

Destination Branding for Business Tourism Market

– A case study of Domaine de Miravel –



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Aalborg University, June 6th, 2012

International Marketing – Master's Thesis

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Keystrokes: 223.491

Standard Pages: 93,1

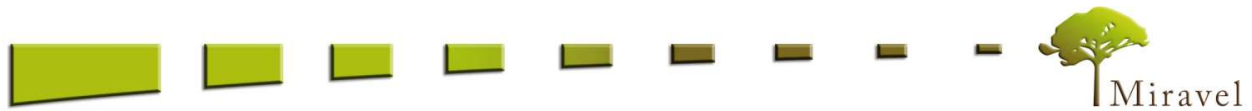


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Abbreviations

BET	Business Event Tourism
BT	Business Tourism
COO	Country of Origin
CVBs	Convention and Visitor Bureaus
DMOs	Destination Management Organizations
LT	Leisure Tourism
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events

Abstract

The seasonality of the leisure tourism market is a big issue for many SMEs from the hospitality industry. Tourists are travelling mostly during the three summer months June, July, and August and the rest of the year tourism market is not very active, therefore many SME's are negatively affected. Domaine de Miravel wants to overcome this problem through entering a new segment of the tourism market: business tourism. This requires a new branding approach over Miravel in order to attract the business clients. The business tourism literature showed that business tourism has several niches with different characteristics and needs. By comparing Miravel characteristics with business tourism niches characteristics, two niches were identified: seminars/trainings niche and incentive niche. The following step was to look into the branding theories from the tourism fields and identify key elements contributing to a strong brand and use them in order to test the branding potential of Miravel.



1 Introduction

This Master's Thesis is based on the case study of Domaine de Miravel. The project writing process was combined with a five months internship in the company Imagics which manages the property of Domaine de Miravel. The objective of the internship and therefore the objective of this dissertation is to brand Miravel as something much more than a simple beautiful holiday destination for tourists. Miravel has a rich history behind and the current owners have a special vision for the property wanting to share Miravel's physical and spiritual beauty with as many people as possible. Therefore, they want to reach new customers. This chapter introduces the reader in the case study details of Domaine de Miravel, presenting also a more economical reason for this strategic move to enter a new market. Further on, the research questions will be presented and integrated into the structure of this dissertation.

1.1 Presentation of Domaine de Miravel – Case study

1.1.1 Property

Domaine de Miravel is a French family owned property used for holiday rentals, with a capacity of up to 34 persons. The Domain contains three different types of accommodation rentals. First, there is a manor house with 9 double and triple rooms. Second, an extra four double rooms were built as a separate annex for the manor house and used as Bed and Breakfast (B&B). Third, there is a separate two levels apartment – known under the French term: gîte¹ – with two double and one single room.

¹ <http://www.larousse.com/en/dictionnaires/francais/g%C3%A9te/37005>, 30.04.2012, 11:30 (Place where one finds a place to live, where one usually sleeps temporarily)



1.1.2 Rentals

Tourist can be accommodated at Miravel under three different types:

1. The Gîte – for small families or groups of friends (maximum 5 persons). The rentals can be made only by week, starting from Saturday to next Saturday;
2. The B&B rooms – for single, couples or small group rentals (maximum 8 persons). The rentals can be made for occasional short stays and outside the high season – when the manor house is rented these rooms are usually available just for the group that rented the house if requested, otherwise they are kept empty. In this type of rentals, the breakfast is included;
3. The Manor House – for large families and groups of friends who want to spend a nice relaxing time together. The rentals are preferred to be made by *week* – starting from Saturday to Saturday – or, outside the high season (see Appendix I), *long weekends* – starting from Friday to Monday/Tuesday;

1.1.3 Services

Under the normal renting condition, the company is responsible just for the following services:

- Administration of rental documents;
- Cleaning the living spaces before and after the rented period;
- Internet, TV and telephone connections;
- Proper conditions for swimming pool usage;
- Serving breakfast – just in the case of B&B rentals.

Under extra charge, the company can provide also*:

- Catering services;
- Daily cleaning services;
- Organization of cultural and creative activities on location.

*In the case of holiday rentals the extra services are rarely requested.



1.1.4 Equipment

The Domaine is well equipped and offers a large variety of indoors and open air activities. Tourists can choose from reviewing a very good collection of classic literature and personal development books in three different languages (French, English, and Danish), exercising their piano skills, enjoying a pool game or a table tennis match. Moreover, the terraces and gardens offer magnificent views and a large pallet of Mediterranean plants and flowers.

For the outdoor activities, the Domaine has a swimming pool built over the river Orb with a view towards Orb's Riviera and red calcareous mountains, a safe playground for children, a special terrain built for the famous French game Pétanque (game played outdoors with heavy metal balls), several sets of binoculars for bird watching, fishing tools, small boats for river crossing and bikes for nature rides in the forest or simply along the national road that is close by. For more quiet moments, there are some social games (chess, cards etc.) available for tourist or just an afternoon nap in our comfortable hammock.

Despite the scenic natural environment which at a first look seems to disconnect anyone from their normal daily activities and routine, tourists can still have short breaks and go back to their usual life through high speed internet connection, telephone and fax lines, and a home cinema system.

The Domaine de Miravel has a lot to offer, also from a culinary perspective. The Languedoc region has its specific special recipes and its resources for local organic and fresh products. At the Domaine, tourists have their own professional kitchen and cooking books to experience the French cuisine in their own personal way.

1.1.5 History of the place

The most important piece of the Domaine, and the oldest part of it, is the olive oil mill which was built in the 19th century. From this old activity comes the original French name of the location "Moulin de Graïs" which can be translated into "Oil Mill". The current owners



of the Domaine took care of the old building of the mill and invested in its restoration, keeping it in good conditions and using it as a historical touristic attraction.

The Domaine used to be full of olive trees. One can still see the hand-made rock terraces which were used in the past for growing olives. Nowadays only a very few olive trees are left, esthetically integrated into the landscape. Furthermore, the actual manor house used to be just a small living place for the owner of the mill. Along the years, the property was extended and transformed into a spacious two floors house. Recently, the building was restored with local materials, with a care for the environment and also for preserving the history of the place. Now the Domaine gives the full comfort that the modern society is used to, but in a historical and natural environment.

1.1.6 Location and Access

The property is located in the heart of the Regional Park of Languedoc, with a magnificent view over calcareous mountains and terraces of river Orb. This region, Languedoc-Roussillon, is one of the most preferred holiday destinations for both French and foreign tourists – mostly coming from Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands².

The Domaine is easy to reach by car on the national road D14, coming from the A9 European highway. The French road infrastructure is quite well developed and the quality of the roads is positively appreciated by the foreign tourists – according to Miravel's own research (self-completion questionnaires) on its tourists. The region is also well connected by trains and flights. The closest international airport (Montpellier) is at 100 km away and the closest train station (in Beziers) is at 40 km away. There is also a national airport in Beziers, which makes the connection with Paris through Ryanair flights.

² <http://www.creme-de-languedoc.com/Languedoc/> (24.04.2012, 19:00)



1.1.7 Customers

Domaine de Miravel, the manor house, is a family holiday destination and its main customers are large families who want to spend quality time together. The company targets its customers on the following international markets: France, Germany and Denmark. Usually, customers are very satisfied with their experience at the Domaine and some of them come back every year, creating a long term customer relationship. The customers for the Gîte and the B&B rooms are coming mostly from France.

1.1.8 Partners

The company is well connected with local people, tourism offices from the region and small local businesses: restaurants and shops serving and supplying with bio and organic products, cultural organizations, and sports and leisure activities in the region. Miravel has its own network of partners carefully selected to have the same type of values that Miravel has.

1.2 Problematic and possible solution

1.2.1 Problem

Because is a family holiday destination, the company receives requests for rentals only for the official school holidays in each of the three targeted countries. With small variations, the main school holiday period, considering all the three countries, – which is the also the official high season for holiday rentals in the French tourism industry – begins in the mid June and ends in the last week of August. This period brings great financial income for the company and work for the local people engaged in tourism activities. Rentals before and after this period are very rare and usually are requests for smaller groups and shorter periods. This type of rentals does not bring too much profit to the company – taking also in consideration that Miravel's prices are considerable lower than in the high season (see Appendix II) – and require quite a lot of preparation and financial resources to receive tourists.



Because of the seasonality of the leisure tourism (LT) sector, the company can hardly survive the high costs of maintenance of such a big domain all the year round. On top of this, the company is highly interested in improving its services and investing in developing new on-location-experiences for tourists (parks and walking/hiking trails). At this point, this kind of investments cannot be financially sustained only from the income that the holiday rentals bring.

1.2.2 Possible Solution

In the situation presented above, the company could try to extend the renting period over the high summer season. The Southern France has magnificent weather from May until late October. With some luck the sun will warmly shine in November and April too but the three extra months would be just enough for a first enhancement of company's income.

One possible solution, which the company is already taking into consideration and slowly explore, to achieve the rental period extension would be to enter a new market: the business tourism (BT) market. More exactly, to try to attract companies to organize their staff events at Domaine de Miravel. According to Business Tourism Partnership briefing from 2003, Tony Rogers explains that "the peak seasons for business tourism events are March-June and September-November"(Business Tourism Partnership, 2003). At a quick first glance, the Business Tourism industry seems to be an interesting path to follow for Miravel. Before any action to take place, some questions arise which will be further discussed in the following part.

Miravel had first the chance to work with the business tourism segment in April 2011 when a Danish coaching company, Mindjuice, came and organised a one week seminar there. The same seminar was organised also this year in the period of 7-12 May. This research gathered its primary data from this year's seminar participants.



1.3 Problem discussion

As stated above, Miravel is seriously considering entering the business tourism market in order to extend the renting period, enhancing its yearly income. In this way the company will be able to continue its investment in the development of the whole domain. Moreover, this strategic decision will offer jobs for the local small businesses and company's seasonal local workers.

This dissertation wants to solve a real-life marketing problem of a real company from the tourism industry. This research wants to help the company develop a destination brand for the business tourism market. Therefore, the main research question of this dissertation is:

How can Domaine de Miravel be branded as a business tourism destination?

In answering this question, the research will be guided by the following sub-questions:

SQ.1 What is business tourism?

SQ.2 What niches of business tourism market are suited for Domaine de Miravel?

SQ.3 Why Miravel is suited for business tourism?

SQ.4 What is destination branding?

SQ.5 What is the current destination brand of Domaine de Miravel for business tourism?

The SQ. 1 is proposed to explain the concept and to give a general view over the local and international business tourism market.

The SQ. 2 is proposed to go deeper into the subject of BT, understanding the needs and behavior of specific niches of business tourism consumers. Based on Miravel's characteristics and ability to satisfy BT's needs a selection of suitable niches is done.

The SQ. 3 is proposed in order to identify what is the added value that Miravel brings to the BT market.

The SQ.4 is proposed to explain the destination branding concept and its components in developing a strong destination brand. The answer to this question builds the basis for



the primary research.

