). The proper planning and promotions of such cultural events has huge contributions to transform the tourism image of the destination (Liu, 2014). Given the cultural history of Amsterdam, it can encourage more cultural tourists to Amsterdam but diversion of tourists from the red-light district to the cultural part would still be a big challenge for top level management. As the red-light district has its own history, some of the findings also talked about the authentic experience that is rooted in the red-light district and is the motivation for millions of tourists. Branding of cultural destinations could be a big motivation and encouragement for cultural tourists, but its influence might not be the same on a group of tourists who visit the red-light district because of the experiences and activities it possesses. However, cultural representation of the history and evolution of the red-light district through the museum could be a place for the tourists who just want to experience the image and stories of the place. And are not involved in any kind of sex activities and cannabis

Some of our findings also mentioned that red light has become a commodity where a lot of people come to see the place, surrounding environment and its secrets. They come to enjoy the environment of the place rather than taking part in any activities and services. Therefore, such a

place (museum) which provides information about the cultural and authentic experience of the red-light district and cannabis could be a place for those groups of tourists and can draw attention of other cultural tourists. These kinds of content-led activities can be included as part of branding the destination and can be seen as a step moving towards the diversification of the image of the red-light district.

#### **6.1.4 Developing Canal Tourism**

Canal boating is a such type of leisure activity that refers to short canal trips on boat for a day of cruising trip (Gon et. al., 2016). Amsterdam canal tours are one of the highlights of the Amsterdam tourism industry. Canal tours are provided around the city center and outside the center in huge numbers. The access to waterways with canals in the city is an amazing experience for tourists. Some of the tourists have shared their excitement and amazing experience of canal tourism in Amsterdam by saying the city has more canals than Venice which was quite surprising for them. However, further development of canal tourism in Amsterdam could add huge value to city tourism offerings. The canals of Amsterdam were not in good shape due to the amount of pollution thrown in it which we have experienced on field visit. Canals were dirty with different kinds of garbage and waste. As per our findings, more than 12000 bikes were taken out of the canals annually which clearly gives an indication towards mismanagement of canals in the city.

The development and improvement in the canals in city areas could attract even more canal tourists. The concept of placemaking can be drawn and utilized to make better experiences for canal tourists and the destination itself. Appleyard (1987) explains placemaking as an urban design strategy which aims to build the environment by working with people who inhabit it. The ideas of placemaking can be used in order to make a better place and environment for different

communities who are living and visiting the place. The proper cleaning of canals should be given more importance for the betterment of canal tourism in the city and for future prospects in terms of environmental concerns it might cause. The placemaking policy works hand in hand with the sustainability of the destination and more sustainable efforts on canal tourism could contribute towards the quality of canal tours for tourists in Amsterdam.

On the other hand, our field observation found out that there were only a couple of canal tours in the main canal which goes through the red-light district. Canals going through the red-light district were barely in use as tourists were overcrowding the street. The finding and analysis also show that a lot of travelers visiting the red-light district are satisfied just to experience the history of the place, representation of prostitutes on windows and outlook of the place which limits them from participating in sex related activities and cannabis consumption. Frequent canal tours through the red-light district would bring new activity for tourists in that specific area who just want to experience the environment of the red-light district from outside. Once people started using canal tours for red light areas, it might decrease the flow of tourists from the street. Therefore, the use of the resources to make a canal tour route including the red-light district would provide an extra layer of tourism activity in the place. Tourists will have more options to engage with other activities in the red-light district. The challenge would be the increment in the number of tourists visiting the red-light district at the same time. For example, more people can access the red-light district via boats and canal tours which could add more tourists in the area, and it could end with more crowds and pollution in the area. That might be the reason for limited canal tours in the red-light district. As per Woolsey (2023), many of the tour operators including “those dam boats” are providing zero-emissions canals tours in Amsterdam which have minimal impact on the

surrounding environment. Promotion and constant use of such types of initiations could contribute towards sustainability and quality of canal tourism.

### **6.1.5 Multi Stakeholder approach**

A tourism destination comprises several stakeholders with their different roles in the place. Each stakeholder has certain influence in the tourism destination as some play a significant role while some are passengers to other key stakeholders. Some key stakeholders are more involved in the participative decision-making process as others are not (Aas, Ladkin, and Fletcher, 2005). The city of Amsterdam and the red-light district involves different stakeholders including local residents, tourists, local businesses, municipality and local bodies, tourism industry, and so on. These stakeholders bring value to the tourism industry as they often possess financial as well as non-financial resources that are key to the development of the destination (Hall, 2008).

Placemaking policies and strategies aim to make the city a better place and eradicate the issues in the community as discussed in the findings. As Buhalis and Amaraggana (2013) mention, one of the key components alongside placemaking is the multi stakeholder approach to address the issues faced by the sex and cannabis tourism, as this approach considers the social, cultural, and economic impacts of tourism leading to sustainable tourism development. The plans and policies implemented in the red-light district like the laws regarding drugs license and use, prostitutes working hours and working conditions, ethical rules in the public space of the district, and so on involve the collaboration between several stakeholders in the decision-making process. The end decision has some benefit on certain stakeholders than others, which raises the question if the decision-making process is influenced by the possible outcome. There are several factors that need

to be considered in the process of placemaking and policy management. Identifying the complexity as well as sensitivity of the problem in the red-light district, various stakeholders like government authorities, business owners, local people, and sex workers themselves have been committed in shaping the future of the neighborhood. Moreover, collaboration between stakeholders is significantly important in order to address complex challenges while capitalizing on the opportunities in a tourism destination (Robinson and Jamal, 2009). Thus, by including the voice of all stakeholders and through a collaborative process, placemaking strategies could be developed in regard with the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of the red-light district. One of the findings mentioned the plan to shift the erotic centers elsewhere from the red-light district and the laws banning cannabis for tourists and banning smoking outdoors. These plans have a notable impact on the economic aspects of the city as well as affect several stakeholders including local people, sex workers, businesses, and tourists. Also mentioned by Omar, the policy makers tried to shift the brothels and ban cannabis consumption at some level in the past, however, it did not work and had to continue as it always was. Thus, the presence of several stakeholders with different interests creates a level of adversity leading to potentially being unsuccessful.

#### 6.1.6 Top Down and Bottom-Up Approach

The destination of the red-light district and the challenge regarding the contested activities invites proper planning and policy making with potential for top-down approach or bottom-up approach of problem solving as well as decision making. The findings gathered through the field research suggests that certain placemaking activities in the city are attributed to the bottom-up approach while some efforts have been made from the higher level as top-down approach.

The approaches are made by the municipality and local governments to establish the strict rules in the consumption of cannabis in the area. As mentioned in the findings, the collaboration of these top-level stakeholders advanced the law to ban the consumption of cannabis in the public space and also the rules regarding closure of coffeeshops and brothels earlier than previously to reduce crowding public space. These policies outline the top-down notion of placemaking as it is a planned effort to influence peoples' thoughts and behavior to shape their perception of the destination (Lew, 2012). The rules and regulations are formed to bring a gradual cut down of cannabis sales and consumption. Similarly, as Katerine mentioned, the policies to remove the windows from the red-light district were brought forward by the authorities and some windows were removed in the past. There is a need to consider maintaining economic balance in the destination as the windows and prostitutes bring higher financial benefits to the city. Thus, careful planning is needed to not disrupt the windows businesses as well as to not reduce the tourist's flow. These plans and strategies could potentially scale down the sex tourism in the long run and also could make the society livable. The other aspect of the top-down approach used by the municipality of the area was to place banners that indicate ethical rules and fines in the red-light district. This action is aimed to increase awareness among the tourists to respect the environment and also to inform the tourists that local people reside in the area. These actions and policies in place at the red-light districts are mostly focused on community issues and improving the social and environmental aspect of the city. On the other hand, another strategy used by the placemakers in the city is to name different sites of the city to make it easier for tourists to understand. This is aimed to help the cultural, historical, as well as locally famous places to be popular at the international level to help attract tourists at those sites. This could potentially help in distribution

of the tourists at different parts of the city and shift the quantity of tourists away from the red-light district.

The bottom-up approach on the other hand is the organic process which shapes the place on the basis of the societal practices in the community (Dyck, 2005). It is considered to be a key aspect to lead to the social and cultural sustainability with the local community is regarded highly. One of such placemaking practices in situ at the city Amsterdam was the project called bloody tourist as mentioned by Kathus. It was aimed to manage the overcrowded streets in the city by engaging both the tourists and the local people with drinks or coffee. This idea brings tourists and locals together in the community and helps them in their encounters. It also promotes responsible tourism as the tourists get to learn about the culture of the place and also be liked by the local people. One of the important findings of the fieldwork is the lack of warmth and affinity exhibited by the local community towards the tourists in Amsterdam. Known for the vibrant nightlife with prostitution and cannabis, the red-light district attracts a significantly high number of tourists in the city seeking such experiences. However, the high influx of tourists has caused friction in the area and disrupted the daily life of the local people making the place more of a tourist attraction than a livable community. Also, tourist's negligence of the local community has led to the locals being dissatisfied with the tourists. This shows the need to improve the resident-tourist relationship in the red-light district in order to improve the quality of life in the place. High tourist flow is considered to be a threat to tourism and a risk in decrease of quality of life especially for the local residents in urban destinations (Vu et. al., 2020). The red-light district being a highly crowded spot, residents' daily life and tourist's itinerary coincide. Such a detached relationship between the local and tourists could turn out to be a potential failure for such placemaking projects like Bloody

Tourists. Furthermore, the strained relationship between tourists and locals could become a significant obstacle in implementing placemaking policies as it requires the collaboration between stakeholders which includes the local community and tourists.

Such placemaking projects and events hold immense importance as it could serve as an influential motivation in promoting the desired likeability between these stakeholders. One promising bottom-up approach to address the contested image could be with the involvement of the local community which includes residents, entrepreneurs, and sex workers in the decision-making process through several participatory forums and platforms to gradually shift away from contested activities. Community-led initiatives could be introduced with these stakeholders collaborating in order to establish alternative economic opportunities and diversify what the city has to offer as a tourism destination. However, there lies a challenge in balancing the needs of the local residents and the tourists in order to attain the quality of life through placemaking policies. Already discussed tension between the locals and tourists brings in obstacles for decision makers to improve the livability of the place. The city being an entertainment hub and place for sex and drug consumption, tourists are more into these activities while locals demand the tourists be respectful of the environment and the community. The need to balance what tourists need without interfering with the local's quality of life could be a headache for the policy makers in the red-light district.

## **7. Conclusion**

This thesis sought to study the image of the red-light district and its tourism activities alongside the placemaking policies that could help in diversifying the image of the city of Amsterdam away from its contested activities. By exploring the city as a tourism destination, analyzing the

placemaking policies in place and potential strategies to shift its image, the research dives into understanding the issues and problems at the red-light district. Furthermore, the research also analyzes these problems and their impact on the overall image of the destination, also proposes the potential policies that could be essential to address the research questions.

The findings of the research are mostly gathered from the fieldwork and briefly through secondary sources. The collected information shows the issues that the red-light district of Amsterdam deals with due to the presence of sex and drugs tourism activities. It shows the positive as well as negative impacts of the contested activities in the area as it highlights the issues in regards with the issues like community concern which includes environmental threat, security problems, and local residents' quality of life. Some of the positive aspects explored through the fieldwork includes economic gain, job opportunities, tourists' satisfaction, improving health safety, and decrease in crime rate.

Finding also indicates that the tourism organizations in Amsterdam are working through different campaigns and policies to promote cultural image of the destination to attract more cultural and family-oriented tourists, while also putting restrictions and limitations on the access to cannabis and sex related activities to prevent tourists who are just coming for partying, soft drugs and sex activities. Also, the alternative tourism activities in the city of Amsterdam were explored and studied as the city has numerous cultural and historical aspects to it.

The analysis of the findings is done from two different perspective. living in place and managing the place. Furthermore, analysis of the findings presents that the negative reputation of Amsterdam has had a complex influence in the local community and destination itself. The impact of the red-

light district and its tourism activities on the local residents and the tourist's perception of the destination is interpreted. The loss of empathy from the locals to the tourists, tourist's carelessness at the destination, and plans to minimize contested activities in the place are some aspects studied in the analysis. Moreover, the reflections on place identity, authenticity of the place, cultural differences and tourist's motivations are made to analyze the findings on tourists' impression on the red-light district. Also, policy management in the place is analyzed on the basis of the stakeholders' impression of the red-light district. Design to nudge practice like the use of signs and symbols and meaning of different semiotics in the red-light district is further interpreted. Furthermore, discussions are shaped with focus on new placemaking potentials and what the future could look like for the red-light district. Some of the bases of these discussions are drawn upon responsible tourism and how promoting responsible tourism could be a challenge in a destination like this. Also, the discussions touch on the social and cultural sustainability as well branding the city as a cultural destination through placemaking policies. Specific consideration is made with development of canal tourism to be one potential policy to exercise in the red-light district. Implication of several stakeholders based on the findings drives the discussion on multi stakeholder approach as well as top-down and bottom-up approach.

Tourism activities in the place including sex and cannabis consumption has affected the local livelihood and the socio-cultural aspect of the community. To tackle the negative aspects of these tourism activities and bring balance and attain quality of life, several placemaking policies and strategies are in place from the local level to the higher level. These policies include the use of semiotics, signs, and symbols to direct the tourists elsewhere and laws to ban cannabis to the

tourists in order to prevent tourists' interest in entering the red-light district. Other key policies include naming the tourist sites differently around the city to attract tourist's attention, a bloody tourist project, and the law to reduce the prostitutes' windows in the district. Whilst these strategies are in place, there lies challenges along the line to get the desired result out of them due to the presence of several stakeholders with different interests. Similarly, the nature of these activities being a historical part of the city makes it an ambitious task to shift the image and reduce the tourist's interest in these activities. Nevertheless, some policies are discussed that could potentially be significant to improve the livability of the red-light district and gradually shift its image. Encouraging responsible tourism in the red-light district and developing a canal tourism route that goes through the area could be some strategies that could be developed at the local level. Inclusion of all the actors and stakeholders in the decision-making process at the community level and balancing the needs of these stakeholders while making key decisions.

Altogether, the contested tourism activities in the red-light district have a significant impact on the community and the image presented by it could likely influence the tourist's motivation to travel to the city. Several policies and strategies are in place and some potentially could be key to tackle the issues and make the community livable despite the longstanding and prevailing challenges that lie in getting the desired outcome.

This research has explored the reputation of the red light district and its impacts on the communities from various perspectives and potential placemaking approaches to tackle the challenges associated with the image of the red light district. Therefore, further research can be done to find out the effectiveness of the latest laws and restrictions which are set to be implemented by the government and municipality in the red light district in order to minimize the negative image

of the red light district. Besides, one of the research for the future could be done with the survey of tourists visiting the red light district on what their alternative tourism activities would be. This could be productive for the policymakers in the destination to enhance plans and strategies to address the issues of destination image alongside managing tourist's satisfaction.

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## 9. Appendix

### Appendix 1: Transcription

#### Interview 1

Kathus (Professor in placemaking in University of Amsterdam and founder of the placemaking foundation in Amsterdam)

Q: Can we just start from your introduction and what do you do?

A: Yeah. Um, so what do I do with, uh, Placemakers? So we are an office for urban activation. Are you familiar with placemaking as a term?

Q: Yes. Uh, I mean, like we are writing our thesis on how placemaking can be implemented in Amsterdam in order to like, uh, change its existing image to something new. We are basically from tourism, but we are also doing placemaking. We also had a semester in placemaking.

A: Oh, Okay. And Why in Amsterdam?

Q: It's because we were planning research for our thesis. And we were searching for a popular destination here in Europe. We did our research on tourism in Barcelona. We had it done our first semester, and then in the second semester we did our semester project in the west coast in Denmark. And then for the thesis, we think, okay, let's choose a destination where we can gather information. And as a popular destination, we choose Amsterdam.

A: Mm-hmm. So, we do place making as improving mainly public space or semi-public space on the basis of local knowledge and local qualities. It involves full creation with all kinds of local stakeholders, and that can take the form of. We'd say it, mention it as an intervention, but that can be all kinds of things. So that can be programming of the public space, but it can also be a design or it can be like physical interventions or Well, it can take all kinds of forms. and then, um, well, we see it is a very important aspect that it is. Then taken over by the local community so that we are no longer needed. But that really gives the local community tools to help them out continue it in their own ability.

Q: We also went through your website and you as a professor in University of Amsterdam, can we go with the example that you have been initiated or you have been working on in Amsterdam?

A: Uh, in the placemaking? Yes, on the one hand I have this foundation that I founded called Placemakers. It's a small foundation and we work on placemaking projects in practice. Mainly in Amsterdam, but also there are some other places. and at the same time, I'm a teacher at the university and I set up the course placemaking for students where they research on their own on campus and work with local stakeholders. But they go through the same methods.

So are you interested in examples of the placemaking that we do as an office?

Q: What kind of project do you initiate in Amsterdam?

A: Well, that really differs. So for example, uh, we do kind of small real time interventions. So we program parks, for example. A concept of neighbourhood campsites. We make city parks, we make campsites together with the local community. So for three days people can set up their tents and then interact with their neighbours and ideas that you get to know your neighborhood. and your neighbours better when you have three days of holidays together than when you are living three years in apartment blocks and next to each other. Well, you don't know anything about each other. And when you really celebrate vacation and you have breakfast together or you sit around the campfire or you do some activities. That's really good for cohesion.

so that's an example that we set up in Amsterdam and is now in 70 cities or like, places in the Netherlands. so that has grown, but the concept is still small. And yeah, every campsite is unique, but it's according to the same principles.

Q: How much of a focus is on tourists? or is it for local people or neighbourhood residents? or is it also focused on a welcoming tourist to those spaces?

A: It is actually exclusively for locals because we think. Obviously, all tourists are welcome, to visit the park or to join in activities. But we set it up for locals in order to get to know each other. So, you can only camp there if you live in a certain postal code or have a certain postal code. and the idea behind that is you meet each other at this event and then afterwards you still see each other at the bakery or in the supermarket, and then you greet each other and then there's more feeling at home. Because when you camp with all kinds of people you will never see them again. And that is not really improving cohesion. So, that's why it's not for tourists.

But we do have another project for tourists in Amsterdam that we call the "Bloody Tourist Project". Because in Amsterdam, it was kind of seen sometimes as an annoyance and a tourist because in some streets or places, there are really many, many tourists. And then it feels for the people who live there, not as their street or their place, but it's like taken over by the tourists or sometimes a lot of people from Amsterdam say, yeah, tourists, they cannot bike. And it's really annoying. But we want to change those ideas because we also think tourists can bring something to the city, or you have a lot in common with tourists.

so we did really like small scale projects in a crowded place in the city centre where we wanted to change the perspective. So, we handed out Bloody Marys for bloody tourists. And then we asked people with a sticker with a question on it. for example, what's your hobby?

Or do you have a life lesson or something people could relate to? And then the idea was that a tourist would have a drink with a local and then have a conversation. And we did different

variations on this Bloody Tourist Project. We also did karaoke. So a local and a tourist had to sing a song together, we created a slogan "*sing a song to get along*".

That was actually to connect locals with tourists.

Q: What kind of response do you get? Do the locals or the tourists give you feedback? Did you get the result out of this project ?

A: Yeah, they both really enjoyed themselves. In the beginning for tourists, if they entered this project, they were amazed because obviously you have tourist places you go through, but here you are kind of welcomed by locals or like entertained and you can participate in something. So, a lot of tourists, they really wanted to do the karaoke and to sing and it's a really, a special experience. But in the beginning with the Bloody Marys, tourists were a bit afraid or something. When they were given a drink and they were like, I don't know, is this something I should buy? Or like, what's this? But then we handed them out both to the locals and the tourists, and then it went smoothly. But in the beginning there was a little bit of resistance from tourists.

Q: if we ask about this particular project we are talking about. How did the initial idea come out to carry out this project? Is it because the local people started hating tourists? What was the initial idea for your project that you carry?

A: I think there are different reasons. To break down stereotypes. For example, you think a tourist just wants to party here and doesn't want to connect or is only here to consume. so to break that

stereotype and also because tourists are here to stay. It doesn't make sense to complain all the time. So, we thought how can we make it work as much as possible? Those were reasons to do this.

There is a project called "Benches Collective", and it's now called Neighborhood "Benches Bird Bump". It's kind of a sister from the neighbourhood campsite. It's like a really small thing you can do very easily. You have the bench outside and you open it for your neighbours, have a coffee, do something for the kids.

My colleague, she lived in a very crowded, touristic place. she said, "well my neighbours are also tourists." That's one of the reasons why we do this.

Q: The reason I ask you the question is that when we were in the red light area, we saw different doors with the posters saying "I live here and enjoy like you do in your neighbourhoods" this kind of complaints we could see in the street. when we talk to the people, they say that my neighbour is a tourist for me, because we don't have that much interaction because we don't get the space to interact. They also says" We are a little bit tired of the tourists living in the neighbourhood". So I want to ask you, how focused were you in the Diwalen area (redlight) or the crowded area?

A: Well it was not in the red light district, but on Ninth Street. So near to the district. It's also in the city centre. Um, and we did. I think four or five of those small bloody tourists experiments were in that area.

And we also did one other project with tourists in Dem Street on Dem Square. And there we experimented with ways to do routine for people. Mm-hmm. For people walking into the dam

street, which is really crowded. The government likes to know how we can spread tourism more. And then we experimented with kind of, what's the name? Signs with hands where you could make a selfie. And it was like, pointing to another road. And then another one was signing on the street. So we painted from dem square to the next or another direction.

Also, we made really big signs on the streets. Then we did something with the counter. So, there was a counter there. It was counting how many people went straight and how many people went another direction. And then we also tested what kind of routine worked better. Uh, yeah, that's another project.

Q:I have a question. As you said you have done that experiment or the research about tuition, different areas of, uh, city centre. Was there any specific reason that you did not choose the red-light district area? Because that red-light district area is also very famous and it's a lot crowded with tourists, especially in the evening and the daytime as well.

A:We did the bloody tourist project because my colleague lives there. And the other one was, there's not a specific reason actually. it's also a good place,

Q: I think for the sign project. The sign and the directions, was it to lose the crowd? or was it to distribute the tourists here and there? Would the direction take them somewhere they would like?, or was it where would the direction the sign take them to? would it take them to the nice places what was your finding?

A :We think that the dam street is not the nicest street. So, if you take a detour actually, then you are more in the quiet and also very old and nice streets with canals and nice buildings. So would it take you to actually nicer and more picturesque places. But we didn't really succeed, so we failed in a way, but we learned a lot from it because we feel like tourists are often led by their phones. They're not really looking at signs, instead they're looking more at their phones than at the signs, or they just follow the crowd.

That's what we learned. Also, we learned that locals were very unknown or surprising in a way. They noticed something new and they asked us "why"? The people who live there are much more interested in it.

But they were not our target group.

Q: Our thesis is about the image of Amsterdam because of its red-light district. Before coming to Amsterdam, they think of Amsterdam as a famous destination for cannabis and sex tourism.

So our thesis aims to look at that problem and how the placemaking strategies and policies could shift that image. Maybe focusing more on cultural tourism so tourists can think of Amsterdam as cultural places. That is our main aim of the thesis. So, have you ever been involved in projects that look at place branding. For example, promoting the place for different purposes like place branding?

Have you ever had Involvement in those projects?

A: Well, I think place branding always goes hand in hand with more content led activities. For example, I think a project like a Bird Campaign, like a neighbourhood campsite is for the

promotion area. So it's also kind of a place branding because if you visit that campaign you see the real neighbourhood.

It can also be seen as an activity in place branding. I've been involved in other places but not in Amsterdam, but in Amira, a city quite close to Amsterdam in the promotion, for example, a new neighbourhood. Um, and in that, I think it is important to set that up with the locals together.

So in this area we actually didn't have a plan. It didn't work out. But we had a plan to make the letters for the place branding. We Make them actually together with the people who were going to live there. We made those wooden boxes where you can put plants: It was really a green city area. So we thought of making the letters green and they represent the greenness of the area. And we make it together with the neighbours because it's also kind of a self-constructed area.

Q:If I need to ask you a question as a professor, as a placemaking founder in Amsterdam, what kind of initiatives that you have been working on in other aspects, or other places of Amsterdam or in the other city, what can we drag? Particularly if we need to come to the red light area. Are there any examples that can be implemented in the red-light area?

I ask this question because when we see more than 12,000 bikes they just fall in the canal. Maybe all those bikes are from the local people because maybe tourists don't carry bicycles. As they are there for a short stay. And then all those bicycles might be from locals. How can you solve this kind of problem that makes local people happy and they don't hate tourists?As a place making professionals, how do you tackle this kind of problem?

A: Well, I think first it starts with listening to the locals. It is an assumption, like what you think always is an assumption because maybe it's not their bikes, maybe it's students' bicycles.

So it's good to listen to how and what they perceive as a problem. And then also involve them in the solution in a way. I would really start with that. And you can do that with all kinds of things. We usually really go in the neighbourhood because you also have this, I don't know how it is in Denmark or where you live, like we have this participation.

But then often it's during the day when a lot of people work or it is a bit of a boring space. Uh, it's not attractive. So if you put like all kinds of people to think along with you, then it's good to really be out there and make it nice to have a conversation or give your input.