The SQ.5 is proposed to identify the current situation of Miravel's brand in order to set the future branding direction.

As the research is done on a case study, the results will have implications mainly for Domaine de Miravel. However, parts of the research could also give inspiration for other SMEs from the leisure tourism industry, in their decision of entering the business tourism market and branding themselves as a business tourism destination.

1.4 Researcher's motivation

The researcher sees this project as a constructive challenge because it requires entering a new field of marketing, the tourism marketing area. Moreover, the researcher is highly interested in acquiring a practical experience for her academic studies and further developing her personal and professional marketing skills in a new environment. Furthermore, the researcher strongly believes that one's adaptability skills to new situations, from both personal and professional point of view, is a must in today's world, as there is a strong globalization trend and employees are required to travel, adapt to new lifestyles, and deal with new and unexpected business problems and decisions situations. Therefore, from a personal point of view, this paper is a transition process for the student-researcher that prepares her for the international job market or for future entrepreneurial activities.

1.5 Project Structure

The first part of this paper introduces the reader into the study case of Domaine de Miravel, together with its business problem, and sets the research questions for this dissertation. The second chapter reveals the methodological approach and the qualitative research design presenting how the primary and secondary data will be gathered and analysed afterwards. Chapter 3 deals with business tourism market, trying to understand its characteristics and behaviour. This chapter will answer at two of the sub-questions: SQ1

and SQ2. The forth chapter looks into theories of destination branding trying to identify and understand its key concepts, answering the sub- question SQ.4. and setting the theoretical background for the field research. The fifth chapter analysis the primary data gathered and tries to give an answer to the sub-questions: SQ.3 and SQ.5. The conclusion part presents researcher's views over the research findings. Below is graphically presented the structure of the project.

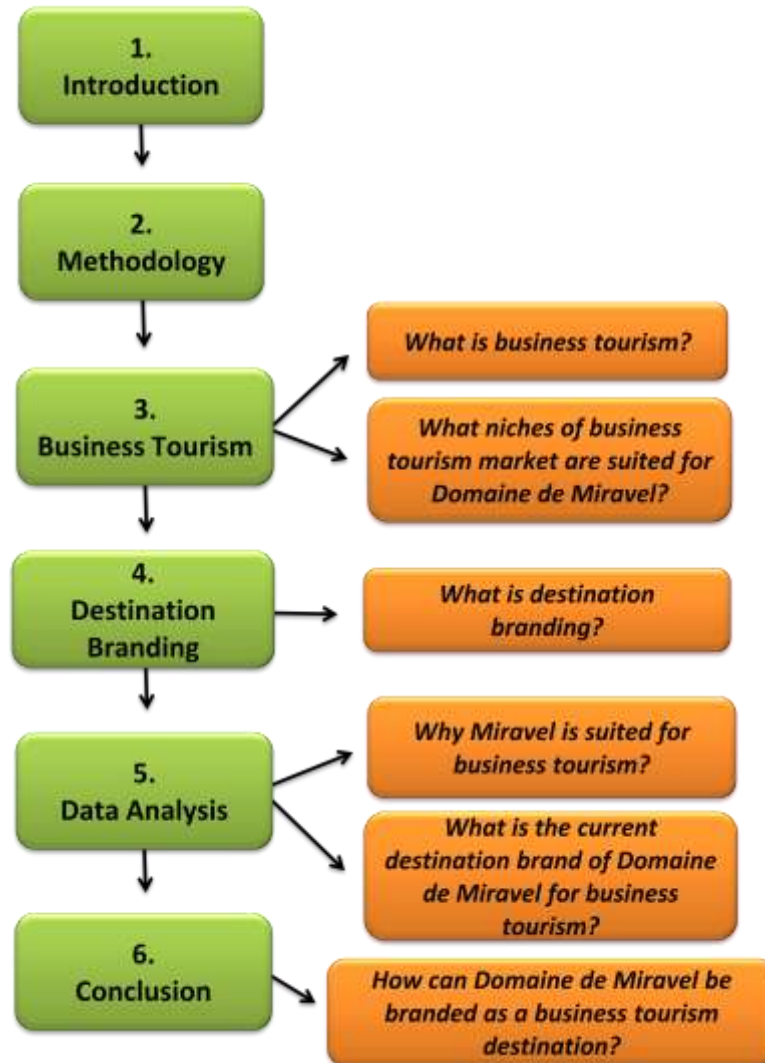
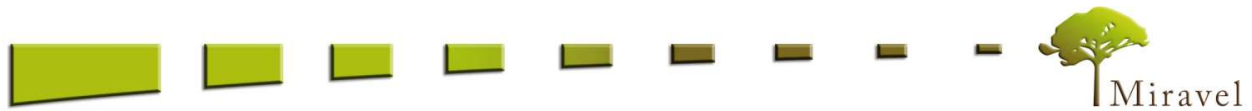


Figure 1 Project structure



2 Methodology

2.1 Methodological Approach

The researcher have chosen a systems approach for the project, as all elements are seen as being part of a large system and interacting with each other. For the researcher, the reality is factive and the whole differs from the sum of its parts (Abnor and Bjerke, 2009). The parts that would form the whole are enriched with the connections between them and each element from the system influences in a certain way the other elements and the whole system. The systems approach is used for discussing theories and the actors approach is used when looking at the reality of Domaine de Miravel through interviewing seminar participants. In the case of actors' approach, the reality is not considered as being independent of human beings, but as resulting from interactions between each individual's own experiences and the experiences of others within his social community over a period of time.

2.2 Research Approach

The researchers chose a qualitative approach to the research by treating theory in a deductive method. Most qualitative scientists focus on treating theory as something that has emerged out of their research. However, some scholars such as Silverman (Bryman, 2008, p. 373) in particular, have argued that testing theories is also associated with qualitative research. The researcher did not want to generate theory or research questions from the data collected, but test the theory for specific concepts/research questions. Therefore, researcher used the five sub-questions to look into the appropriate theories and

answered to those questions through testing the theories into the social world. The interviews are testing destination branding concepts: country of origin associations, identification and differentiation through logo and brand name, brand image through brand associations and destination selection criteria.



Figure 2 Deductive approach

2.3 Research Methods

The researcher chose to employ qualitative research methods for both primary and secondary data gathering. Qualitative research methods are associated with anti-positivist perspective. Anti-positivist places “an emphasis on the ways individuals interpret their social world” (Bryman, 2008, p. 22). Researcher wants to test destination branding concepts and explore Miravel’s brand image and association through performing personal interviews and understanding the ways in which seminar participants perceive their experience as business tourist at Miravel.

2.3.1 Secondary Data

The researcher gathered secondary data from several scholars who collected data on business tourism and destination branding subjects of origin over two decades. As a result, it was identified two business tourism niches suitable for Miravel and several tools to explore Miravel brand associations.

The gathered of secondary data led the researcher's interests towards finding how business tourism destination branding can be done starting from seminar participants' perceptions on their experience at Miravel. The researcher did not take the same views as the authors used in their research findings as it was considered that does not offer a satisfactory answer to the topic of this research.

Other sources for gathering secondary data were in-house information from public documents (annual and financial reports), corporate website, promotional materials, and other relevant online sources were carefully analyzed in order to gain insights into Miravel characteristics.

Based on the following statement: "Examination of available secondary data is a prerequisite to the collection of primary data. Start with the secondary data. Proceed to primary data only when the secondary data sources have been exhausted or yield marginal returns" (Naresh K. Malhotra, David F. Birks, 2005, p. 87), it has to be mentioned that the secondary data gathering was the first step performed by the researcher and this phase formed the foundation for the gathering of the primary data which enriched the understanding of the researched topic.

2.3.2 Primary Data

Concerning how to execute qualitative interviews, the researchers will describe in this section how to adapt the theory to the research needs and resources in order to get the maximum level of information and data from this research method. Moreover, the researcher will present the choice for an adequate research method, its design, implementation, and analysis.

2.3.2.1 Research Objectives

The main scope of the primary research was to explore perceptions and mental associations with experiencing Miravel from a business tourism perspective. A secondary



objective was to identify the selection criteria used when organizing a corporate event like trainings or seminars. Another objective was to identify associations with the region of Southern France, and also with Miravel's logo and brand name. The researcher got inspiration on the general orientation of the interview from the theories, concepts and discussions from chapters 3 and 4.

2.3.2.2 Research Method

In order to follow the objectives exposed earlier, researcher decided to gather primary information directly from Mindjuice seminar participants because they are directly involved in a business tourism activity – participating in a seminar –, are accommodated in the Manor house of the Domaine and are exploring also the surroundings of the Domaine. In order to receive this kind of rich and detailed answers the researchers have chosen a qualitative method to gather information from employees.

Indeed, the qualitative researches ignore representative sampling, with their findings based on a single case or only a few cases (Malhotra and Birks, 2005), but for this project, giving the time, the type of information needed, and others limitations, a qualitative method will be the best choice to tackle the case.

According to Bryman (2008), the quantitative research reflects the researcher's concern and perspective over the research subject. This type of research is often used to generate hypotheses and identify variables that should be included in quantitative approaches and this is why a quantitative method has to be preceded by a qualitative one. Therefore different research techniques can support each other and can work concurrently. Based on the qualitative method performed, researchers gathered valuable information which could be used in structuring a future quantitative research on new seminar participants. It would be very interesting to compare and combine the findings.

After revising all the qualitative research methods, the researcher opted for using interviews. The researcher needed to gather information on specific subjects, detailed and



personal answers. Because certain topics had to be covered the best solution to ensure that the participants reach those topics the researchers decided to use as a research tool semi-structured interviews. They are flexible and give the opportunity to the interviewees to freely express themselves. However, the moderator has to follow a certain script – the interview guide (Annex III).

2.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide was developed in order to answer the fifth sub-question of this research: *What is the current destination brand of Domaine de Miravel for business tourism?* A secondary objective was to give an answer to the third research sub-question: *Why Miravel is suited for business tourism?* Therefore, the questions from the interview are guided mainly by these two research questions, but they also have a theoretical foundation on the concepts presented in the Destination Branding Chapter. The main theoretical elements introduced in the interview guide are: country of origin associations, brand associations, logo associations and name associations. Because the interview had several objectives, the guide structure contains four parts:

- ❖ Respondent presentation;
- ❖ Country of origin;
- ❖ Miravel in a business tourism context;
- ❖ Brand, name and logo associations.

The presentation part sets the role of the respondent in the project, in terms of decision maker or just a participant. Some of the questions have two options of formulation to be addressed adequately to the both types of respondents. The country of origin concept was selected to be analysed because is an important part of the decision making process for BT event managers, as it represents the selection criterion *location* mentioned to have a great importance in the choice of a BT event destination. Therefore, the researcher wanted to identify respondents' associations with the region of Southern France. Furthermore, referring to the branding perspective of the country of origin concept, COO influences very much the image of a destination brand especially when the place has low awareness.