Well, I know, I do know that a big problem is garbage. In the Dewalan district. so that's something that probably comes up when you have those kinds of conversations. Uh, but then, um, like they're also the people who.

Um, experience a problem are also part of the solution often because they can change something in their attitude or they can think along for a solution because the solution is best when people feel it's their solution or they're contributed to it, uh, instead of you thinking of a solution and then implementing it on them.

Q: We are almost done with the meeting. It says like five minutes left for the meetings. I have one question to conclude, do you believe that they see the images of Amsterdams, like basically when

the youngsters or the tourists will think of Amsterdam as a hub of cannabis and the prostitution, do you think the placemaking strategy can change it to something else?

A: I think it is very strong. It is obvious that red-light and cannabis have been around for a very long time. And it's like a very difficult problem. Because the government is struggling with it for a long long time. Place making can be part of a solution. But also policy and all kinds, for example the very cheap flights to Amsterdam that also contributes to it.

And you cannot change that replacement thing. Placemaking can make the local needs and wishes more visible. And those are obviously different from cannabis shops or nutella shops or sex industries. So I think it can show or make another side of this area visible or another character, like it's really historic.

There's many, many people living there and they have their daily lives. They like the green, they like to bike, they do their shopping, so it's also a normal place. And that's placemaking can make that more visible.

Q: How far do you live from the centre or that area? How far is it?

A: I lived for 15 years in the West, and that was like 15 minutes biking. And now I live in Newark. I have to take the ferry, so it's 25 minutes.

Q: So what is your opinion on the tourists visiting Amsterdam? Being local there and seeing all these activities and involving in placemaking?

A: I feel most for the position of the women or like the people working there. So I personally do not really like it. I worked there for a long time when I was in my studies. I worked there in a

restaurant and then I liked the place because of the new marks, so it's close to the university, it's close to the red-light districts.

A lot of people live there, so I like the diversity, but really the red light district itself with all the windows, I feel it's a bit, Unpleasant. I feel for the women who work there because I think there's a lot of things wrong with this. But I do like the diversity of the city centre. Being one dimensional, I don't like it as much.

But if there's a lot of other things to do, then it makes it more comfortable to be there. And I think that people can be more aware that it's not just that.

Actually, there's a new proposal to move some of the prostitution to other areas, to the north of Amsterdam or to the south. In the new Erotic centres. So it will move part of the activities that are located now at the Red Light District. So that might be interesting information for you as well, to know that they are trying to spread the activities.

Q: Thank you for the time. Thank you for the help.

A: Have a good day. Bye-Bye.

## **Interview 2**

Olga Sowa from STIPO



Q: Let's start with an introduction.

A: My name is Olga.

Q: We are studying at Aalborg University in Copenhagen and doing our master's thesis on Tourism Management, and we are writing our thesis project on Placemaking in Amsterdam. Basically, Amsterdam already has images of the prostitution and drugs at least with some. It has a negative impact on negative images. So, we try to study some strategies that can shift its old image to something new. We think placemaking is one of them. So, we went through the internal research, and we tried to search who the organisation that had been doing or what the government has taken some initiative to shift this image. So, we found out about your organization. And that's the plan for today's meeting.

A: STIPO is an Urban Development company, and we are not a research centre, we are not a participation center. So, we have a clear vision of what a good city is and it's social. It has a good financial idea behind it. We usually work with municipalities or with real estate agencies or with housing corporations. That's something I don't know if that kind of institution is still present in Denmark because it's not in every country like the housing corporations, but maybe address. Because it also has a bit of a. More like social, I guess. Direction to the social. And so, we are often like, asked to either figure out what the needs in the neighborhood are, but we are not only doing like a classical participation session inviting people and thinking what we heard and bringing it to the aid to the to the client, but we always like filter it through our knowledge and try to create some ideas for the future. We also do some placemaking activities in some of the neighbourhoods together with the people, and we work on guidelines and future strategies for neighbourhoods.

Q: Is it only for the municipalities or is it also for the private organization?

A: Also, for other organisations. For example, housing corporations, they are not public bodies. We also work for real estate developers. So, we also work for private companies. And sometimes for the small scale of a square. But sometimes it's a bigger scale, like a whole area in the city around the central station. It is something good to mention. We are not only thinking about the physical infrastructure. We have this triangle of org software, hardware where hardware is the infrastructure, urban design and so on. The software is how people use the city. That's something that I'm very much focused on because I have an architecture and urban geography background. So, I always think about looking at the physical infrastructure but also how people use it, how they behave, where they walk, where they stop. And also what kind of activities happen in certain areas and certain public spaces. Because that's not only that you build something, but also think how you are going to use it. And there's also a third part, which is the orchard. So, kind of coalitions that you can build between different stakeholders in the neighbourhood. For example, business owners, some municipalities, social workers or whatever. And, kind of regulations that can be implemented by the municipality. for example where the square doesn't work because it's super busy, you can limit the speed for example, it already helps with making it a bit more lively. And so, there's always like these three things that we really want to think of wherever we work.

Q: Is place making a big part of what STIPO does or it is just a small part of what it does?

A: I would say it is a tool that we use. It's usually not the goal. But often when we do field research, we talk with people in the neighbourhoods. For example, we stand in a camper van for a few days to really get to talk to different people. That's what we heard. We try to filter it through our

knowledge and come up with what is actually needed for the long term vision to make it better, but then we always try to do something quickly and then we use place making not to lose the trust not to lose the energy that we managed to build in the neighbourhood.

Q: Is your company based in Amsterdam or in another part of the Netherlands?

A: It is now based in Amsterdam. It is a 25-year-old company that was like a spin-off from the University of Amsterdam. So, we were for a long time based in Rotterdam, but we moved to Amsterdam almost two years ago. And then we also have colleagues working in different countries. We have someone in Greece, in Italy, maybe you've heard about them?

But we don't compete with other place makers, local offices, but we just try to actually collaborate with them and all those people that work abroad, they were actually ones in STIPO and they just wanted to bring the STIPO values to their countries.

Q: As you mentioned you are based and focused in Amsterdam right now. Are there some current projects that's undergoing in Amsterdam from your company?

A: Yeah, many. I mean, I can tell you about my projects. I've been working in the Hague, I have two projects in The Hague. One was about the central innovation district. The district around the central station. When they create this whole vision for the next 20 years, how the area will develop and what will change. There will be new housing, new offices and so on. More mixed than it is now. But then, we were asked to conduct and understand whether the plans that they have will bring liveability to the streets. And what are the values that are still good to keep? So, we did the street interviews, and we analysed the plans that they have. We did observations and based on that we created some guidelines and I'm working on this. I think this is my favourite project. It's also

in The Hague because in The Hague we have Canal. We have canals in most of the Dutch cities, but they are not very visible. There's not something that pops out immediately. When you think about The Hague, they have a sea, they have seeds and a beach. So that's what people usually think of when you say water. And it's also like a very complex thing with the water, like the ownership is very complex, like, it's owned by the owner, managed by the province. More like a bigger body and some municipality. And there's this whole we must figure out how not super straightforward to change some things. But then we're exploring what can be better to make. Also, to use the canals and inland water for extra public space, but also for some commercial activities because there is not much going on in The Hague. And I also worked on the simple placemaking activities close to The Hague. We're decorating pots with children in the park. And it was like bringing the neighbourhood together. And so here, what else would they like to do? And that's also because some of the buildings will be turned down, so they want to somehow make sure that the community there is strong .

Q: Was your project approached by Amsterdam Municipality to you to research about the liveability?

A: Yeah, that was like mainly a municipality because that's how they prepared. they will execute the whole plans they created. But also, national. It's called National Real estate developers. The owner of many buildings, like many buildings of ministries, because the government is located in the Hague. So, they own a lot of buildings in the centre, and they are somehow a bit problematic because they have different safety regulations. So, for example, we always try to create a good plinth. So, like Ground Zero. The street is not only like the street, but like how you feel on the street. What's your experience? It's also about what you have on the

ground floor of the buildings. And that should somehow there shouldn't be a sharp division between what's inside and what's outside, and that can be problematic when you have a ministry building that has to be safe.

Q: You mentioned that you interviewed some People. Who do you interview ? Is it the local businesses or local people or big companies, corporations or who else?

A: Well, I can tell you how it looks. For example, for the Inland water project, I was the one doing the interviews with people in the streets. With just regular citizens or visitors or whatever you do it also in certain chosen times to get. That is the best representation of the society. For the central innovation District, the other Hague project, it was also important to hear the voices of those ministry workers. Because one of the clients was interested. They wanted to create a better environment for their workers. Because now people it's not only about work but also if it's pleasant outside and that's how you also attract more people to work for you. I'm usually focused on the citizens. But my colleagues conduct all those one-on-one, interviews with different stakeholders that can be for the water project. For example, the owner of some canoeing. Canoe company. Also, there are some people who manage the water from the side of the municipality. Some people who own some restaurants in the neighbourhood, like everyone that has some in.

And if you go to the neighbourhood you try to understand by talking to people who are the big figures or who to talk to, who are the most active citizens, for example, like the local heroes. And that's usually where it's good to start, because then where the energy is.

Q: I think when we talk about Amsterdam and when you talk about all these projects. I think tourism is an amazing part of it. I think they come parallel. Do you have any collaboration with municipalities in place making in relation to tourism?

A: Not yet. The tourism topic is not very present in our work, something that I realised recently. Maybe the theme topic of migration will appear, which is I think also important for the cities. It's not very present yet. So, for tourism itself, we don't use placemaking as place branding. It's way more than just making nice places for people. It's just making places together with people, so they function well. Not only that, but they also look well.

So, it's more for the community from your side, it's more for the community other than branding.

So not only thinking about the residents, but in general all the users, yeah, but including like we always include the voices people. So placemaking is really about creating a city together and that we strongly believe that this is the only way. It can work.

Q: You have not had any approach from the red-light district area?

A: No, we don't.

Q: So, you have had some successful projects. How do you measure the success of the **projects**? like do you have any like how much did it change from the previous liveability or previous state of the place and then afterwards so?

A: Well, I don't know if I'm able to give numbers, but I can give you an example. Its example of the building that this company was. Slowly with the placemaking activities, they managed to fill the building completely. They were like they had all those agreements in the whole process. So, for example, if we say that we managed to fill up the building 80% I think that was the number. Then would you create a door in the back on the ground floor because there was no floor door and the door is super on the wrong side. And for successful buildings you need doors. You need entrance. So then they created a cafe. Then they were saying it wasn't green. It wasn't attractive. So, they found a group of non-drinking Alcoholics as a support group. And they were looking for some activities. To do so, they started taking care of the rain garden and then, slowly initiatives were popping up. The building that was a mistake.

STIPO didn't buy the office space for themselves. They secured the space for themselves. They started thinking about it when already the not the cost but the not the price of the building but the yeah, let's say the price of the building. Was already too high, so from the building that cost 500. So half a million euro. After 8 years they sold it for six million. And so in the end, the people had to move out. But the good thing is that it was social like the housing, corporate social housing. So, they would like to sell this building, they invested in some other housing buildings initiative. So in the end it was good, but it was a bit stupid of us that we didn't secure it. It is in time, but then you like those concrete numbers. I mean if you need it, I can search. For it afterwards. But to me, I think that's a good example. Of course, that's not the goal to increase the increase, increase the value of the property, but it shows that with that kind of listening like and also implementing the vision that you think. City is better. It's not. Only you think this works better.

Q: I have one more question. We talked about the municipalities in your collaboration. Now if we move to the real estate or the private organisation, are there any requests to you from the place making perspective that maybe from the hotel organisers. Do you have any project that's especially focused on hotels or maybe building a park for the tourist whatever it is? Do you have any?

A: Could be. I'm thinking. I think it was Dave Venter. It was the centre of the city. Stand with a camper van on the main square of the city. In the end, it became car free. So, I would say this Definitely made it more tourist friendly as well, but it's not the most straightforward example.

Q: As you work as an architect. when you design, do you have a practical or your individual experience that what do people ask you? for example What do they want? Are there any preferences that attract tourists?

A: Let me think about this inland water project in The Hague. What we discovered during the observation is that one of the streets is just full of places where important Dutch painters lived. So, we try to make the area around the water more walkable. And how you do it is more workable. You do it more than removing cars in some places. Then you also make it more enjoyable. So, when you have some idea, the idea can also be like a route like a Dutch painter's route. And that's how you also think about tourism in this.

Q: How much of A focus do you have on sustainability when you do these placemaking projects? Do you really focus on that liveability? Or Is it kind of sustainable as well. How much of A focus do you have on sustainability?