The third section deals directly with the two sub-questions mentioned earlier. Some of the interview questions refer directly to Miravel's characteristics as a BT destination and its added value to the BT event, expressed through brand association. Other questions have a more general view over the BT market: the selection process and the interest in LT like activities of the decision makers. Moreover, in this section, respondents are asked to give their view on what other kinds of seminars are suited to be held at Miravel, giving valuable inspiration for new BT niches. The last section identifies the strongest associations attached to Miravel, evaluates the perception over the quality of the name and logo and also their potential to represent the destination.

Table 1 Interview guide

No.	Questions	Objectives
Respondent presentation		
1	1. Please tell a little bit about yourself and your role in the seminar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow introduction into the interview • Participants' role identification: a decision marker or participant
Country of origin		
2	2.a. What did you think of when you first find out that the seminar will be held in the Southern France? 2.b. What was your perception of France, and of the Southern France before coming to Miravel? (For decision makers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COO / region perception and associations before experience
3	How did your perception changed after coming to Miravel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of the COO / region after experiencing Miravel
Miravel in a business tourism context		
4	Why do you think the seminar is held at Miravel? (Participants) Why Miravel was chosen for the seminar? (Decision makers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes of Miravel suited for the business tourism activities • Seminar needs
5	How do you think the venue (kursus sted) influences the quality of the seminar?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General business tourism destination attributes
6	How the fact that the seminar was held at Miravel influenced the quality of the seminar?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific business tourism attributes for Miravel

7	Supposing that you have to organize a seminar, what would be the most important criteria when selecting a destination for your event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Criteria for business tourism destination choice
8	What other activities are you interested in when going to this kind of seminars? (Sports, sightseeing, history, culture, shopping, relaxing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link between business tourism and leisure tourism • The potential of Miravel to attract BT customers with its leisure tourism attractions
	How important are these for you, as part of the whole seminar experience?	
9	When you think of Miravel, what other types of seminars do you think are suited to be held here, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible niche markets for Miravel
Brand, name, and logo associations		
10	What would be the biggest advantage of Miravel, from your point of view?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong positive associations
	How important is this factor for you?	
11	What would be the biggest criticism for Domain de Miravel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative association
	How important is this factor for you?	
12	What are the attributes that first come to mind when thinking about Domaine de Miravel France and your experience there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes and associations
13	What the word Miravel makes you think of?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name associations • Representative for the place?
14	What do you think of when you look at this logo? (Participants receive a link through Skype of a image containing the logo of Miravel)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logo associations • Representative for the place?

2.1 Selection of participants

Participants in the interviews were selected from the 33 participants in the Mindjuice seminar from Domaine de Miravel, 7-12 May 2012. The selection criteria were based on gender mix and role in the seminar. The research needed input from both sides: trainers/teachers and student-participants. The trainers/teachers inputs were needed, among others, to give the real reasons for selection of Miravel as a seminar destination. The student-participants were expected to give their perception on how did they felt experiencing the seminar in this new location. The two teachers and the trainer were

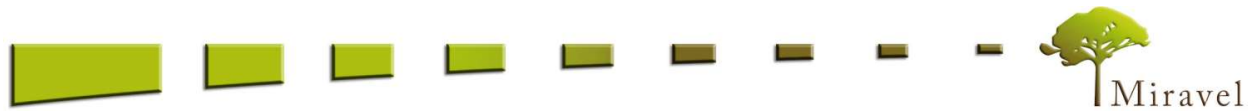


directly approached, through face to face discussions and e-mails, to participate in the research. Two of the student-participants already agreed before leaving Miravel that they would be open and willing to have interviews once they go back to Copenhagen. For the rest of seminar participants, an open request for volunteers to participate in this research was submitted on the Facebook group page of the Mindjuice seminar group. This announcement attracted another two persons. However, other people were also volunteering, but their time schedule did not fit within the deadline of this research. Therefore the number of participants was limited to seven.

2.2 Interview setting

The primary research was gathered from seven interviewees, all taking part in Mindjuice seminar in May 2012 at Domaine de Miravel. Mindjuice is a Danish coaching and training company from Copenhagen. The company organized for the second time its personal development course at Miravel, their first seminar being held in April 2011. The course was coordinated by four teachers in cooperation with six other trainers. During this years' one week seminar session all 33 participants were engaged in very demanding tasks and activities with just a few short breaks during the day. In these conditions just one personal face to face interview was made, which acted also as a test interview to identify respondent's reactions and understanding of the questions.

During the one week stay at Miravel, several contacts were made among seminar participants and another six persons agreed to participate in the research in the following weeks to the seminar, after their return to Copenhagen. The six participants were contacted again through e-mail and commonly agreed with the researcher the most appropriate time when the interviews can be held, therefore, an interview schedule was prepared (Table 2). In order to attract and reward interview participation, all interviewees received a set of two postcards with Domaine de Miravel sent to their home address in Denmark. The researcher paid attention to the interviews and selected postcards



illustrating interviewees' most preferred elements and places during their stay at Miravel creating a higher value to the reward.

Table 2 Interviews schedule

No.	Name	Position	Interview type	Date	Hour
1	[R1]	Yoga trainer	Face-to-face	Thursday 11.05.2012	15:30
2	[R2]	Participant	Skype	Wednesday 23.05.2012	15:00
3	[R3]	Seminar manager and teacher	Skype	Saturday 26.05.2012	18:00
4	[R4]	Participant	Skype	Saturday 26.05.2012	16:00
5	[R5]	Participant	Skype	Sunday 27.05.2012	10:30
6	[R6]	Participant	Skype	Monday 28.05.2012	14:00
7	[R7]	Trainer	Skype	Tuesday 29.05.2012	13:00

The interviews with the six remaining volunteers in the research were held over Skype, through Skype calls. The researcher opted for using Skype because of financial reasons – the calls had to be made internationally, from France to Denmark, and usually interviews need longer discussion time, therefore the costs would have been considerably high. Furthermore, the interviews needed to be recorded and Skype has a good compatibility with the available call recorder online software options. The software used was a 30 days trial version of the online call recorder Pamela. The trial version had several limitations but none with a negative impact on the quality of the interviews.

Each interview started with a short presentation of the problem field giving interviewees the general idea of the research and also the purpose of the gathered data. It was also discussed the structure of the interview and the type of questions asked. Furthermore, the interviewees were made aware of the fact that some of the questions might be repeated and some of the answers might be obvious but these were made intentionally and their input will be valuable for the research. The approval for recording all the interviewees was discussed beforehand. All the interviews were transcribed and introduced as appendix materials for this research project.

2.3 Data Analysis

As mentioned before, all the seven interviews were tape recorded and after each session, the researcher transcribed them and added their notes from the sessions in order to gather all the available data. However, some of the data is not relevant to the study and it has to be thrown away in order to ease the work. Reducing data involves a process of coding data, which means breaking down the data into discrete chunks and attaching a reference to those chunks of data (Malhotra and Birks, 2005).

The coding and analysis process used by the researcher involve the below steps. The researcher took its inspiration from Till et al. article from 2011 to use association maps when analysing each of the below mentioned elements.

1. Identification of association

The researcher was interested to identify respondents' associations (both tangible or functional, intangible or symbolic) for the following elements:

- ❖ South of France
- ❖ Brand Name
- ❖ Brand logo
- ❖ Domaine de Miravel as a Seminar Destination
- ❖ Seminar destination selection criteria
- ❖ Domaine de Miravel general brand image
- ❖ Negative perceptions
- ❖ And Business Tourism Niches

2. Grouping associations

The respondents were using almost the same or similar words or expressions to describe the same object – one of the above mentioned in the list. In this situation the researcher grouped associations for each of the eight elements from above, based on their meanings. For example the group “nature” contains associations like “trees”, “mountains”, “beautiful”



“nature”, “sky”. At this stage each element that researcher want to analyse has its’ own groups of associations.

3. Strength of associations

In order to identify which of the groups of associations are more related to each of the eight elements, researcher counted the number of associations for each of the groups. The group with a larger number counted, had a stronger link to the element. The numbers and names of groups were introduced in Excel as presented in Table 3 and Table 4. In table 3 below, it can be seen that association “nature” is stronger than association “food” for southern France from Mindjuice participants’ perspective.

Table 3 Example of associations grouping for Southern France element

Group	Associations counted	Visual Representation						
Nature	6	Max – 6	wild	Beautiful nature	trees	mountains	nature	nature
food	2	Max – 2	Good food	cheese				

Table 4 Southern France list of associations

Associations	Mentioned	Visual representation
nature	6	(Max+1)-6=1
countryside	2	5
far away	2	5
wine	3	4
climate	2	5
food	2	5
beautiful	3	4
authentic	2	5
beaches	3	4
high class	2	5

4. Visual representation

Researcher used Radar Charts type from Excel to represent the associations for each element analysed. Because in each graph were just one or two very strong association, and the graph was disproportioned and unreadable the researcher decided to change the orientation of the Radar Chart and introduced the third column in Table 4. The mathematical equation to fill in the third column was: $(\text{max}+1) - x$. Max being the maximum number in the second column and x being the value from the second column. In this way the orientation of the graph was changed and made the association map more visible. The centre of the chart is considered to represent stronger associations.

2.4 Research Criteria

Some scholars suggest that qualitative research should be judged or evaluated according to a different criterion than quantitative research because qualitative research employs the terms validity and reliability in different terms as will be seen below. (Bryman, 2008, p. 376)

2.4.1 External Reliability

External reliability is the extent to which the research can be replicated. It is "impossible [to] freeze a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make replicable in the sense in which the term is usually employed" (Bryman, 2008, p. 376). In this case the semi-structured interviews would be nearly impossible to exactly replicate, but it is not completely impossible. However, the findings are believed not to differ too much. Researchers suggest that in order for another researcher to replicate the semi-structured interviews the researcher should take the similar social role and strategy as the original researchers. The researcher have partially transcribed and detailed the strategy and methods used in process of semi-structured interviews and secondary data.



2.4.2 Internal Reliability

Internal reliability is the agreement that researchers have to achieve from observation. In this project, the interviews were held by just one moderator which recorded and took notes of each of the seven sessions. The two sources were confronted with the available literature that was found, identifying which of the sources were relevant for answering the problem.

2.4.3 External Validity

External validity refers to the degree which the findings can be generalized across multiple social settings. Although the semi-structured interviews were performed only on seven participants there was a wide range of demographics and with different specializations, and with different experience in the training/coaching field. Therefore if the participant's choice would be different, the researcher does not expect to receive a very different answer. However, the results of the research cannot be generalized outside the case of Domaine de Miravel, as this research was made taking in consideration this specific case study.

2.5 Field notes

Field notes were used in this research as a complementary research method to the primary research method, in-depth interviews. They are notes based on observation during a research and are classified into three methods of taking notes: *mental notes* based on memory and used when is inappropriate to write down the observations; *jotted notes* which are just brief ideas and short notes of the observations with the purpose to use them later in a more detailed way; *full field notes* are needed in details when this is the main data source (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, and Sanjek, 1990, according to Bryman, 2008). The methods chosen by the researcher were mental notes and jotted notes on different notebooks or computer and pictures, because of the busy schedule during that week which



made impossible detailed daily notes from the lack of time. Further, the notes were organized in a more comprehensive way and used in this project for analyzing behaviour and reactions.

Bryman (2008) is presenting Gold's classification of participant observer role based on the degree of researcher's involvement in the social setting. The role of a researcher is presented as being classified in four different categories: a *complete observer* with no interaction with people; *Observer-as-participant* where the researcher has just the role as a interviewer; *participant as observer* where researcher is involved in the social setting performing regular interaction with people and its role as researcher is known b everybody; *complete participant* where the researcher is a fully involved in the social setting and his true identity is not known to the members (Gold, 1958, according to Bryman, 2008).

Considering the above classification, I was a complete participant in the one week Mindjuice seminar at Domaine de Miravel, in the period 7-12 May 2012. My main role in the program was as a simple Miravel employee, responsible with receiving participants in their first day, coordinating the repartition of the rooms, organization of seminar's brakes during the day, and as an intermediate/translator between Danish seminar participants and Miravel's French staff. In this way I had the chance to come into direct contact with some of the participants and observe their behaviour during a business type event: seminar activities. The seminar participants did not knew about my role as a researcher just until their last seminar day, when the first interview was done and contacts were asked from the other seminar participants to volunteer in the research.

2.6 Limitations

The main purpose of this project was limited to showing how can a DMO be branded as a business tourism destination, a strong focus on the specific case of Domaine de Miravel.



Through the secondary research the researchers selected valuable segmentation information and theories that are directly related to the problem formulation. Limited to available resources a selection of only a manageable number of theories and concepts had to be made. This selection was made based on the best knowledge of the researchers at the specific point in time and naturally the projects outcome may vary slightly if other theories would have been chosen. Any other theory or model that could further explain or is connected with some parts of the research were avoided in order to have a focused study, pertinent findings, and a simple structure that is easy to follow and understand. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that the theories and concepts chosen provide a necessary focus and direction for the dissertation guiding the development of the primary research method.

The findings from the interviews are applicable just in the case of Miravel at that moment in time, further generalization is not relevant. Because the researcher chose to perform qualitative interviews, the data cannot be treated objectively, as researcher's personality, culture and own life experience may influence the findings.

3 Business Tourism

As presented in the introduction chapter, leisure tourism is heavily affected by the seasonality of this market, bringing income for DMOs³ just in the summer holidays season. Domaine de Miravel is also affected by the seasonality, despite the fact that the Southern France benefits from a warm climate more than the three summer months per year. Therefore, the company decided to try to enhance its revenues by entering a new market which is active all year round, as a complementary solution for the leisure tourism segment. The market considered by Miravel is the business tourism segment but no explicit analysis of the potential, trends and specific requirement of this tourism segment was done.

Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to answer two of the research questions: *What is Business Tourism? And What niches of business tourism market are suited for Domaine de Miravel?* The analysis of the business tourism segments is needed in order to identify the exact characteristics and requirements of the market. The results will be compared with the on location facilities of Miravel in order to match Miravel's characteristics as a possible business tourism destination with the business events' requirements. Through this comparison the appropriate business tourism segments will be identified.

³ **Destination management organizations**, usually found in the tourism marketing literature under DMOs, frequently take the form of convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), and are a critical component of the tourism industry. DMO members may include hospitality-related entities such as hotels, restaurants, tour operators, governmental bodies, and indeed any individual or firm that directly or indirectly supports tourism. For example, attractions, gas stations, retail outlets, city officials, transportation companies, incentive planners, airlines, and universities are all potential DMO members. (Blain et al., 2005)

The first part of the chapter, as presented in the Figure 3, will present the tourism industry in general terms, its potential and trends, and then will go more into the specifics of the business tourism niches. The chapter will continue with a review of the European and Languedoc Roussillon region market as business tourism destinations, and will end with presenting the potential of Miravel on the business tourism market. The below figure shows also the researcher's process of understanding and dealing with the Business Tourism concept in the Domaine de Miravel case.

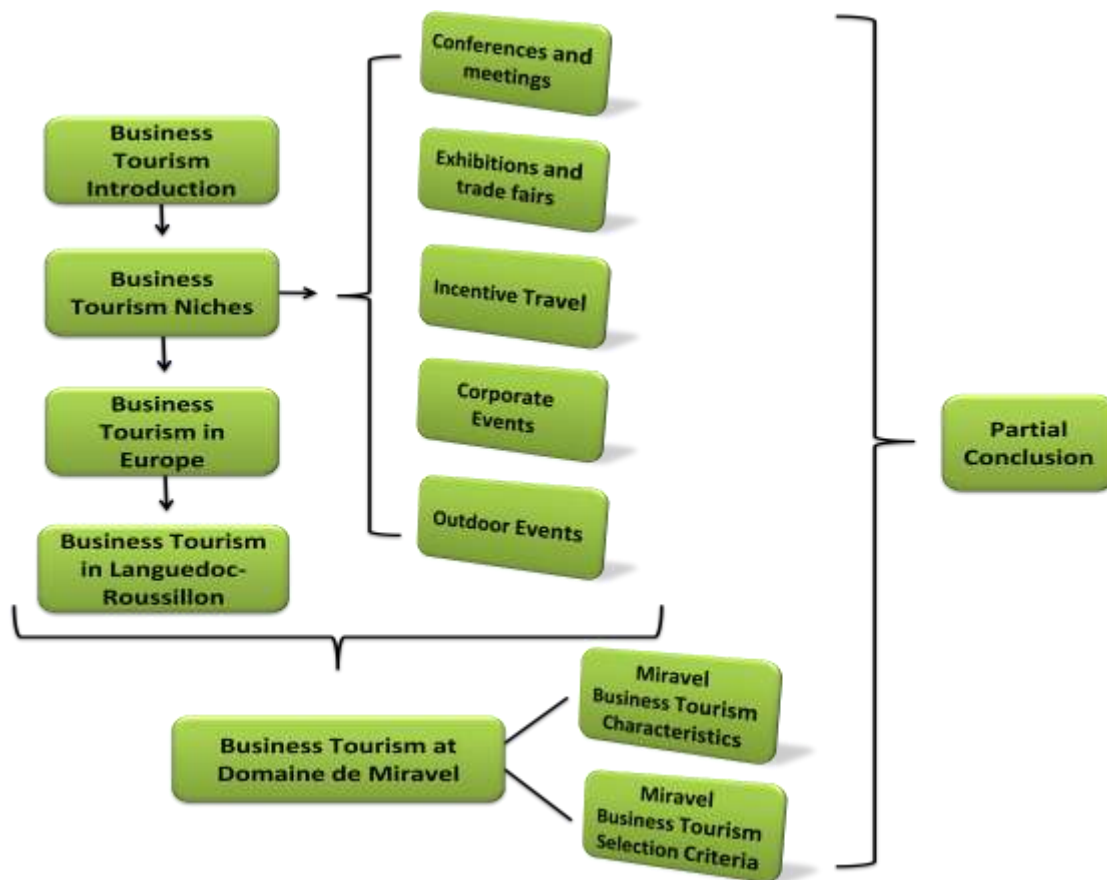


Figure 3 Business Tourism Chapter Structure

3.1 Introduction in business tourism

Business tourism is an important part of the tourism industry, which is the second largest global industry after agriculture, contributing with 10.3 (in 2009) percent to the global GDP and as much as 80 percent of some nation's economy (Balakrishnan, 2009). The research in



this area showed that business tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of tourism industry and is forecast to continue to grow with faster than average growth in certain sectors (McCartney, 2008). The main reasons for this rapid development of the sector are the interest in economic growth, as business tourism is a high return business, and in image enhancement of the business tourism destination. For these reasons, nations and cities invest in building convention centres and developing infrastructure to attract foreigners to organize from very small to large scale events including: corporate meeting, international conferences, and exhibitions.

From a demand perspective, the trend of globalisation is gathering companies, business people and academics to share and develop together ideas, extend businesses overseas, or just reward a good business result for both company employees and clients. Using off-site workdays to motivate staff and improve their productivity is gaining popularity in the corporate world. Companies are also realising the benefits to their business when regional dealer conferences, incentive trips and focused business meetings are organised in exotic locations which includes sightseeing, recreation and shopping – as business relations with partner companies are improved, new connections are made and employees are more motivated to improve their work performance (www.bestincentivestours.com/mice, 14.04.2012, 16:18).

Business tourism segment is known internationally under the name of MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions. Some would refer to it as BET (Business Event Tourism). MICE tourism is a new way of tourism that derives from the features combination of tourism and the ones of Conferences and Exhibitions (Zhou, 2011). The primary purpose of business tourism is group encounters, which involves travelling, for business type activities involving presentations, workshops, seminars, exhibitions, banquets, association meetings and social events. Furthermore, usually between or after business activities visitors are engaged also in leisure touristic activities like: sightseeing, shopping and entertainment. However, MICE tourism segment uses tourism's already



established platforms like infrastructure, hotels, restaurants, museums, theatres, and other entertainment facilities.

MICE tourism is embraced by more and more nations and cities all around the world but among the most preferred business tourism destination, the USA, Singapore and France were ranked the top 3 international meeting countries in 2009 (Business Tourism Trends presentation 2010). However, there is a new trend among developing countries and Far East destination to invest in developing facilities and marketing strategies to enter the MICE tourism segment because of its high revenues. Nowadays, when congresses are becoming larger and more important economically these emerging destinations are competing with well-established congress destinations such as the UK, winning based on lower prices and on the novelty of the destination for the participants (Business Tourism Partnership, 2003).

When it comes to selecting a destination for a MICE event, according to Dorothy Riddle (1999), business travellers' needs are efficiency and relaxation. However, the literature shows that there are some specific primary criteria to be considered. In order of importance these relate to the quality of meetings facilities, cost, accessibility and image of potential locations (Law, 1993, according to Rogerson, 2005). The selection criterion accessibility of the place was identified to be very important in the decision process, and the attractiveness of the location was identified to be usually of lesser significance for exhibition venues, despite the fact that some researchers identify image as being a prime pull-factor (Rogerson, 2005).

A more recent research from 2009 (see Table 1 and Table 2), showed that the location is indeed a primary selection criteria for a destination but the attractiveness of the place is an important factor in the success of the event. Hankinson (2005) suggests that event managers perceive destinations from a functional perspective, looking at a quality of the conference facilities, the choice of venues, the quality of hotel accommodation and accessibility, forgetting about event participants' needs as leisure tourists outside work

hours. Therefore, this could explain why the Table 1 positions the attractiveness of the destination on the first place. Participants might appreciate better the events if the ambience is pleasant and they can combine their business activities with some few leisure tourism activities in their free time. However, the venue requirements differ depending on the type of the event therefore the selection criteria might not be always the same in all cases.