A: Sustainability not only related to nature, but also just in general sustainability. I think that's something that we very much think on. Not easy, quick wins, but also we always aiming for some

bigger vision. And in those projects, there's always something about people wanting more nature, for example in the city greener. And that's just the need of people. And that's also something that we believe is important in cities and is good for climate change, so for the water retention and all those things. But it's just good also for the healthier societies for people to be active, but also for the mental health. So the top theme of green always like appears somewhere in ours. Projects and also the sustainability I think in terms of the financial structures. That's not my background because we have very mixed team, so have political scientists. I'm the only architect. The rest is like urban anthropologist. Urbanist so, everyone, brings something to the table, but some of our colleagues, they are very focused on that. Hardware and really coming up with a model sustainable model for financing the places. It's just it's international and it's focused only on placemaking, but not like. On practical implementation of using placemaking, but rather advocating. for example, we organise annual festival last year, it was in Spain, and we also participate in different European Union project and we have this like self-organised group, it's called place led development. And the last presentation, we organised webinars once in two months. And last webinar was with Alexandra Ziegner. She's a pacemaker from Switzerland. And she came up with sustainable placemaking model. I'm thinking about hotels because I think that's what they started with. That are not doing very well that are located in some smaller towns and they turned them into community places. For example, elderly people can rent A room there and its fully functioning facility, like a room for. Apartment for an elderly person, but it's also. And for example, around that pop out other initiatives. So, they had a restaurant that was not serving enough people to survive. So now it's the canteen and they offer quite cheap meals to the people who live in the building. And they also have this app, so it's a nice combination of digital and offline too. So they

have this app where the currency is your time. So, for example, you can ask for help like going somewhere and going to the doctor or fixing something in the house. So, you can also offer your time. And you can exchange those offers and needs in the app. But if the elderly person, for example, comes to the desk in that former hotel, they can always use the physical board and they can ask the person behind the desk to put the post for them in the app. So, the app is the base, but like it also works offline. And then I think it's online, so it's available. You can watch the web on our YouTube and I think it would be something very nice maybe for you because it is also about tourism.

Q: We find out about the city at the eye level, which is initiated by STIPO. What is it? Can you tell us briefly about it?

A: The City at the Eye level is the whole research programme. That we developed around the plinth. So the plinth I thought was like a fully functioning English word, but it turned out it's a steeper. Word so the plinth. Is exactly like the streets, but also like the ground floors of the buildings. So this is this whole concept. And knowledge and set of guidelines on how to create a city that would give you a good experience. So creating flat glass facades is bad for the experience because it's good to have something more 3D, something more soft because then people turn around and they also like to stop next to the facades more. If you spend more time, then you're also willing to spend more money, so I think that for tourism, it may also be important that you create something interesting, like shop windows. And also that softening that of the edge between the trends, yeah, the border between the private and the public is also important because I don't know putting some plans in or some band or just softening in any word. So all the like. And so we created. We wrote 22 books about that. We're working on the third one. So, the two books were, I

think 3 actually 3. So one is the city at eye level in the Netherlands, the other is just international. The third one is for kids. Who, especially perspective on kids and then. And we also offer training every year. So actually, next week we're starting with that one. Which is like every I think every three weeks or so, something like that. And there's also an international one in English in June and it's like a three day training. So on one day we focus on a sorry morning. In good places. There's like, I think, places, streets. And the last day is always about your practice. So people bring their own cases, something that they struggle with and then it's very collaborative. Workshop. And yes, that's a city at that level. And if their books are available for free, by the way, online PDF. You can download it.

Q: Are you local from Amsterdam?

A: I'm Polish, but I live in the Netherlands. It's been like 4 and half years now.

Q: What do you think about the tourism in Amsterdam? Do you go to the city sometime if you have time?

A: I live in Utrecht, which is outside of Amsterdam. When I moved I started disliking it. Because it was just too much and too annoying and I couldn't like it. I wanted to use the city in a normal way at a normal pace and it wasn't really possible. And then the corona happened. And then I think a lot of people realised the city could look differently. And I think that made this because there are all those. Changes. I think that the red-light district will move out at some point. I think that there are some changes, I think it will be implemented very soon.

So, I think that that time of pandemic really made people realise that it could look differently and maybe a bit nicer. Yeah, it's, you know, has the specific type of tourists that come to Amsterdam who often drink and smoke..

Q: You already mentioned this too much. What is too much? If you can explain a little bit more about why you started disliking it because it's too much. Can you just explain that too much? Did you live out of Amsterdam because you don't like it?

A: No, I studied in Utah, so that was natural for me to stay. And the housing prices. The rent that you pay for your room is much cheaper. Well, still not the cheapest, but better than in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, the amount of internationals, the percentage of internationals, just the switch, now there is over 50% of international people.

And well, I think it's the pace. So, except of I think often it's the for example during the day, the pace of Walking that, for example, makes it difficult to walk normally or get by, go by bike somewhere, because you really have to be aware of other people that they are maybe not taking the most obvious or not walking the way you would walk. And they are stopping more. And so on. Of course, like the Stars, they are more focused on. A lot of touristy stores also in the centre, so anything that you buy is overpriced. For a lot of people, they just use those different strategies to avoid places with tourists during the day or they don't go there in certain hours.

Q: Have you been to Amsterdam as a tourists?

A: Yes.

Q: What do you think that should be initiated in Amsterdam that makes it more safer and create bit positive image to the tourists?

A: So, it does not have positive image for the tourists?

Q: We mean to say that at least for some people. Many people sees amsterdam as a place for adult entertainment. From your opinion what do you think about the redlight district in relation to safety? We want so listen your opinion.

A: I dont go to the red-light area that often. I only go there if the people visiting me really wants to go there. I go to other places of Amstedam in general. Because I dont feel safe there and being a woman I dont feel comfortable in that area. There is no reason to go there. It is not even pleasant to walk there.

Q: Do you mean to say that except the red-light area other part of Amsterdam is safe?

A: Amsterdam is a big city. We also work in safety. We try to see what causes the lack of safety. For example lack of social control. So we try to stimulate the neighbourhood to open cafe until late. This gives the light in the area. And it is not the problem because there are alot of people in the centre. So those cafes and restaurants can earn from it. It is more precipitation of safety rather than something that really happens. Small things such as pickpockets happen in the centre because of tourists not being aware.

Q: What places do you suggest going in Amsterdam?

A: I suggest museums. Amsterdam is rich in history. IT might not be political anymore like Berlin. But it still has different histories from the past like the 1980's. And ofcourse the paintings and also

the art that I go for. I could suggest some restaurants. But the food in Amsterdam is not so international in comparison to other places. So, I suggest museums. Also, some placemaking strategies that have been implemented in the north are the go to place for me. Also the industrial places.

Q: How have the neighbouring cities of Amsterdam been impacted by tourism? Do they have tourists? For example the city you live in.

A: If we talk about the tourists in my place. The city I live in is Uttrek which is cute. And the tourists here are old German people. The people who travel to Amsterdam by the canal and people on bikes and stuff . They can come to Uttrek as well. Because it is pretty much the same except the weeds and the women in the window. so , sending the people with the interest of canals and nature to Uttrek could be a strategy to diversify the tourists.

Q: Being a placemaker, what strategies could you develop to make yourself feel comfortable? The reason to ask this is, you mentioned that you don't feel comfortable in redlight. So what could be done?

A: I was seeing a video yesterday, people are going to cheese factory and place with windmills and wearing the dress of 18th century. It doesn't exist now but it could give the experience. And maybe that is what people want. Actually separating these people with different interests and creating a clear route where people move where people visit more could help. But from the start you need to answer what you want to achieve? Is it less tourists? Or the tourist with specific interest?

Q: Let's talk about placemaking again. How long do you think the placemaking strategies takes to make it effective?

A: It depends. Sometimes we do sports activities. I have an example of “activating the parking spot for sports”. We did this near our hostel where tourists pass by. But those were not our target. And they do not seem interested in it. So, If we need to do something placemaking I suggest making some passive placemaking like lighting some places. That could help in engaging tourists for some time. For this you could collaborate with some design school and create some light in the building together with some house owners and it does not take much time. But using the placemaking to change the whole strategy of the city could take months. But our projects take some months. But there are projects going on for two years. Especially when we work in difficult neighbourhoods where the housing corporation dont listen and people are frustrated.

Q: We think we take an hour from you. Thankyou for the help. We are still in the data gathering process. Do you have any suggestions for the company we could talk to? We believe that now with this conversation you have an idea about what we are doing and which company is best to talk to in Amsterdam in relation to our projects.

A: I have a meeting in one minute now. But I will talk to my colleague and write to you on Friday. Good luck with your project. Thank you.

### **Interview 3**

Cikren from the Souvenir Boutique)

Q: Let's start the conversation with the introduction.

A: My name is Cikern. I am 21-year-old and I live in Amsterdam. I work at the Souvenir Boutique.

Q: What is your opinion on cannabis and Redlight tourism in Amsterdam?

A: I would say it is not one of the most important things, but it is one of the most known things in Amsterdam. Everybody comes here for the redlight of for the marijuana. So, it is very big here and I think most of the people want to try these things. And that's the reason I think for having a lot of tourism here in Amsterdam.

Q: What kind of tourists do you have here? Are they young, old?

A: Actually, it is really mixed here in Amsterdam. Even the older people come here and go crazy.

Q: As you have been here for a long time, how have you seen the evolution of Tourism in Amsterdam?

A: I think it increases a little bit in the youth. It has not really changed. Back in the days older people used to smoke but nowadays small children or younger people also smoke so that is the change I have noticed.

Q: How long have you been working here?

A: It's been more than a year.

Q: When you were young what was your thought about Amsterdam?

A: I remember Amsterdam was a big city, with growing we see different things like homeless people, Poor people but I look a little different now. But I still love Amsterdam. It is my home. I have been here my whole life. Growing up I did not realise about the red-light area, but marijuana was known for a long time.

Q: What is your opinion about redlight and cannabis? Is it good or bad for the people?

A: I think it is a good thing that a lot of tourists come here and check it out. This centre is known for the tourists. Here people from other cities also come for one or two days and enjoy themselves. So, I think it is good.

Q: Do you ever have bad experiences with tourists?

A: Lots of drunk people, people on heavy doses busy with clubbing and fighting. I think that is normal in tourist places.

Q: Do people do only soft drugs, or do they take high dose drugs as well?

A: Many people come to my shop and ask for cocaine. We don't sell that. I don't know where they get it from, but I can say there are people who do those things. People take truffles. This is the city for psychedelic products. Which I don't like but marijuana is ok for me.

Q: What inspires you to smoke? Can you say some advantages of smoking?

A: I started smoking because of a problem in my life. It actually helps me to calm down. Then I started smoking marijuana then it plays with your emotions. Then I started smoking hash and I am good with that.

Q: What is the hardest product that you sell?

A: The hardest is the gummies.

Q: How much do you sell those?

A: I do a lot because the people who regularly smoke want the hard one.

Q: Who buys the most? Tourists or locals?

A: Mostly tourists.

Q: Being a neighbour living in the and working in the redlight area, what is your opinion about the ladies behind the windows?

A: I pass by these windows everyday. I really don't notice it anymore. But I really don't think about it. It is normal for everybody. And I think it should be normal. But I think it should not be there.

Q: Why do you think it should not be there?

A: Because back in the days, the girls behind the windows used to make a lot of money. But nowadays people just come here to see. It is nothing major anymore. It just dies. I don't know but they could do something else for the people.

Q: What could be that other thing?

A: I don't know. They could be new a little bit

Q: What could be that little more in your opinion?

A: Maybe a little newer with everything. For example, the buildings are very old. Maybe help ladies with styling. Everything here is being renewed so I think this should be renewed too.

Q: Are you annoyed with this? We ask this because during the interaction with other local people they say that they are tired of this thing here in redlight area. What is your opinion?

A: For me it really does not matter. But for the older people they do not want this for their children. I just think people from the policy making level need to listen to what the people living here need.

Q: As being involved in the cannabis business. How important do you think this business is for Amsterdam?

A: I think it's very important.

Q: If you think this business needs to be changed. What do you think will you change for?

A: It's a good question but I don't know.

Q: If this shop needs to be changed, what will you change in?

A: Amsterdam is all about sex and cannabis, so I don't know what to change. But maybe a cheese shop or fries. Because fries are very popular here. But here people really love sex and drugs. People here like more negative than positive things.

Q: If you need to suggest your friends or cousins to visit what do you suggest doing in Amsterdam?

A: During summertime I would suggest taking the boat ride. I really love the boat ride. Ride the bike. Amsterdam has many parks where people sit and have barbecues. So, I suggest taking the boat ride bicycle. In winter ice skating is another option but I like summer more than winter.

Q: As you have been living here and we could see a lot of people, so the place does really look compacted. Do you think that you are missing the public spaces such as parks or the place to ride bicycles?