Table 5 Issue contributing to successful event (The Business Tourism Company Presentation, 2009)

Issue contributing to successful event	% respondents
1. Attractive destination	70%
2. Ease of access / travel	57%
3. Quality of the venue	55%

Table 6 Factors influencing venue selection (The Business Tourism Company Presentation, 2009)

Factors influencing venue selection	% respondents
1. Location	83%
2. Price / value for money	78%
3. Quality of service	51%

According to Business Tourism Partnership publication (2003), principal characteristics of business tourism include the following:

- ❖ it is at the high quality, high yield end of the tourism spectrum;
- ❖ business tourism is year-round, peaking in Spring and Autumn but still with high levels of activity in the Summer and Winter months, thus sustaining permanent, full-time employment;
- ❖ it complements the leisure tourism sector, relying on much of the same physical infrastructure, and bringing business to destinations such as seaside resorts which would otherwise be dependent upon a relatively short Summer season for their economic health and prosperity;
- ❖ investments in business tourism facilities lead to the regeneration of urban and inner city areas by engaging visitors in touristic activities: sightseeing, cultural events, restaurants, shopping and entertaining activities;

- ❖ many of the investments in a destination's infrastructure designed primarily for the business tourist (hotels, transport and communications facilities, restaurants, attractions and amenities, even conference auditoria) provide benefits which can also be enjoyed by the leisure tourist and the local population;
- ❖ it is resilient, being much less affected by economic downturns or by disasters such as the Foot and Mouth Epidemic than leisure tourism and other sectors of the national economy;
- ❖ business tourism stimulates future inward investment as business people see the attractions of a destination while travelling on business or to attend a conference, exhibition or incentive, and then return to establish business operations there. They can also become unpaid 'ambassadors' for a destination by communicating to colleagues and others their positive impressions and favourable experiences;
- ❖ the higher quality of personal service demanded by the business tourist requires more labour-intensive service suppliers, which in turn translates into higher levels of job creation;
- ❖ approximately 40% of business travellers will return with their families as leisure visitors to destinations they have enjoyed visiting on business;
- ❖ business tourism is sustainable, offering higher added value with fewer negative environmental impacts than mass leisure tourism. Furthermore, conference and incentive visitors are together as a group, so that it is possible to inform and educate them about the local community in which their event is being held in order to maximise the enjoyment of their stay but also to minimise any disruption and possible inconvenience to the local resident population. It is very much harder to manage, in the same way, the impact of individual leisure travellers on a destination. (Business Tourism Partnership publication, 2003)

Business tourism is at the high end of the tourism spectrum because its customers are corporate customers with high quality level for their demands. According to Dorothy Riddle (1999), business tourists are less cost-sensitive than leisure tourists, spending on average twice as much per day. Furthermore, she is stating that their purchase decisions



are influenced primarily by their ability to use time efficiently within business travel schedules. They are also engaging in shopping and local touristic activities, including sports and cultural events, as long as the effort required is minimal and the risks are low. Furthermore a third of business travellers extend their business trips for pleasure when they can (Dorothy Riddle, 1999). These touristic activities improve the local economy in periods of the year which are not normally preferred by tourists.

Despite the considerable benefits that MICE segment could bring to the economical development of a destination, and the continuous trend of relatively fast growing, this segment is very vulnerable and directly influenced by the global economical situation. The literature is mentioning the 9/11 event and the financial crisis from 2008 as having major impact on some of the MICE activities, therefore also on service providers and intermediates. Corporations are now more careful when planning corporate events and tend to make cost-savings wherever possible but still international travels for business events/incentives are kept as an important part of corporate travel budgets (Business Tourism Trend presentation – August 2010).

3.2 Business tourism niches

Business tourism is one of the most diverse and fragmented themes in tourism industry, as throughout literature it has been divided into at least fifteen different categories of travel, including individual general business trips, training courses, product launches, and corporate hospitality and incentive travel (Rogerson, 2005). To simplify things, the Business Tourism Partnership briefing (2003) divided the business tourism segment into five categories of events:

1. Conferences and meetings;
2. Exhibitions and trade fairs;
3. Incentive travel;
4. Corporate events;
5. Outdoor events.

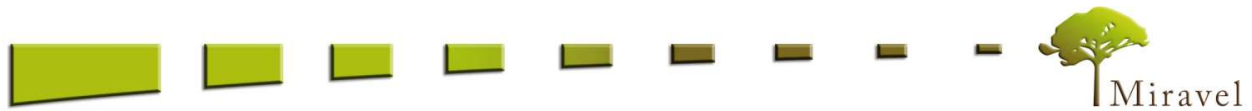
3.2.1 Conferences and meetings

Conferences and meetings are divided into three categories depending on the organisation type:

Corporate	National Association	International Associations
❖ Training courses	❖ Trade unions	❖ Convention
❖ Product launches	❖ Trade associations	❖ Congresses
❖ Sales conferences	❖ Societies and educational bodies	
❖ Business presentations	❖ professional associations and institutions	
❖ Management meetings		
❖ Annual General meetings		

According to Business Tourism Partnership briefing (2006) corporate events tend to have lower numbers of attendees than other types of conference – the majority of events having less than 100 delegates. The duration of this kind of events have a tendency of becoming shorter, from 1.6 days in 2001 to 1.1 in 2006. The top three preferred venue types are city centre hotels, purpose-built convention centres and unusual venues. For decision-makers, the choice of a destination for organising the event is influenced primarily by location, value for money and access; but also quality of service and quality of food are considered to be very important. The same publication is mentioning the factors causing most dissatisfaction: the venue staff's understanding of an organiser's needs and speed of service (Business Tourism Partnership briefing, 2007).

The term 'national association', is used by Business Tourism Partnership briefing (2006) also to describe voluntary bodies of which membership is more related to a hobby or interest rather than a person's employment e.g. political parties, charities, voluntary associations, religious groups. These kinds of events are hold within the country, with a frequency of one main big meeting per year but with some small meetings throughout the year.



In the case of international associations, the meetings are held in a commonly agreed locations – some of the participants need to travel and find local accommodation. The average duration of a national or international association's meeting is between 2-4 days and the number of participants could reach 1.000, in the case of national organisations, or 15.000 in the case of international events, considering also the fact that some of the delegates are coming with partners (Business Tourism Partnership briefing, 2006).

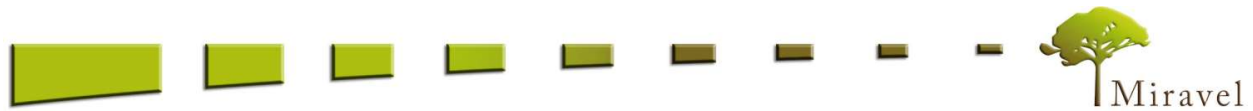
3.2.2 Exhibitions and trade fairs

Exhibitions are large scale events organised with the purpose to facilitate the meeting of buyers and sellers in a cost-effective manner (Tourism Partnership publication, 2006). Exhibitions are usually big scale events held annual, biennial or even every four years in the case of larger international shows. Based on their targeted market, there are three types of exhibitions:

- ❖ Trade exhibitions are business-to-business events with participants from a certain trade sector;
- ❖ Public exhibitions are business-to-consumer events aiming to attract certain types of consumer;
- ❖ Trade/Public exhibitions are a combination of the two above mentioned niches. The aim is to have a face to face encounter between the two.

3.2.3 Incentive Travel

Incentive travel is an individual or group travel to a unique destination as a reward for very good work performance, and also as a motivation tool for reaching higher targets. Organisations frequently use employee rewards, including vouchers, merchandise and cash bonuses, but travel has been found to be the most effective motivator but also the most expensive (Tourism Partnership briefing, 2006). Companies use this kind of rewards also as a way to gain the loyalty of their best employees – this kind of incentives are given just to employees with higher level of performance.



The top users of international tourism as a reward tool are companies producing a product or service that has a high profit margin, including insurance corporations, financial services, pharmaceutical, information technology, automotive manufacturers/dealers, and computer hardware/software manufacturers. In 2006, the USA was the largest national buyer of international incentive travel, followed by the European countries including Germany, France and Italy. (Tourism Partnership briefing, 2006)

The decision for selecting the destination for an incentive travel is based on the following factors: value for money, climate, ease of (travel) access, business links, sophisticated tourism infrastructure, and the 'wow' factor. In 2005, the most preferred destinations for the UK organisations were Spain, France and Italy, and for the North American organisations were Britain, Italy, Ireland and France (Tourism Partnership briefing, 2006).

Some consider incentive tourism as not being part of business travel segments because its main purpose is to reward through entertainment activities and usually no business activities are involved. However, there is a trend for the incentive tourism trips to be combined more and more with educational elements like workshops and teambuilding sessions, or business meetings – as a result of economic crisis which forced companies to cut back the travel budgets, therefore, incentives and business related meetings are combines. The duration of these trips is usually of three or four days and the groups are quite small, as the companies want to give the idea of an elite group in order to motivate its employees. It is important to mention that these events are usually held in unique venues, food being an important part of the incentive experience. (Tourism Partnership briefing, 2006)

3.2.4 Corporate events

The corporate events segment, as Tourism Partnership briefing (2006) present it, refers to all events that companies organise for employees and clients – overlapping with some of the other segments previously presented. Therefore in this section of business tourism are included three niches focused on employees and corporate clients:



- ❖ Incentive travel – a motivational tool for a group of elite employees, as presented in the previous section;
- ❖ Client entertainment – a tool for improving relationships with senior corporate clients;
- ❖ Staff entertainment – mostly used as a motivational tool and also a employer loyalty enhancement for bigger groups of employees.

3.2.5 Outdoor events

This segment does not include just business tourism events but also sports and musical events. However, these could be associated or organised by corporations, and can attract, as an event destination, certain niches of MICE tourism. Tourism Partnership briefing (2006) presents as being part of outdoor events segment the following types of activities:

- ❖ Festivals
- ❖ Music events
- ❖ Agricultural shows
- ❖ Sports contests
- ❖ Charity events
- ❖ Craft events

The publication further explains that these events can last from one to three days, and can attract up to tens of thousands of local, national and international visitors which can involve considerable expenses from tourists' side. Therefore, the outdoor segment brings substantial benefits for local economies but it can also affect the environment of a region in a negative way because of the large number of participants and therefore a large amount of litter on the streets.

3.3 Business Tourism in Europe

According to Davidson (2009), Europe leads the way as a destination for international meetings in particular. According to the same source, the worldwide market share for



meetings in 2008 by continent was: Europe 52.73%; America (North & South) 17.83%; Asia 21.67%; Africa 4.70%; Australasia / Pacific 3.07%. Nowadays, Europe is still preferred as a business tourism destination but, as previously mentioned, there is a strong trend for developing countries to enter the business tourism market. However the European destinations are still preferred, for certain types of business events, because of their well developed infrastructure and good flight connections.