A: I live near Amsterdam, so I don't have that problem because the place I live is calm and relaxed. But I know the people living in Amsterdam have this problem. I have some family members living here in Amsterdam and they cannot cope with the loud noise, disturbances, and cars continue cleaning in Amsterdam. I think it is too much.

Q: What is their experience? Do they hate tourists?

A: I cannot say hate, but I think if it would be a little bit less than it would be better. There have been a lot of new changes in Amsterdam.

Q: What are those changes?

A: There have been a lot of economic changes here in Amsterdam. People are really struggling with their work. I can see people are going to their work but tourists are moving here and there creating disturbances for them to walk. So, I think they need to close it a little bit and open it again.

Q: As you mention you live outside of Amsterdam, is there any reason for that?

A: I already live there. The reason to choose to work here is, actually I don't want to see the people from my town anymore. I want to meet new people and have conversations. I have very good conversations with people about life and stuff like that. I learn a lot.

Q: The reason to ask this is because of the tourism people from Amsterdam are moving out.

A: At one point people get a little tired of Amsterdam. Personally, I cannot be here for the whole of my life. But I love Amsterdam. I have a lot of good and bad memories here in Amsterdam. It is important to accept both.

Q: What are those bad memories?

A: When I said I smoke marijuana, I went through a traumatic experience. I stopped smoking out of nowhere and I smoked a lot. That was really bad, and a lot of traumas came back and. Actually, it happened here on Central station. So I was going through a traumatic experience, I was not in a psychosis. But they thought I was in a psychosis or on drugs because a lot of people here are on drugs. So, they treated me like somebody that was on drugs because they actually didn't know what was going on. I was going through a lot of emotions, and it was just overflowing at that moment. I just felt like I was treated pretty badly. I was in the hospital. This makes me think maybe the drugs and things need to lower down a little bit because they don't even see the difference anymore. And when people are emotionally unstable or like on drugs or, you know,

psychosis or anything like that. That's the only thing that I really experienced. It was really pretty heavy. One of the heaviest things that I experienced here.

Q: Soyoumean,if someone living nearby just needs some kind of psychological help. Do they pretend this boy, or this girl is on drugs? Do they have this kind of stereotype?

A: Yeah, I think they try to come to people as calm as possible in the beginning. But eventually It just turns out to be a little bit rough. But for everybody, they just need to figure out another way. Maybe this starts at the roots and that's like the drugs and things. Butthey just won't do it.

Q: Do you think cannabis or Marijuana should be promoted like this as it is right now?

A: It's promoted heavily.

Q: As they promote marijuana gives you peace of mind and makes you wise. These kinds of logos that they're promoting cannabis or maybe the marijuana and weeds. Do you think this needs to be promoted?

A: They should shift it a little bit more into something else. Right now, it's just really major like drugs are really high. As I said, sex is really high on the Internet, games and things are really high here in Amsterdam. So, I just know people here are really money hungry. They don't really care about the mental state of people and how they are really doing, they just want to make money and that's It. Well, I don't know more. I think they should not promote it this much. But maybe for people that are going through stuff, it will help a little bit.

Q: Maybe people will just get addicted to this stuff and maybe go more mental than they already have it.

A: That is also something. People can figure it out when they grow up themselves and really push everybody's face right now. Also for the younger. I

I think they just really should focus on something more positive for the better. I'm going to think about it right now. I don't even remember when I started smoking.

Q: What kind of people do you encounter? Are they all nice or are they all bad? If we go to the percentage.

A: Most of the time they are nice. I am the moody one because I see there's so many people on the day that sometimes it's just too much, but they are nice. Sometimes they might look like they have an attitude, but maybe that's just where they grew up and how they are, but that's the only thing. I don't think any more of that. I'm just dealing with everybody even if they are mad or not.

Q: Through different research we find that the Dutch government is planning to reduce the sale of cannabis and soft drugs to demotivate the use of such products. Do you know any regulations that are implemented for your business?

A: Actually, I don't really know about that now. This is the first time I heard. But it might be better. They should really figure that out.

Q: If they stop selling to the tourists, all this cannabis and the prostitution, if they legalise it only for the local people living here, what do you think? What would it change?.

A: For the community, it would be much more relaxing here. Lot of people would not come here. I know that for sure. It would just be a little bit silent. More shopping stores would open. But nothing too major for real. For now, I am making money out of it. So no, not yet, But I would actually say, if they would change it, everybody is definitely going to move with it, even if it's going to be a hard time for some people. I feel like change is needed all the time. You need to evolve in life as a person, but also as a community. As a city it doesn't matter, we just must grow. So I am ready for change. I really don't. I don't mind if it doesn't change yet, but I feel like it has to change though. I do not know when it is going to be, but I feel like. Because people are evolving in life. So I feel like everything should change a little bit more. I think Amsterdam is also very known because of the history and the buildings and things like that. I don't think that should really change, but at least the district. That's really, we could do something bigger right now.

Q: I think my question is finished now. Thank you for your time.

A: Yeah, perfect. Thank you.

#### **Interview 4**

Munna ( Manager of Magic Mushrooms Amsterdam).

Q: Are you living nearby?

A: No sorry, I live too far. Away from here. I just came to work. Maybe it's better to ask for people.

Who are inhibitors of, you know, like the people who are living in the house?

Q: How do you see the different rules which are implemented by the government?

A: I have Heard that you know the government is changing the rules because the people living here are now running into some other place out of the city centre because of the too much noise. Now, people can't drink alcohol on the streets. and they're also not allowed to sell in this shop in this area after 7:00 o'clock in the evening, so you know a lot of changes are happening here.

Q: How do you feel about this red light district?

A: It's too busy. Sometimes, people are not so nice. People come here from all around the country. Sometimes, they don't behave well when they are too drunk, and they smoke too much. So, the people come here to chill out and overall it's good . It's not too bad I would say.

Q: What kind of businesses could have been here instead of a red light area to change the aspect of tourist?

I have not been here for a long time, so I have no idea when it started. I don't have any idea. Many people just come to visit the red light district. prostitution might be legal all over the world or in European countries. But local people usually don't visit the red light district. Most tourists go there. Lot of Indian people also go there as tourists, which I have seen since I am from Pakistan.

Q: What kind of customer do you encounter in this shop?

A: 98 or 99 percent of customers are tourists here. Because all of the stuffs here is for tourists and the stuff are also very expensive for locals. Most of the tourists are also young people. Because they come to smoke and they will do all the things here like marijuana, lighter, smoking stuff.

Q: Government is putting a lot of restrictions via different rules and regulations. How will it affect the flow of tourists in this area?

A: They are talking about it and there will be less tourists because a lot of tourists come to this area to smoke.

Q: How do you look at the rule which says only locals are allowed to smoke and tourists will not have access to cannabis?

That's in the coffee shops. I have seen almost every person enjoy smoking and lot of Dutch families come here in the car and smoke. Nobody wants to talk about it you know, maybe they don't like to talk about it openly.

Q: How far do you live from here?

A: I live 10 to 15 km away from here.

Q: Why did you choose to stay out of the city centre?

A: It is very expensive here in the city.

Q: Is it the only reason or it is because of the noise in the area?

A: Noise is annoying for the local people, but I don't have any problem with it.

Q: Accommodation is very high in the city because people want to rent a place to tourists rather than locals to get more money on a daily basis than renting monthly to other people. Your views on it.

Answer

Yes, there are few people who do that through Airbnb.

## Interview 5

Jil from the information center I amsterdam in Amsterdam central station

Q: Let's start with the introduction.

A: My name is Jil and I work here in I amsterdam information center.

Q: We talked to the office. We had a meeting and they sent us here. And said if you want to know in the field, you can just go here and ask the questions. As we know Amsterdam is known for red lights and cannabis and stuff. As you are a part of the campaign, are you trying to shift this image to something else? For example, the culture. Amsterdam has its own history, like the Tulip Garden and Are there any kind of campaigns from this I am Amsterdam that's going on? In order to discourage the negative image and see through the positive. Do you have any?

A: I know they set up this city card because of this region. It is only the cultural things. I could show you here. Here you can see a list of a lot of museums as well, where people can go. What I understood is that they hope in this way that people also go more to museums and go also more to cultural attractions instead of the red-light district.

Q: You live here, and you are from the Netherlands? What do you think about these people in the red light or the tourists? Are you OK with them?

A: I am From the Netherlands? Originally not from Amsterdam, but now I live here for five years. I think about the noise. I always avoided the red-light. To be honest I have been there a few times just to walk around. But normally I just avoid the city centre because I also don't live in the city centre.

Q: From our secondary and primary research we could find that most of the people living in the city centre are moving out to the countryside because of the disturbance. As you are working in the information centre in the central station. What kind of tourists come here and ask? Do they ask for cultural things such as museums or do they ask about the red-light district?

A: Actually, I was surprised because I've been working here since September and people always just ask about museums. I was expecting they are going to ask me a lot of questions about where is the best coffee shop or something? But actually, it didn't happen that often to me. So, they are really calm here. I think of this Information Centre. They ask about the museums and also the attractions of the region.

Q: What kind of tourists come here to ask? Is it younger or which age group?

A: It's really a mix. I think the tourists are in general 30 to 50 years, not really like my age around 20. I think it's not really common.

Q: Do you have any statistical data about the tourists in percentage who seek the information about different attractions. For example, the percentage of tourists asking about the museum, cultural heritage etc.?

A: I don't have any proper data from my own experience. I think even maybe 70% will ask for the import of city cards, but they did their research before. may be because of that. And then they just get a card and information. For the rest they ask just some questions. For example, where is the nearest post office? And of course, what I recommend doing in the city. But that really depends upon the person.

Q: What do you recommend?

A: I always try to find out what their Interests are. But then I also always recommend them to the North side. I Really like that. Also, maybe the lesser-known areas for example, the east part which I really like. It really depends on the person to be honest.

Q: We can see that you are also in the shop. Do you feel any impact on this business due to the change in the policies in Amsterdam? Do the government and municipality discourage the prostitution and cannabis? We went to the red-light district and what we saw was that we don't think it is going to stop in a day. But do you know about the strategies or policies that the government is trying to implement to discourage the negative image currently?

A: I am thinking that Amsterdam and partners have a lot of campaigns. But I don't know which campaigns they have. But I know you can find them on the website. Because I am also a student. So, I also just checked it.

Q. What do you study?

A: I am also a student in tourism. I am in my last year of Diploma. I am writing my thesis about Internationals living in Amsterdam. So, I know there are some policies, and you can definitely find them on the Internet, but I cannot tell you exactly which ones, but yeah, definitely go. Yeah, search on the website from Amsterdam.

Q: Back to the question again. You have been living here, not in Amsterdam particularly, but in the Netherlands. Do you see the changes from the past years in tourism? How has it evolved? we compare it with maybe 10 years ago or five years ago? The changes that might be positive and negative. What do you Think about it?

A: I think. During the Corona Times, of course it has changed, because then the full city centre was empty. It was a different experience. Before it was also like this. It is always not a difference, to be honest, it was already really full before corona times and now it is again pretty congested. I do not think there are a lot of changes.

Q: There are a lot of businesses besides Coffee shops and cannabis outlets. How has Amsterdam and Partners collaborated with all the businesses for diverse tourism?

A: Again, you need to ask the headquarter office how they do that. I just know that we have this card where we advertise or give information about the different museums. But again, it is the head office how they collaborate.

Q: As we can see you are busy at work. Thank you for the time.

A: I hope I have answered some of the questions and good luck with your thesis.

## **Interview 6**

Katrine from Red light secrets

Q: Let's start with the introduction.

A: My name is katrine. I am from portugal. I came to the Netherlands in 2019. The reason I chose the Netherlands is because in Portugal everything is not ok. For example, salaries, the rent. So I was a bit depressed with my life. I saw an opportunity here with a high salary. I visited Amsterdam a couple of times. That is the reason I moved here. The first job I got here was in Sex Museum where I am currently working. I got this job because my cousin also works here. It is not the dream job but it's ok with saving some money and to pay the bills.

Q: What is your opinion on this red-light area?

A: In the beginning it was shocking for me because it was something that I never saw before. Women expose and everyone looks at them. They were like zoo animals . I don't have any issues with the business itself. The main issues is how people see prostitute. Many times I have seen people making fun of them, joking about them in really bad way as they are toy or something. And people think about those ladies in such a way that they might have a very poor life and it is the only option. But it is not like that. There are many options in this country. Most of them like what they are doing. I have heard testimony from the prostitute who works in that street. So, I think it should normalise a bit more and see the prostitution as a job. Because in this country it's a job and they have the freedom to choose and let in. But in other countries they are treated as slaves. For example in my country there are also prostitutes which are illegal but still there are and they are treated as slaves. Here this is business. Those ladies have security, they are tested for diseases. They also have alarms if anything happens. I think that there are always one or two stories about

the women who are trafficked but the country and the municipality are doing everything for their security and betterment and not to let that happen.