Seven out of the top ten countries for international meetings in 2008 were the western European nations (in order): France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, and the UK (Davidson, 2009). There are several rankings for the most preferred European city used as a destination for MICE events – usually large scale events – but articles from the same period of time are not consistent with their rankings. However, the lists usually contain cities like Vienna, Paris, London or Brussels. Furthermore, it seems that in the choice of a corporate event destination, the climate of the place is quite important and Mediterranean destinations are preferred to Nordic countries especially in the case of incentive tourism and corporate events.

3.4 Business Tourism in Languedoc-Roussillon

According to the French publication “Business event” from March 2012, the region Languedoc Roussillon is one of the first choices for business tourism in France. It is stated that this is happening due to the regions’ astonishing natural beauty, wonderful climate, interesting history, French wine and cuisine, welcoming and rich culture, and also because of a large variety of sports and open air activities that can be done here. It seems that this region is a first choice for both leisure and business tourism. Furthermore, Languedoc Roussillon has the right characteristics and resources to combine the tourism made for business interests with leisure activities, creating a unique experience for the participants.

The region is quite rich in marvellous landscapes, combining sunny beaches, lagoons, and mountains with wine fields and Mediterranean vegetation. It’s well preserved historical



buildings and the strong culture for French wine and French cuisine makes the place unique. Moreover, the warm Mediterranean climate has an important contribution to the attractiveness of the region all year round.

Besides the natural beauty of Languedoc, the region has also various urban destinations well equipped to receive large number of participants for business type events (conferences, exhibitions or corporate events). Cities like Montpellier (the third congress city in France) or Nîmes (a medium-size city with rich history) have the facilities which fulfill the requirements for successful business events in a less businesslike environment (Business event publication, 2012). However, Languedoc also provides corporations and events planners with more convivial places for smaller seminars and incentives where work and pleasure activities can be successfully combined in an authentic location including restored old mansions or chateaux.

Languedoc-Roussillon region is accessible by road, train and airplane. European roads and highways give an easy and comfortable access for European travellers who prefer driving. SNCF, the French national train company, has good connections all over France and also with its neighbouring countries. The region also has 5 airports (Nîmes, Montpellier, Béziers, Carcassonne and Perpignan) with direct connection to Paris and other major European cities. However, some of these airports have more international flight connections just in the high season for leisure tourism, June – August, being a major drawback in terms of international accessibility.

3.5 Business Tourism at Miravel

This chapter presented the business tourism market at global level, European level and regional level in order to understand the potential of this market and also the specifics requirements that BT events have. It seems that Europe is one of the most preferred BT destinations, France being one of the first options for MICE countries and Paris being one of the first options for cities, at both European and global level. Therefore France already has a positive reputation for MICE events and this could enforce the decision of Miravel to



enter this market. Another reinforcement comes from the fact that also the region of Languedoc-Roussillon has a positive reputation as MICE events destination for both business meetings and incentives. France is promoted at an international level as being an attractive MICE destination and this idea is sustained by several regions in the country, including Ile-de-France and Languedoc-Roussillon. Miravel is in a very good position to enter the MICE market from this point of view. However, further analysis is needed to be done on this topic. Next part of this chapter will present more elements of the suitability of Domaine de Miravel for the MICE market.

3.5.1 Miravel Business Tourism Characteristics

In the previous part of this chapter, the BT segments were presented in order to understand what exactly the BT market is and also what are its characteristics and requirements. After evaluating all the BT segments and niches it can be noticed that events differ one from another based on some criteria:

- ❖ Number of participants – BT events can be organised for groups starting from just a few participants, groups of high level managers, to big scale events e.g: international conferences, sports contests or concerts;
- ❖ Duration of the event – events can last from less than a day, in the case of short local/national business travels, to 4-5 days in the case of international events, usually requiring a longer travel;
- ❖ Facilities needed – depending on the number of participants and duration of the stay, facility requirements usually refer to overnight accommodation, meeting rooms, electronic equipment, restaurant services, and other special requirements;
- ❖ Event purpose – BT events can have different objectives: to entertain, relax, business meetings, business deals, product presentation, etc.;
- ❖ Emplacement – this refers to where an event wants to be held: in a city centre, conference centre, in a university, in a unique environment, in a remote area, or in a touristic location



The above criteria will be applied in the case of Miravel and this will be the starting point for identifying the appropriate segments that Miravel can target.

Number of participants

The number of participants depends directly on the number of accommodation places that Miravel has. Knowing that Domain de Miravel can accommodate a maximum number of 34 persons, in double and triple rooms, the event reaches this number only if participants accept sharing a room with other one or two persons. If there are requests for single rooms, then the maximum number is lowering down considerably (there are a total of 16 rooms), making possible just the organisation of very small events.

Duration of event

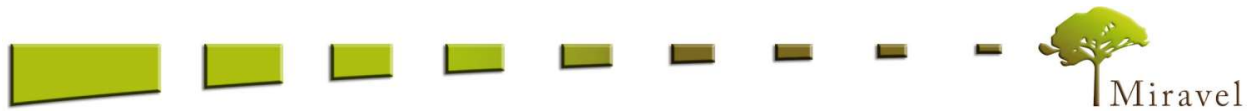
Miravel rents the Domaine for periods starting with 2-3 nights. A renting duration lower than this, does not cover the costs for receiving guest at the current level of prices. Therefore, the events should be longer than 2 nights or the prices for business events should be increased due to extra services provided (catering and cleaning) to this type of clients. However, in MICE terms, a duration of 3-4 days is considered to be a medium-long business travel.

Facilities needed

Depending on the purpose of the seminar, Miravel can provide two large meeting rooms with electronic equipment, accommodation places for groups from 16 to 34 participants, catering and cleaning services, and also relaxing (massages) or sports activities if requested.

Event purpose

Events were identified to have single or multiple purposes. Miravel has the necessary elements for relaxing and entertaining purposes, combined with business related activities, meetings, trainings or seminars. Being in the middle of the nature, Miravel can satisfy participant's needs for relaxing recreational activities through stunning landscapes,



adrenalin rising activities through water and mountain sports, and business activities through its modern equipment and high speed internet.

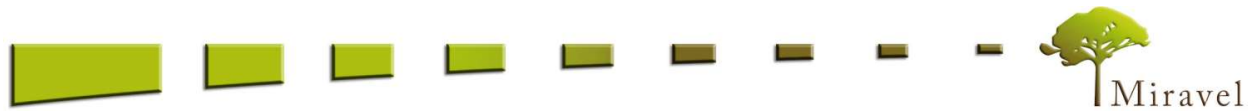
Emplacement

Miravel is in the country side of Southern France, in the middle of the natural park of Languedoc, surrounded by beautiful natural landscapes. The Domaine offers an authentic experience through its emplacement, rich history of the place, and through its old architecture combined with modern facilities.

At this stage, the suitability of a BT niche for Miravel depends mostly on company's ability to fit with the characteristics of this market. Looking again to the above criteria, Miravel can easily exclude the following MICE niches:

- ❖ Some of the corporate conferences and meetings like product launches or sales conferences – because these niches require a larger number of participants and their preferred emplacement would be in more urban areas;
- ❖ National and International Association meeting and conferences – because they require emplacement in large urban areas with international flight connections to facilitate a large variety of international travels, and of course these events have large numbers of participants;
- ❖ Exhibitions and trade fairs – because besides the large space they need, their event purpose is to reach large numbers of customers and Miravel is situated in a rural area with a low rate of population;
- ❖ Outdoor events – because they are large scale events and Miravel cannot fully provide their needs and requirements. However, Miravel could be part of these kinds of events as a hotel service provider for outdoor events in the nearby region e.g. yearly cycling tours contests, www.6666.fr.

After this stage, the remaining niches that could be suitable for Domaine de Miravel are from the segment of corporate events: training courses, incentive travel, client entertainment, and staff entertainment. These niches are considered to be suitable for



Miravel based on the five criteria identified from analysing the MICE market segments. The number of participants is usually low, these niches do not need a wide range of special equipments, the duration is more than two nights, the purpose is to combine business activities with leisure activities and the ambiance is important as these niches look for unique venues and also for the wow factor – referring to the novelty and attractiveness of the place.

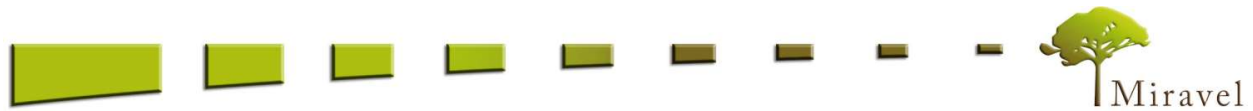
In the case of staff entertainment, because it refers to larger groups of employees, and knowing the trend for cutbacks from the travel budgets, companies might select destinations which are closer to the location of the company. Therefore, for this specific niche Miravel could set its target just on the national/regional market. Despite the fact that this chapter identified already the appropriate niches for Miravel, the researcher would like to have also a closer look at the selection criteria used in choosing a destination for a MICE event. The researcher believes that this overview will help in the future process of branding Miravel as a training/seminars and incentives destination.

3.5.2 Miravel - Business Tourism Selection Criteria

On top of previously presented five criteria, it is important to take into consideration also the selection criteria that event organisers or the companies themselves use when deciding on a place for BT events in order to identify what are the potential competitive advantages of Miravel. As presented in the beginning of this chapter, the selection criteria or its order of importance depend mostly on the type of the event. However, the most encountered elements in the literature were, in no specific order: locations and its accessibility, quality of meetings facilities, price, and image and ambiance of the location.

Location and accessibility

Domaine de Miravel is situated in the middle of the natural park of Languedoc and is accessible mostly by car as the closest train station and airport are in Beziers, at 40 km away. The only mean of transport available for tourists are cars, more exactly taxis, and they tend to be quite expensive, adding a considerable amount on top of the rest of travel



expenses. Of course, renting a car would be an option but this is limited just to the visitors able to drive a car. International travel could pose a bit of a problem because the close-by international airports have more international flights during the summer months (e.g. Norwegian has direct flight from Copenhagen to Montpellier between June and early September) and the peak season for BT events are spring and autumn months. Furthermore, these airports have links just with a few major European cities. Travelling to Miravel cannot be done through direct flights, several flights and different means of transportation are required. Therefore reaching Miravel can be considered as being time-consuming for participants.

The accessibility criterion is considered to be by some event managers and also in the business tourism literature, the most important element in selecting a destination for business events. As Miravel cannot provide, for the moment easy access, the company would have to overcome this problem with finding other strong competitive advantage for attracting international business tourism events managers.

Another option would be to geographically reduce the targeted BT market. More exactly, to target MICE market from the neighbouring regions, including French regions, northern Spain, North-West Germany or North-West Italy – because of the closer positioning to the Laquedoc region. This decision for targeting neighbouring regions and countries would not be justified just by the close positioning but also by the statistics presented earlier in this chapter, saying that in 2006 Germany, France and Italy were among the top buyers of international MICE events – incentive travels. New statistics were not found about this subject but considering the fact that the BT market is growing, these three countries could continue to be among the buyers.

Quality of meetings facilities

Domaine de Miravel does not have extensive experience with BT activities and therefore its offer for this type of customers would be the same as for the leisure tourism market. More exactly its equipment is not specific for business meetings but can be very well adapted,



under certain limitation, to satisfy the needs. However, basic business meetings needs like conference rooms, internet access, electronic equipment, presentation boards and other small details can be provided. As mentioned before the Domaine can accommodate up to 34 participants in certain conditions and can provide catering services. However, the catering services are limited and cannot be compared with restaurant services, the menu being fixed beforehand. This fact could be a major drawback as the menu should be adapted to everyone's lifestyles, and this requires detailed clarification work over the menu with the group of participants before their travel to Miravel.

Price

As Miravel does not have extensive experience with BT events, the prices used in the two attempts of dealing with this new market were based on its experience with leisure tourism customers. Setting a competitive price could be a strong competitive advantage but in the same time low revenues do not allow further investments in the developing of the Domaine, and this is a priority for the company. Therefore, before further adventuring on this market Miravel needs to set its price lists which permit both attracting customers and further investing in the development of the Domaine.

Image and ambience of the location

Domaine de Miravel is not a common type of place for business meetings and events. The BT literature would call this type of venue a unique or an authentic destination. Therefore the unique ambience and the atmosphere of the location are among the main characteristics of Miravel. These elements could be considered also Miravel's competitive advantages on the MICES destination market. However, further study on this topic is needed in order to create an attractive image of Miravel for the MICE market.

After going through these selection criteria, the researcher identified one main area where Miravel can be competitive: the image of the destination, in terms of unique emplacement and ambience. The other criteria were not considered to be very advantageous for Miravel, as is placed in a not very accessible location (at least for the international travellers), the



quality of meetings facilities can be considered acceptable but do not reach the quality of most of the conference and meetings hotels or centres, and the price cannot be set at a very low level to use it as a competitive advantage as it affects the future quality of the Domaine. Therefore, Miravel should focus on developing its image as a trainings, seminars and incentives destination brand.

3.6 Partial conclusion

The business tourism market is complex and diversified, and its continuous growing trend will make it more competitive, among DMOs. Its segments are not well defined, and international economical situation forces corporation to adapt the business tourism events to new lower budgets, making them more efficient, through combining several purposes in one trip or event e.g.: using incentives for training sessions or board/business meetings.

However, the literature is clearly showing that MICE tourism has a lot of potential, is embraced by cities and other DMOs, and has a strong tendency of growing. These characteristics make the industry quite attractive for cities, service providers, and event organizers. As more DMOs are entering this market the competition is raising, becoming stronger, and the selection of a destination might not stay just under the criterion of prices. Moreover, the access to what is today a remote location will be made easily in the following years, as major investments are made in infrastructure and the distances have a tendency of “shrinking”(The business tourism company presentation, 2009). Therefore, accessibility will not be anymore a primary selection criterion in the near future but image and atmosphere of a destination will become more and more important in the decision process.

This dissertation works towards creating a brand image for Miravel that is attractive for the business tourism niches, overcoming the problem of accessibility for the international BT market. Therefore, the next chapter will deal with understanding destination branding concept and apply it in the case of Miravel.

4 Destination Branding

This chapter deals with the fourth sub-question – “*What is destination branding?*” as part of the main research question - *How can Domaine de Miravel be branded as a business tourism destination?* In this part the researcher reviews several destination branding definitions and also theories and concepts from classical branding and destination branding, indentifying key branding elements which can be used in the study case. Important to mention would be the fact that the objective of this chapter is to prepare the theoretical foundation for the primary research.

This dissertation deals with a subject which is quite new for academics. Destination branding is a topic discussed more in the leisure tourism marketing literature and just a little academic research was made on destination branding from a business tourism perspective. Therefore, this project looks into destination branding concept and its elements in the leisure segment of the tourism industry and applies the appropriate concepts in Miravel’s case for targeting BT niches. However, according to BT literature, BT is about combining business with leisure activities. In the case of seminars, trainings and incentives, the leisure part of the encounter holds a greater importance than in other types of MICE events. Therefore a leisure tourism approach could be more useful than taking a classical branding perspective which deals more with products. However, the leisure tourism destination branding is still focused on leisure tourists’ needs and behaviours and the researcher is just interested in looking at destination branding concept by its own, without a strong influence from the LT field in order to use it in the BT destination branding.

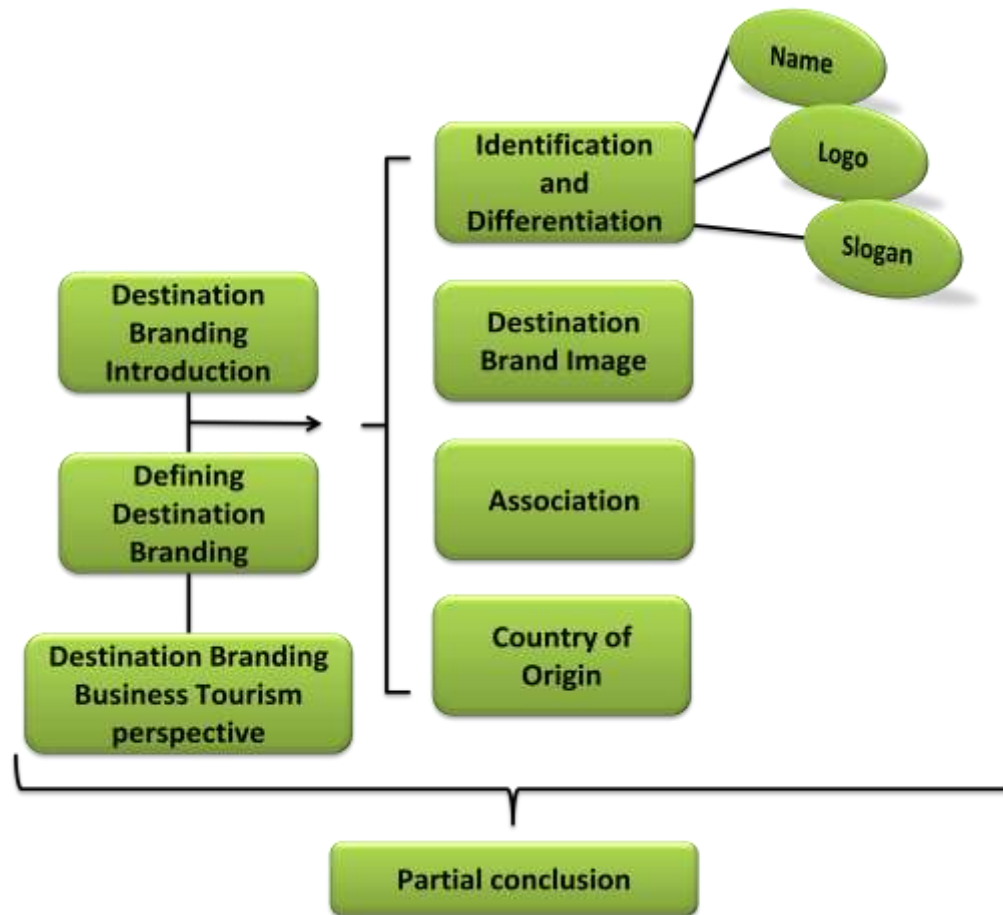


Figure 4 Destination Branding Chapter Structure

The present chapter starts with an introductory part into the destination branding concept, briefly presenting the literature on this topic, the importance of destination branding, and its benefits. Next, the chapter goes further into understanding the concept through looking into tourism marketing academics' definitions that were developed along the years. The objective of this part is to identify key elements which contribute or are involved in the destination branding. The chapter continues with going through the most important elements identified in the previous step, topics being related to the findings from the definitions. However, new concepts are also introduced, based on conceptual models of destination branding found in literature. Based on the concepts presented throughout the chapter, researcher draws a conclusion on this dissertation's approach over destination branding, becoming the basis of the qualitative research design.

4.1 Introduction in Destination Branding

According to Balakrishnan et al., (2011) destination marketing has a tremendous scope to grow, as governments are investing over 12 percent of world investments into tourism-related industries and infrastructure; receiving revenues of an average of ten percent of the world GDP. Therefore considerable investments are made so that tourists can access different locations around the world. Furthermore, with a better access these destinations are also developing themselves to attract, receive, and better satisfy the needs of their guests.

Qu et al. (2011) state that consumers are generally offered various destination choices that provide similar features such as quality accommodations, beautiful scenic view, and/or friendly people. Therefore, it seems that nowadays is not enough for a destination to reach the normal standards and offer high quality for their tourism services. As Qu et al. further state, today's destinations, in order to be successful, have first to be unique and differential. Moreover, Pike (2005) states that never before has it been more important for a destination to develop an effective brand.

The latest research in the tourism marketing field focuses more and more on discovering and bringing the uniqueness into touristic destinations through developing frameworks and theoretical models for destination branding. Therefore, researchers' attention turned towards adopting classical branding concepts and theories in the tourism business. Worth to mention is that, according Dioko and Harrill (2010), in the early 1990s "the fundamental research question posed was: Can nations, states, places and destinations be branded and marketed in the same framework as consumer products?". Nowadays, both, the academic world and marketing tourism practice clearly show that destinations can be branded following the same framework. However, destination brands are a bit more complex than regular products or services, as they are multidimensional constructs, carrying with them a considerable set of deeper meanings, history and culture besides the obvious functional characteristics.



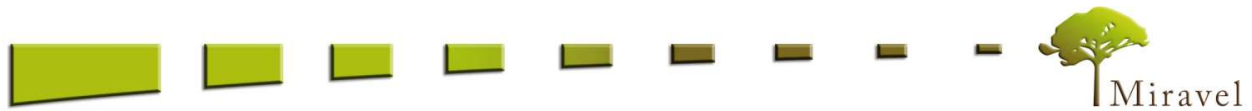
According to Pike (2009), the current academic streams of research focus on: destination brand identity, brand positioning, and destination brand equity measurement. Reviewing also the more current destination branding literature, the researcher also found papers covering subjects like: destination brand components, destination personality, symbolic and functional brand attributes, and destination image - is the most common topic encountered in the tourism academic research.

Destination branding is a concept used mainly in the field of tourism marketing with a focus just on leisure tourism. The field of tourism marketing is developing quite rapidly but there are just a few research papers dealing with this topic. However, on the specific topic of destination branding the researcher found few academic papers discussing the branding elements involved in creating a destination brand or destination image – “destination branding is in its embryonic stage” (Dioko and Harrill, 2011). Furthermore, according to Pike (2005), the destination branding literature only surfaced relatively recently, with the first academic conference session convened in 1996, the first journal articles appearing in the late 1990s (Travel and Tourism Research Journal), and the first book published in 2002 – Morgan, Nigel, Annette Pritchard, and Roger Pride, “Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition”. Moreover, Pike is characterizing the ten years between 1998 and 2007 as the decade of infancy for destination branding studies (according to Dioko and Harrill, 2010).