Q: As outsiders we think that those ladies are working for someone. Do they work for themselves or do they get the commission?

A: No, they work for themselves. You see some windows that say room for rent. This means they can rent the room. They have working hours per day and can not work two shifts.

Q: We have been following different media and they are saying that the government is trying to discourage these activities by putting restrictions and exploring other aspects of tourism here in Amsterdam. But you say the government and municipality are doing everything for the security of those ladies. If the government wants to put restrictions, what could be other aspects they can use to flourish the tourism?

A: Since, there is a new mayor in the municipality. She has many ideas and she wants to keep the prostitution inside the building like in Germany. And from the first of April, if I am not wrong you are not allowed to smoke in the street. She wants to prohibit foreigners from buying weed in the coffeeshops. I think the red-light district is only a small part of Amsterdam. But for me Amsterdam is beautiful because of different architecture, because of the housing, there are so many museums here in Amsterdam. It is a beautiful city with canals. You have tulips now. The red-light area is the oldest area of Amsterdam. The buildings are old and they are maintaining and taking care of those throughout the city. One thing to mention and that's my personal opinion. One thing I hate here is that every two houses you have candy shops, waffle shops, coffee shops. So, if they stop giving permits to so many candy shops, waffle shops and give to, for example, clothing shops

could make it inclusive. And a bit more shared with locals. Because all the shops are here for the tourists and for Dutch people they think they are outsiders which I don't like. Of course I am able to live because of tourists. But sometimes I feel tourism is dumb. It's only sex and weed. But this city has a lot much more to offer. They can also be integrated to red light.

Q: If the government reduces the windows and reduces prostitution. What do you think ? Will it affect the business here?

A: I think it was in 2017, they reduced the amount of women in the windows. Then the business went down, the tourism went down and they suffered a bit with that. If they close the window down, then I think the tourism will go way way down, if they stop selling the weeds then also the tourism will go down. And I think there are a lot of dealers in the neighbourhood and that will be a bigger issue. So, if they stop the weeds then the number of dealers will be even higher. And that will be a major problem for the municipality and the police. This is my personal opinion.

Q: As you say , the window and the tourism went down. What did they do? Did they open again?

A: I don't know exactly. But I think they opened again. Some of the windows were replaced by the candy shop.

Q: Where do you live?

A: I live on the other side of the canal

Q: What is the importance of these businesses in the tourism industry? If you can number from 1-10 scale.

A: The reality is probably higher than I wanted. So, I would say 6. Because a lot of people come here not because of that. At the same time I would say they come for that. I want people who visit Amsterdam not to think of weeds and sex. They should think of other aspects.

Q: What are those other aspects?

A: Like I say canals, also for museums and bike riding.

Q: How safe do you feel living close to the red-light district and working here?

A: I really don't feel unsafe, but when we work at night especially on Friday and Saturday night, a lot of things happen. A lot of time we even have to close the museum because there happens to be a lot of fights. Even we need to call the police. Once there was a guy who came to me bleeding as he was stabbed and asked for help with me. It is mostly because of the drunk people and the drug dealers. I don't feel that unsafe and I can walk and ride my bike during the night as well.

Q: Can we say that the older people don't want to stay here?

A: Yes you can say that. I know some of the old people who don't want to live here because of the noise here. But some of them have a social house. So they have a long renting time. The people with families and the children live outside of the centre. Young couples, prostitutes, the people who work here live here. You don't see many old Dutch people living here.

Q: Have you heard any complaints from the local people living here?

A: They don't complain to me. But I have heard many. Most of the complaints are because of the trash. After every weekend the canals are full of trash. Also the complaints about the noise. People do not respect the time. I think people don't understand that people also live here. Yesterday I saw a couple who said "oh cars can go here". I said of course, it's a street and people live here. This is not a fantasy place for tourists, instead it is an actual place where people live. Once, my colleague

who lives here. He had some friends coming to him. Coupæ of tourists were following him. His friends asked the tourists “where are you going” and those tourists replied “we are just following you”.

People think that these buildings are all about windows and brothels.

Q: What is your opinion on changing these things? Do you think banners could change it?

A: There are some banners. But people don't care. There are banners saying “don't pee”, “don't shout”, “ don't drink alcohol”. But people don't care. I have the sense that , when people are on vacation they are disconnected. Then they dont have the notion of what is around them. When people are drunk or high then it is worse.

Q: What are the local governments or municipalities doing to solve these problems of trash and making the place sustainable?

A: Actually this is a good question and I also wonder about that. I don't know how to answer that exactly. It is the question that I wanted to ask the municipality. Because I can see many people throwing garbage in canals. They could have boats to clean. I don't know the budget but they can have some boats that can run here in the centre. Because it is really really dirty. Once I saw a man throwing a Tv in the canal. I think people should be fined often. The fines and rules are written there but no one is fined ever.I have never seen any one fined.

Q: Can we conclude that the government knows everything but they are not taking responsibility?

A: I think it is also very difficult when people who come are not from the best education. But they have many police roaming around but I think it is a global problem.

Q: Whom do you blame? Is it people's mentality or is it the drugs and alcohol?

A: I would blame that people are not aware. I would say that a lot of tourists who visit Amsterdam are dumb.

Q: As you said that people are not aware, what could make them aware from your opinion?

A: Fine people would be one of the solutions. There are trays for cigarettes in the street, but people throw cigarettes in the street. People have the mentality that if people do not throw the trash, then the cleaning people do not have a job. There are many things that I can not say.

The municipality doesn't fine people.

Q: What kind of people visit here?

A: The tourists visiting this place are mostly young tourists, tourists from the UK.

Q: Do the local people go to the windows for sexual activities?

A: Yes, I know some of the locals do. But it is mostly the tourists.

Q: You have been here for 4 years. What changes have you noticed in these four years?

A: The number of tourists is actually less compared to previous year. Four years ago the crowd was way more. During the corona there was no one. Now it's almost Easter and I remembered by this time it was always busy. I think there are two reasons for this. Because of corona. People might still be afraid of it. Another reason is, since most of the tourists are from the UK, BREXIT doesn't help. That's my perception.

Q: could it be the rules and regulations to restrict cannabis and the prostitute?

A: I think that is a good conclusion as well.

Q: Are there any policies that are being implemented to discourage prostitution and cannabis?

A: I don't have any idea on this.

Q: During the study in different media we could see that different protests are being held by the locals because they are disturbed by tourism. Have you seen such a protest?

A: I can see those protests sometimes. It is basically the old people. I do not understand what they are demanding because the banners are in Dutch.

Q: What do you think about the people living in these streets?

A: I can give an example from my colleague. He dont like it because it is much more noisy. And the streets are one-way so you need to walk extra if you need to go to the supermarket.

Q: If the municipality takes the policies to market and brand other aspects such as cultural heritage. What impact do you think would be in your job or in this sex industry?

A: For me it would not change too much. Because I can find another job. But I think that the museum that I am working at needs to exist. Because it is a good source of information even if the prostitutes are not in the window. But there might be a huge impact in this business.

Q: As you have been working here for 4 years. What do you think about the future of the prostitution business here?

A: I would say that it would not be that easy to close these windows. If they close it would create a clash. This is also one of the reasons for many tourists coming here. So it is going to be difficult to do that. If that happens then it might be in five or more years. But I think it will remain the same

Q: Are there any ways that local people are getting benefit from these red-light activities?

A: Some people might be. Some people who have money buy the rooms and rent it out for the ladies. So they make money out of it. So the people who have business here are having benefits. But I don't know about the other majority people. I think if things change then people would find other ways to adapt to the change.

Q: Thank you for your time .

A: Thank you .

## **Interview 7**

Omar (local plus worker in “Cafe De Pool red-light district” in Amsterdam)

Q: Let's start with your introduction.

A: I am Omar.

Q: A lot of people and the media are portraying Amsterdam as a red-light area and people know this city as a hub for sex and cannabis. What is your opinion?

A: They see like that. But Amsterdam is also full of museums and is famous for museums. It is true that the Netherlands is open for drugs and sex. But people come here for refreshment. They want to forget stress. They want to smoke, they want to enjoy and want to do everything. But for us it is not all people in Amsterdam smoke. I live here but I don't smoke. So people understand only the drug dealer lives here. But it is not true. The guy in my neighbourhood is from India and he sells mushrooms but he dont eat mushrooms. Amsterdam is very good for business also. You can make a lot of money in Amsterdam.

Q: Are the people smoking here creating the problems?

A: Yes, but only the tourists create problems. People here smoke cigarettes or hash and are habituated to this. So, they smoke but do not create problems. But the tourists take hash, mushrooms and they go crazy and create problems. Most of the cases reported to the police are of tourists.

Q: What do you want to say about the noise and disturbance created by the tourists here?

A: Most of the central part is noisy. It is the same for Belgium, Germany or wherever. The centre is always busy with people, cars and is always noisy. But the place where I live is a little bit out of the centre. So it is calm. It is mostly noisy here in the red-light area. This is because this place is in the centre.

Q: What about the local people living here?

A: Yes, the people living here in the red-light area have this problem. They complain about the noise of people and cars in the early morning. But they can not do anything because of the problem of housing in Amsterdam. There is no house because Amsterdam is a small city above the water. If you lose your house you need to sleep in the street. If the government gives you the house you need to accept it. Even if it is a studio apartment or room you need to accept it. Because there is not so much building. And there is not so much parking space.

Q: how expensive are those houses?

A: It is expensive. It's 700 euro or more. Even if it is a studio apartment it is more than 700 euro a month.

Q: What about the garbage? We talked to other people as well and they were complaining that tourists are throwing the garbage.

A: Yes, they are mainly tourists. Tourists do this kind of stuff. But the police and the municipality are doing as they can. For example if the police sees you throwing the garbage they catch you and ask for your details to fine you. Even for the tourists.

Q: What do you think about the government wanting to put restrictions on cannabis and the sexual activities in Amsterdam?

A: On weekends we get some problems because drunk people create fights. Government can not do anything. I think Amsterdam is the number 3 top destination in the world. This means that the government is making a lot of money from the tourists. This is business and they are trying their best.

Listen I used to live in the village before and if I put my trash beside the garbage bins then also I get fined 200 euro. This means that you should put your trash in the garbage bin. The Netherlands is a very strict country. Everywhere there are cameras. You have to be careful.

Q: how safe is this place?

A: The Netherlands is safe. In the beginning when I started living in Amsterdam it was a bit scary. But now it's safe. And you are used to it. The Netherlands is pretty safe. The Netherlands is safer than any other countries in Europe. I am telling you. It's honest. You will not get things stolen from your house. In the village you will probably get things stolen. But in Amsterdam you cannot get stolen.”

But for bikes and small things it might be stolen. My bike got stolen and reported to police but I have not heard anything from police about the bike. So bikes and small things might get stolen but not major crime in Amsterdam. They also have rules. If anybody is caught stealing the money or anything then they do not put you in jail instead they charge you with a lot of fine and make you work like a donkey.

Q: As you say that the Netherlands is open for sex and cannabis. But the people outside take this in a negative way and maybe many people do not want to come here because of this negative thought . What is your opinion on this?

A: If the people do not come here then that is not my problem. This is the problem of the government. But I know a girl who thinks the same and when she came here she was living here and studying here. The Netherlands has many universities, even the best university in Europe. Lot of young people wish to live here and study here. Because life here is good. But the people above the age of 40 or 50 think that this place is of drug dealers. IF you take an example of me, I am living in Amsterdam and maybe I think this place is the place of dealers. But if I live in Rotterdam I don't think like that because Rotterdam is not like that.

Q: What do the tourists look for when they come to Amsterdam?

A: There are alot of Museums here in the Netherlands and the majority of the tourists look for museums. It also has a long and very important history so they look for that.

Q: Do you think that the government should focus on marketing Amsterdam as a cultural aspect rather than cannabis and redlight?

A: The government can not stop these. They tried but the people don't like that. They went out and protested against those banned in cannabis and sex. People come here to enjoy, to take cannabis and to find women. They may have set some rules but can not stop this.

Q: The government is trying to sell cannabis only for the locals and not for the tourists as the mayor also says this. Do you think it will help?

A: I am living in the country and I know the country. They can not do this. It is not going to affect us. But this may affect the government as they are making money out of the tourists .

Q: Thankyou for your time and it is a wonderful help.Can I know where you are from?

A: Thank You man. I am from Turkey.

## Interview 8

(Amsterdam and Partners)

Q: We are writing our thesis on Amsterdam and tourism and its place making strategies and policies around the D Wallen area. So, we would like to ask you some questions regarding Amsterdam tourism and your activities, events and projects, whatever you do. So first of all, we want to ask you if we can record this interview for?

A: Ok. That's fine.

Q: Yeah. Thank you. So, let's start with your introduction.

A: I am Issis. I work at Amsterdam & partners as a PA intern. So, I work with partners from Amsterdam and partners, and I connect with them and sell them like advertisements. For example, I work closely with the colleagues for the campaigns, so I do know globally where it is about. If you have any questions that I cannot answer, I will write them down. And I will. Ask the campaign management if they would like to respond to that and I can send that to you. So, that's what I do and I'm here today to help you guys.

Q: Yes, thank you for the help. Are you living in Amsterdam? Are you from the Netherlands?

A: Yes, I am from the Netherlands. I am not living in Amsterdam. I do follow my study there. I live by myself in Almira. That's like a 20-minute drive from Amsterdam. So I live in the metropolitan area.

Q: So, like being there, what do you think about this red light area and sex and drugs or cannabis? Basically, what is your impact on that? Like, how do you think about its image?

A: Well, it is a tough one. The city itself, it really doesn't like the tourists that it attracts. We, as I'm sure many partners would like people to come to Amsterdam to discover the culture, to see the area around it and not just to come and drink a lot and do a lot of drugs and go to red light district also because it is very in the centre and it gives a lot of noise complaints and that's not so nice for the people who there. So yeah, it is something that we want to start to get out of the tourists, but that's harder to do because it is like it's not a brand but that is how people perceive Amsterdam is red like district there. But, we don't really want those guests anymore because of the complaints that we get from the civilians.

Q: What are the types of locals who are against it? Any examples like that? How are locals raising their voices against those tourism activities?

A: We are trying as Amsterdam partners to have a lot of different campaigns. For example, we had a campaign like a year or two ago. We are an organisation that works with the municipality. We are not the municipality. so, they come to us and they say we really do not want those types of guests anymore. How are we going to try and resolve that? Problem and then we are going to look at how we are going to do that. One of the examples is that we are now working on the idea that only locals are allowed to go to the coffee shops which means that tourists cannot go to the coffee shops anymore, which makes them not want to come to Amsterdam anymore. So that is the way that we are trying to resolve the problem. But we also have like better campaigns we have like

these metrics boards and then we put on posters to decrease the interest of going to that type of places and we have a lot of city guides and that promotes the metropolitan area so that people are coming to see the metropole and not just go to the city centre so that that's a few examples that we are trying not to get those kind of people to come to Amsterdam.

Q: How effective do you think this has been? Can you see changes in the flow of tourists?

A: How effective has it been? Well, I do not know any numbers. That's one of those questions that I could ask from the other department if you would like to know a bit more about that. I have written that down to ask my colleagues, if they write statements about that.

Q: When we see your website, we see that you are a nonprofit, public private organisation that works for the metropolitan. If you are working for the public, what do you think about the cannabis outlets? If the tourist does not come, then those shops that sell coffee and cannabis might have a negative impact on their business. How do you address this kind of problem? If businesses are not allowed to sell cannabis to tourists, it will be a big problem for them. How are you going to tackle such challenges?

A: Yes, I get where you're coming from. We have a lot of these kinds of shops in the city centre to an extent that you can find them sometimes at every corner of the street. It is a difficult question

because of course they get money, and the city gets money from it as well. But the people who live there are just getting annoyed by it because it does not draw a good kind of tourists. So yeah, It is not my section to really talk about that kind of stuff. But personally, this is not Amsterdam & partners. Personally I believe that there are already too many of these kinds of shops and if there would be a little less, there would still be enough income just from locals. If you ask me so, that is my answer, but that is not Amsterdam & partners answer

Q: So, you are also focused on branding and marketing to improve the reputation, the image of the city. So how do you balance the needs and desires of tourists and the locals and businesses? How do you balance between that?

A: That's a good question. How do we balance that? We work with partners, so that means people who work in the Amsterdam metropolitan area and have a business they can contact us if they could be partners and we do not necessarily have a very strict rulebook where they need to live. But we do have minimums. For example, Uber is already a really big company. If they are going to be partners with us it doesn't add up actually because they're already a really big company. So how we balance it is more, I guess getting the small partners to come to us. Provide say we have two different types of target groups. We have the locals, and we have three businesses and tourists. The businesses come to us, and it is very nice for them and also for tourists, as the locals can find them on our site. we make it by providing information via an English site. We have a Dutch side also where we promote a little bit more of different things than we do on the English side. So, I

don't really know how to say the balance is there, but because we work with all the groups, we know what all of them want and we can provide that to them by advertisements, by putting them on the website, making lists so locals can find them. But making different lists so that the tourists can also find them and in that way, we really balance it out, I guess.

Q: Have you had any projects specifically focused on portraying the image away from this D Wallen area?

A: Yes, for the locals we have different kind of campaigns than we have for the tourists. For the locals, for example, we really try to get the local go the cultural sites that are maybe not as commonly known to them. So, what we have like the 24. Hour off. Amsterdam is made in different kind of sections like Amsterdam north, Amsterdam South. Then, we have 24 hours and this time it's going to be north. There are lots of museums that are going to be open for 24 hours where people can come. and sometimes it's even free of charge so that people from other sections of Amsterdam can go to north and see what is there. We also have for the tourists as well. We have a way of spreading them so instead of saying you have like Amsterdam and then you have some Fort and then you have Almera and then you have other places. If people hear that they're like I don't know. I just want to go to Amsterdam. So, what did we do. We made a few plans. That is Harlem, which is next to the beach. We have made the city guide and there it's called Amsterdam Beach. We have castles in Melgabear people don't know that place. How do we call it? We call it

Amsterdam castles so that way we spread the tourist because they think that this is the part of Amsterdam. They go to the other places, even though it's not officially Amsterdam, but they fall into the metropolitan area. So that's one of the biggest ways we have campaigns making people go out of the city centre.

Q: So you have distributed the tourists by promoting these smaller places. Do you have any data like the flow of tourists in those places or growth of tourists?

A: I don't know if we have them. I can ask if we have any records and send them to you.

A: We talk about a lot of campaigns you've been working with the public sector as well. Is there any kind of policies that the public bodies initiate to shift its image away from prostitution and cannabis

A: The thing or image that you have in the city is not going to change in a day. We have been working on our image for the past 20 years already I guess. But the thing is that we have the right red light district and the cannabis which it's very open and nice . It's not going away by day. So, we work with a lot of different kinds of campaigns every time. The policy that we have in there is companies that are coming to us, they need to be Sustainable. So it's about the reputation being better and if a company is only located in the city centre, of course you need to have some things

in the city. But if it is only based in the city centre, then you will never have people going to spread and not never going away from the red light district in the cannabis areas. So that is a policy that we have that we have a lot of different partners outside of the city centre and in other cities. So we can get them there out of the red light, so that's like the biggest policy, I guess.

Q: Can you please tell us about the campaign that you have worked on with the campaign name I Amsterdam? I think it is very famous as well and what kind of messages did you want to give to the world from that I Amsterdam campaign?

A: The logo of the I Amsterdam campaign is actually more based on the Amsterdam people because I am Amsterdam. The thought is that we want people from Amsterdam to be nice, caring, sustainable and inclusive. The people who come here, who only do drugs and alcohol and make a lot of disruption. You cannot call yourself an amsterdamer because. You're here to Party and you are not just living with us. That is where the quote I Amsterdam came from to be more inclusive. To the people who want to come here and enjoy their stay mostly on a cultural basis and not just go here to go ham and have a nice night out, but that's why we had Amsterdam.

A: So is it to separate those types of tourist and the young and the hippie tourist apart from the other type of tourist and locals?

A: Yeah. So it's, it's like if you come here and have a nice time and you're being respectful to the locals and respectful to them for the environment, then you can call yourself someone who's from Amsterdam because you care about the cultural heritage. If you come here to get drunk. Yeah, that's not the idea of what we like to see for someone who is living in Amsterdam, so also not to see tourists and then you cannot call yourself an Amsterdammer. That's the idea behind it.

Q: You mentioned sustainability. you give us some examples like how are you working on the sustainable projects around those areas?

A: The sustainable thing which we say is more of the liveability, the attractiveness and the prosperity of the city. One example is that we had bikes in the Netherlands, we called them bare bikes. you can with like 6 people you could sit on a bike and then there was a crate of beer in the middle which you can drink. They typically went through the city centre. That was two things. What was wrong is they didn't really know how to bike so they were in the way of people and also they were drinking a lot so if they could get off the bike. They were just drunk and they would just toolbar into the red light district and get into the shop. So one of the sustainable things that we did is say ok we do not want these kinds of bikes anymore in the city centre and they are actually forbidden now. So yeah. That's one of the examples. That I have right now.

Q: About social sustainability, like how do you bring balance between the locals life and the tourist life? For example, the prices must be higher for the tourists of the local goods and vice versa.

A: Not really. We are thinking about making it unavailable for tourists to buy cannabis but it will be possible for locals. We do not have price varieties, so it's not that if I go to the shop I get a product for 10 and if you go to the shop you get for 15. That's not how it works, we. If you go to. What do you call it ? Yeah, there sometimes might be a price difference. That's because Dutch people sometimes have cards for museums, so they get a discount. Or they work as I do it and partners so they get a discount with the partners but. Mostly the prices for tourists and locals are the same.

Q: What kind of challenges do you face when you implement these kinds of strategies, for example, banning cannabis to tourists?

A: There's always a challenge with everything and it varies a lot from campaign to campaign. We don't want cannabis. So, we say we're not going to give the tourists anymore. But then the tourists are going to complain, of course, but the locals will be happy. We want the world to look like Amsterdam without cannabis.

Q: What kind of placemaking strategies are you working with for diverse tourism?

A: The biggest regime we use is by spreading the tourists by naming the places differently. That's one of the strategies that we use, and Another strategy is promoting. When people are coming to

Amsterdam, most of them get to Amsterdam central where we have a store there. people typically go there to ask information about where to go, and then we also like to spread them. We also have a product that we offer. That's the Amsterdam city card. you can buy it from like 24 hours to 120 hours if I'm correct. It's an app and you can see all the highlights, but the highlights are typically spread as well. So that is one way we spread those tourists. I think those are the biggest strategies. We have to spread tourists from the city center, so the city cards, the naming places differently and just giving information at the Amsterdam city shop.

Q: Can I get a name or two of naming the places differently? Can you give me one or two names that we can find on the Internet about the name?

A: One of the names that we have is you Saltford, it is at the beach and people don't know it and don't go places because they don't care. We have called it Amsterdam beach now because people see Amsterdam, they see the beach. They think I want to go there. Another name that we have is old Dutch, that is like above Amsterdam, it is falling down sand down. It's like cheese making clogs, dikes, that kind of stuff. That's what we call old Amsterdam or Old Holland. And people go there because they have a typical few and then they see it and then they go there. So that's two of the ones. But I can send you brochures of it as well if you want.

Q. I want to add more like we are also visiting Amsterdam on the 27th of this month. I mean this Monday. So, if I ask you like there might be other organizations that are working in tourism and like shifting its image from negative to positive?

A: That's a really good question and Amsterdam partners were actually like 4 different businesses in Amsterdam. We had the Amsterdam metropolitan area and 3 more. Amsterdam partners is actually the only metropolitan place if You have questions.

Q: You know a lot of the international media is also portraying Amsterdam's image just based on this red-light district and cannabis. As a tourism organization in Amsterdam. How do you tackle such a situation? Could it be a marketing policy or promotion of other tourism activities?

A: We have two Instagram accounts, one for locals, other is for tourists. so we are very busy on our Instagram, on our Facebook, on our twitter, people with questions, we answer them. What we also have is a press release office. So, if we have notification of someone who is from social media and has a lot of followers or someone who's literally from the press and wants to make a tour through Amsterdam. We give them information and say you want some information. Come to us. We give you a whole day of planning and say we need to go and what to see and we typically if they are going for three days, we also send them to another city close by. So, we can promote not just Amsterdam, but the whole metropolitan area that is amazing to watch. That is the biggest strategy we have is like the press office. So, people come to us for information, and we are very busy on our social media every day with questions and promoting different aspects of Amsterdam.

Q: When you say local residents are against the prostitution and cannabis. But there are other locals as well who are involved in businesses in the red-light district who might be in the favor of continuity of prostitution and cannabis because they are generating income. How do you see it?

A: Not completely true. We have a lot of bars in the red-light district, they like people to come there and have a drink and be fun and entertaining. We are not against people who want to have a

drink. The problem is that a lot of people go too far, and they drink too much and then they go pee in the water and against the buildings. The business also likes to see a bit of a change, like of course they don't want everything to be gone. But they want to see a bit of change in a way that there are responsible people coming to have a drink, have a few and then get back to the hotel or go to another area or whatever. So, it is not our idea that people who come here could never have drinks anymore or you know, but it's just to get them out of the city center, respect them for arguments and the locals and that is our whole campaign actually just respect.

Q: How do you ensure these kinds of things? When people go to the bar, they can just get drunk and when people get drunk, they do stupid things. What kind of strategies do you apply to make a good environment where tourists would not do such things.

A: Well, for example, we had a banner campaign, I guess a year ago. The banner shows a picture of a man, he had his daughter pulling his hands. He said my daughter is going to bed now. Could you be quiet? That's one of the examples of a banner that we had to try to implement to the tourist brains. I know you're here for fun. But just remember there are people living here. And that is one of the things that we did try to get them away and had just a few drinks and then not be annoying. I think that's one of the biggest campaigns that I was also involved in and I knew of. We had a couple more of these kinds of campaigns. We also have boards on the bridges, and they say like if you pee in the water, you get a fine. If you litter, you get a fine and then the amount of the fine as well. So, people will know that if I litter, there is a possibility of getting fine and they're walking a lot of police there to keep everything in control. They are a bit more aware of their responsibility as well the consequences if they do not follow. So, we have the emotional side like the family and the harsh side with police will get here just like normal.

Thank you for your time.

## Interview 9

Zamar (Tourist from Jordan)

Q: Can I get your introduction?

A: I am Zamar from Jordan. I have been in Amsterdam for 7 days now.

Q: What do you think of Amsterdam as a tourist? Do you think it is safe?

A: Generally, I feel safe. But it also depends upon the people how they react.

Q: have you been to the red-light district?

A: I have passed through it but I have not been there. But I saw plenty of people going there on the weekends.

Q: What kind of people have you seen going there according to age group?

A: I have not particularly observed the age but it is a mix.

Q: What is your opinion that people think Amsterdam is a hub for cannabis and red-light?

A: The first point of the people who have not visited Amsterdam think that Amsterdam is for weeds and sex. But when people like me visit, they don't think that Amsterdam is only for such activities.

Q: We can see a lot of people here and what is your thought on this? I ask this because A lot of people are moving out because of tourists here and making this place more crowded.

A: If you ask me personally, I don't want to live in the center.

Q: In Amsterdam, the government is trying to put the rules and regulations in cannabis and sex. As a tourist what do you think of this? Do you think that tourists will still visit Amsterdam?

A: I believe that you cannot discriminate against tourists. If locals can do it, why not the tourists. If it goes it needs to go both. Otherwise, it will be unfair. Maybe they can limit it to certain place where people can smoke.

Q: Are you aware that the local people are protesting against tourism because they cannot tolerate the behaviour of the tourist?

A: They cannot do anything. If they do this, then it is not good for the tourism industry. Maybe they can explore other things such as architecture and canals for example and market them. Then it will help to minimize the concept of weeds and red-light.

Q: In general, our understanding is Amsterdam is popular for sex and weeds and is good for the young tourists or backpackers. What opinion do you have, if Amsterdam targets middle aged or old age tourists? Do you think it will help to come out of the concept of sex and drugs?

A: I don't know how much they get from the backpackers. If they get a lot of money from the young and backpackers, then it is hard to shift.

Q: As per our study of cruise tourism and family tourism, they spend more than backpackers and young tourists.

A: I do not have the exact answers for that. If other people spend more than they should target them. But I think they cannot stop the prostitution and cannabis tourism. Rather they can shift to another place from the center.

Q: Being a tourist, would you like to go to the red-light or do you prefer to go to red-light or cultural and natural sites?

A: I prefer to go to the sightseeing and the museums rather than going to the red-light area. But you know, these red-light and cannabis are going viral. So, they cannot just stop this.

Q: Do you think protesting is a good idea to stop such kind of tourism?

A: For me, the people who are protesting against the red-light and cannabis should embrace other aspects of what they have instead of protesting. They should market other things that can be done in Amsterdam. With protesting they are marketing more than stopping. So, instead of only focusing on redlight they should focus on marketing other things which will eventually less market the red-light and cannabis. And people start to see other things in Amsterdam. They can integrate cruise, cultural, natural tourism together with red-light and cannabis tourism together. Because some groups of tourists want to visit the cultural place where some groups want to visit the red-light. So, they can integrate all forms of tourism so that it can contribute to the tourism industry.

Q: Do you smoke? It might be a personal question, sorry.

A: No, I don't. I don't even smoke cigarettes.

Q: The reason I ask is because we see the people smoking and getting high and staying in a certain place and creating the disturbance.

A: That is the reason I said that the government should have a certain place to smoke rather than allowing it in all places.

Q: Thank you for the time. It is a good help for us.

A: Thank you, but other people might be different from me. Maybe other people say we want to smoke and need red-light. So, it depends upon the tourists.

## **Interview 10**

Kalyan (Restaurant manager of the Yeti restaurant)

Kalyan is of Nepalese origin living in Amsterdam and is a manager of Yeti Restaurant in Amsterdam. As he speaks Nepalese we talked with him in Nepalese language. We briefly described the purpose of our study and talked to him about Amsterdam's reputation, tourism, and business.

Q: We are here to study the negative image of Amsterdam because of cannabis and sex. Do you think this city has a negative image?

A: I don't think it has a negative image. It might be because it is banned in other countries and is open in this country. And many people come here for these things. I think they legalised it here because they have done research in cannabis and thought it is good for the economy and for tourism.

Q: How long have you been living here in Amsterdam? And how long have you been working here?

A: I have been living here in Amsterdam for 20 years. And I have been working in this restaurant for more than 5 years.

I want to add that this society is something different from Asian society. From the asian mentality we think that the country open to sex and drugs is not a good country to live in. We think it is undisciplined. But the other people from other countries like Europe do not think in that way. That might be the reason you say that Amsterdam has a negative image.

Q: As a business, how dependent are you on tourism?

A: 90% of the business is dependent on tourism. Not only this restaurant but the 90% of the business in the city center are dependent on tourism. Only the remaining 10 percent are from the people living here.

Q: The government is trying to put restrictions to discourage the use of cannabis and redlight district. For example, the mayor is saying that they are going to sell cannabis only for the locals. Also, they are trying to reduce the opening hour of the windows. What is your thought on this?

A: I also heard the news of shifting the red-light district. But I don't know where they are going to shift it. But if they want to stop this, they cannot. This is because it is not new here; it has been like this for many years. And if they try to stop then other problems may arise like sexual assault and even rape. Legalized red-light, these crimes are very low because if the people want some sexual intercourse they go there and finish it and it is not a problem.

Q: As a business, how do you think you will be affected if the government will put restrictions on such activities?

A: I think it will not affect as much because of EU tourists. Because these tourists come here for its cultural and natural beauty like the canal. So, it might not affect that much. But the tourists who come here only for drugs and sex will affect us a bit. The tourists from the UK are the ones who are mostly here for red-light and cannabis. And they are the ones who create unwanted noise. Now they are out of the EU which also makes the flow less of UK tourists.

Q: The people of Amsterdam are protesting with the demand that they don't want tourists because tourists make their place unlivable. What do you think about this?

A: Not all the people of Amsterdam. It is basically the old people who go to church. There is a church near that street where ladies portray themselves in the window. So, the old people going to church don't want to see such things. That is the reason why the old people are protesting. But not all the local people living here protest against them. But as I said the government is planning to shift that. It will help to solve the problem.

Q: As a local living here in Amsterdam for 20 years, what is your opinion of the red-light district? Do you think it should run in the same way as it is now? Or should I put some restrictions or ban it?

A: I think if it could be shifted to another place then it would be the best. Because the people who want such things will go there and will not disturb the people living here. So the people here can live in peace. And I think the government is planning that. If the government implements that, it will be fine.

Q: have you encountered any sort of misbehave or fight from the tourists in the street?

A: No, I have not seen such things. But the problem of garbage can be seen in the street. If you just walk to the street, you can see a lot of garbage. But me as a person and the business we are

happy with tourists. Also, the government is good here. They have the system for licensing the shops and they also take suggestions and consult with the business if they are planning to implement some policies. So we are happy.

Q: Thank you for the time and a nice talk with us.

A: Thank you for visiting our restaurant. Wish you a good luck with your study.

## **Interview 11**

Frank and Renee (Tourists)

Q: Why did you choose Amsterdam to visit?

Frank: It's a place we've never been before and they're having an art exhibit of a painter that we really wanted to see and they are collecting his (Vermeer) paintings. They have collected 28 of his 34 paintings. This is the biggest program ever of his art.

Q: Have you travelled to any other places here?

Frank: No, we came directly here from the U.S. and going back and probably wouldn't have done it except for the Vermeer painting.

Q: When you think of Amsterdam as a destination, what comes first in your mind?

Frank: Museum. It has Van Gogh Museum as well and several others. I have been reeling about it a lot in past weeks so I couldn't go back and tell you what I knew about it 3 weeks ago and be certain of what I knew. But I've learned a lot about the city recently and it's a very fascinating city.

Renee: We always wanted to come to Amsterdam. Yeah, we just never were.

Q: But you didn't know what to look for before. But only you knew after your research?

Frank: Yeah, we knew, yeah. You know, and we knew about the canals, yeah, but not as much. We didn't realize how many canals there were and how large it was. A city it was with respect to the water. We've been to Venice several times and we really love Venice and we thought Venice was the city of canals. Amsterdam has even more.

Q: When we see the canals, the water is a little bit dirty and maybe not as attractive as you think.

Frank: But Venice is the same. I mean, Venice, the water is not clean either. And it's probably done more damage by tourists than any other place on Earth. And think about it, because it gets nothing but tourists in Venice.

Q: How do you like the city? Like walking around the city?

Frank: We've had a nice time. We wish the weather were better. I mean, there's no sunshine and we kind of expected that, but it's still sort of disappointing. Nice to have a day of bright sun.

Q: How do you compare the weather here and the US district you live in? Is that compared to the US?

Frank: Whether in the US there's more days of sun I think I know are here I think they have more rain.

Q: Which state are you from?

Renee: We're from New York. I've heard that this is called the San Francisco of the United States. You know what it's called the taking of San Francisco. Cooler and Rainier and apparently you get a lot of rain here.

Q: The tourist that we are trying to target is like the people who go to the red light area and those tourists.

Frank: Yeah, we're not going there. And you know, I mean, I'm curious about it, but it's not an important thing to me. Yeah, I guess we're not. We're not like most tourists. We didn't come to this. Most tourists, I think, come to Amsterdam as part of the tour of several other cities.

Renee: It's extremely unique. I haven't seen anywhere else the amount of bikes I have seen here. And how fast they ride their bikes. We don't have bikes like this and nobody here wears a bike helmet, it's crazy. We were walking on the sidewalks where the stairs go down, there's no railings. If you don't pay attention you fall right in there. A lot of instances people could get hurt, lack of helmets is astounding.

Frank: Renee was looking how close to the canals the car was parked. We did one of the canals yesterday, people fall in as they come drunk and try to get in their car and miss the steps and fall in.

Frank: You know one of the things I have been reading about Amsterdam is their attitude about tolerance of different kinds of people and also the tolerance of people who are not within the law like the cannabis trend. They have such a strange approach as they say that the drug use is illegal but at the same time, they have these places to sell the drugs. They apparently do the same sort of thing with the prostitution too. It seems like they won't make the rule about pharmaceuticals, I

don't know but it appears like that, and they don't want to be regulating people like other cities probably would be more likely to do.

Q: What do you think about Amsterdam, what do you like and what do you think could be better?

Renee: Well, obviously canals, they are beautiful even in this weather. That's impressed me and I keep thinking how this place must be when the sun is shining and the flowers are out. It's gotta be amazing. I expected it to be a beautiful city and it is.

Frank: One thing that disappointed me I am gonna say is, on the canals what we've learned yesterday is that back in the 70's in the last century, people who lived there couldn't afford to live elsewhere in Amsterdam because it was cheaper to live in those houses close than it was to live elsewhere. And they allowed them to dock without charging them taxes. Tolerance in the city was wonderful. Now, they are one of the most expensive places to live because those houses were over a million Euros because of the taxes they've imposed on them now and they wanted to get them under control and make them more expensive for the people who live here. That's sad in a city that seemed pretty wealthy to me. You want a place where people who are not so wealthy would be able to live cheaply.

Renee: Well, they got out of control. I didn't realise there were so many house boards on some of the canals. And the bikes surprised me.

Q: If I can ask , the red light district here makes a lot of money for the tourism industry. If you were in charge, what would you do? Would you like to shift the image of the red light district to the cultural aspects or would you let it be like that?

Renee: I mean, there's something to be said about regulated prostitution. As opposed to having someone on every street corner. It's safer for the women and safer for the industry to be regulated.

The way they advertise is maybe a little aggressive. They've lived with it for so long. It's now harm with it I wouldn't mind.'

## Appendix 2; Photographs Gathered in Amsterdam