However, in practice, destinations like countries, cities, touristic resorts, islands, or hotels already had implemented marketing strategies to create attractive destination brands for tourists, all over the world. Within the first decade of the millennium, several destination branding campaigns were launched at the national level by various countries, millions of dollars poured into research and subsequent implementation of promotional activities on a global scale (Dioko and Harrill, 2011):

- ❖ “Kenya – creation’s most beautiful destinations, all in one country”(Pike, 2005)
- ❖ “Barcelona es mucho más!” (Barcelona is much more)⁴

⁴ <http://www.barcelonayellow.com/bcn/gov/city/barcelona-slogan> 14.05.2012, 19:45



- ❖ “Ténérife – Bienvenue sur l’île du printemps éternel” (welcome to the island of eternal spring)⁵

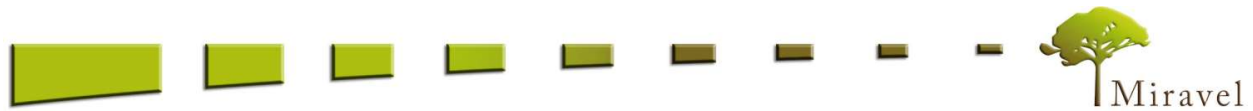
According to Wagner and Peters (2009), in the tourism destination context, six benefits of branding have been identified by Clarke in 2000:

- ❖ tourism is typically high involvement, branding helps to reduce the choice;
- ❖ branding helps in reducing the impact of intangibility;
- ❖ branding conveys consistence across multiple outlets and through time;
- ❖ branding can reduce the risk factors attached to decision-making about holidays;
- ❖ branding facilitates precise segmentation.

Tourism destinations and packages are intangible and require a high financial investment from the side of consumers. The high price makes the consumer being more involved in the decision making process and the intangibility makes the risks of the decision being higher. The consumer is afraid to invest a high amount of money in an intangible purchase without being sure that he would be satisfied when consuming the purchase. Therefore branding efforts could lower down the risks attached to the purchase decision, assuring the consumer that his decision of choosing a certain destination will not disappoint his expectations. Furthermore, branding can help destinations to position themselves so the consumer will not spend time looking for e.g. a high altitude ski resort or an entertaining beach holiday. They should instantly think that they will go to Switzerland to sky or to Palma de Majorca to have fun on the beach.

The same situation is happening also in the business tourism industry. Event managers are the buyers of services and are highly involved in their purchase as the value is even higher than in the case of leisure customers and the acquisition has the same intangibility as the leisure tourism packages. The branding benefits for a BT destination would be the same as the ones presented for the leisure tourism. Branding in general reduces the choice and the risk attached to any kind of purchase; and has a major impact on positioning and

⁵ <http://www.exxostenerife.com/auvol/pourquoitenerife/index.html>, 14.05.2012, 20:05



segmentation. Branding brings a very important contribution to the success on the market of products, services and also places as touristic destinations, as it can be seen in both academic world and more often in practice. This chapter will present in the following part the academic perspective on destination branding concept.

4.2 Defining Destination Branding

According to Bo et al. (2009), definitions of destination brands draw their inspiration from marketing, as the concept may be extended to both tangible and intangible elements. Further he states that “tourists perceive destinations like products” (Boo et al., 2009), evaluating destinations’ attributes through both cognitive and affective processes. Many researchers emphasized in their papers a unique combination of functional, symbolic, and experiential elements of a brand to create a unique destination identity. The differentiation element is also found in the classical brand definitions, which are usually variations of the one that Aaker proposed in 1991 (Pike, 2009):

*“A brand is a distinguishing **name** and/or **symbol** (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to **differentiate** those goods from those of competitors”.*

(Aaker’s definition for brand in 1991, according to Pike, 2009)

Despite the various definitions that marketing academics propose for destination or place branding, there is still not a clear, consistent, and commonly agreed understanding of this term “almost nobody agrees on what, exactly, branding means”, when talking about destination branding (Pike, 2009). Moreover, according to Blain et al. (2005), although destination management organizations’ (DMOs) executives “generally understand the concept of destination branding, they are implementing only selective aspects of this concept, particularly logo design and development” (Blain et al., 2005, p.328). However, this paper presents some of the most used definitions, from the early years of destination branding to the most recent times, trying to deeper understand the concept and its evolution.

According to Saraniemi (2011), Ritchie and Ritchie introduced in 1998 one of the first and most cited definitions for destination brand:

*“A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel **experience** that is **uniquely associated** with the place; it also serves to **consolidate** and **reinforce** pleasurable memories of the place experience.”*

(Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998, according to Saraniemi, 2011)

This definition relates very much to Aaker’s classic brand definition in terms of visual brand identification and differentiation from competition. In addition to this, other elements are introduced: the promise, visitors’ experience, unique association, consolidation and reinforcement; - showing the complexity of destination branding compared to product brands. Referring to the above definition, Saraniemi (2010) agrees with earlier studies of *Konecnik and Go (2008)* that “although this definition limits a brand as being only a symbol of the place, it clearly infers a brand to be related to differentiation and, in relation to competitors, not an isolated perception as an image might be” (Saraniemi, 2010).

Cai Limping (2002) is also one of the researchers trying to define and give a visual representation for the concept of destination branding. He states that “*the core of destination branding is to build a positive destination image that identifies and differentiates the destination by selecting a consistent brand element mix*”. Further, he gives his definition of the concept:

“Destination branding can be defined as selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building. A brand element comes in the form of a name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package, or a combination of these, of which the name is the first and foremost reference.

(Cai, 2002)

From Cai’s perception of what is the core of destination branding one can identify the presence of destination image concept, which he further defines “the image of a destination

brand can be defined as perceptions about the place as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory”(Cai, 2002). The above definition have common elements with the one developed by Aaker (1991) for brand: the visual identification elements and differentiation concepts. Cai further improves Aaker’s definition by introducing the destination image component, giving it a special attention in his research when developing his model of destination branding. However, his definition is less complex than the one developed by Ritchie and Ritchie but has a strong focus on destination image, even putting this concept in the centre of destination branding.

Qu H. et al. (2011) are presenting in their research paper on branding and destination image in the tourism context, a destination branding definition by Morrison & Anderson:

“Destination branding can be defined as a way to communicate a destination’s unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors.”

(Morrison & Anderson’s, 2002, according to Qu H. et al., 2011).

In this definition are present the same elements encounter in the previous definition: destination branding’s role in differentiation and competitive advantage. However, the visual elements are not directly mentioned here but can be part of the communication mix: “a way to communicate”, so the brand is communicating through visual elements. The new concept introduced here is destination identity, element not directly mentioned by the previous definitions. However, the above definition does not offer a clear and comprehensive image of the concept, it just present destination branding’s role as a differentiation tool among competitors.

According to Pike (2009), the most comprehensive definition of destination branding has been the one proposed by Blain et al. (2005). Their definition is “derived from a disparate collection of branding theory and other concepts found in the marketing literature” (Blain et al., 2005):

*Destination branding is the **set of marketing activities** that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily **identifies** and **differentiates** a destination; that (2) consistently **convey** the*

expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice.

(Blain et al., 2005)

In their research paper from 2005, Blain, Levy and Ritchie revised several definition of destination branding with the objective of proposing a new one, more compressive, with a holistic approach. They started from Aaker's brand definition and added on top of it elements that were found to describe destination branding, according to the literature available at that moment. Therefore, the first segment (1) of Blain et al.'s definition relates very much to Aaker's classic brand definition, the same as Ritchie and Ritchie's definition does. In addition to this, other three segments are introduced. It is important to note that in the above definition, Blain uses destination image as a result of destination branding. The second (2) segment deals with the uniqueness of the place, therefore each destination should put forward its specific characteristics which ensure the uniqueness of visitors' experience on location. The third (3) segment requires field research among tourists and identify their emotional connection with the place. Once this information is gathered, marketers should ensure that these types of connections are reinforced through consistent marketing activities. The last (4) segment shows the tourists' benefits of a destination brand.

A more recent definition of destination branding is proposed by Qu H. et al. in their research paper from 2011:

*"Destination branding is partly defined as a **way to communicate** the expectations of a satisfactory travel experience that is uniquely associated with the particular destination [...] destination branding should emphasize the **unique image of a destination**, which exercises a power to differentiate it from competitors".*



(Qu H. et al., 2011)

As Qu H. et al., (2011) were researching the destination image concept within destination branding therefore their definition has a certain focus on destination image. It also contains differentiation concept, tourists' experience, unique associations, and competition; elements encountered also in the previous definitions.

In today's competitive world, no matter the industry, branding is a useful tool to stand out from the crowd. However, not all types of branding activities can be enough to reach success. Understanding the branding concept in a holistic manner is a crucial step to perform before any other marketing activities to be planned or implemented. In this subchapter, the researcher reviewed some of destination branding definitions in the search of an answer to the question: what destination branding is? Comparing Aaker's definition of branding with the other definitions presented here, it is clear that destination branding concept took its inspiration from Aaker but was considerably improved along the time in different directions. This happens mainly because a place or destination is much more complex than a product (referring to Aaker's definition of branding addressed to products), which represents just a physical offer and can be easily modified; a place as a product is a large entity which contains various material and non-material elements to represent it (Florek, 2005, according to Qu H. et al., 2011). Furthermore, in Aaker's definition distinction was seen just from a visual point of view, whereas in destination branding distinction is much more – referring to the message of the brand which can be considered as a brand promise to form consumer's expectations for their future experiences. Therefore new elements and concepts were added to the original brand definition: place and tourists' experience, unique association, consolidation and reinforcement, brand image and destination image, unique identity and buyer's view of destination branding.

In the literature, destination branding is seen as a set of facts, behaviours and activities performed or developed by the company with the objective to build a positive destination brand image. The image is the final result of branding activities and is considered to help identification and distinction from the competitors. Moreover, the definitions show that



image is expressed through associations that tourists held in their minds, based on their experience with the destination. Furthermore, researchers are stressing the fact that images have to be positive in order to be effective. Therefore, a brand should be promoted through positive associations as a promise of positive future experiences.

This paper will take as a primary definition of destination branding, the one proposed by Blain et al.(2005) as it offers a holistic view over the concept. However, the other definitions will also be taken into consideration as they reinforce Blain's understanding of the concept.

4.3 Brand Identification and Differentiation

The brand identification and differentiation element was found in different forms in all the definitions, as being part, and sometimes as being the first step, of the branding process. Going back to Blain et al.'s (2005) definition, differentiation is understood as being "*a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination*"(Blain et al. 2005). Therefore the elements that differentiate a brand just from a first look are: names, logos and slogans. Further, the three elements will be discussed and understood from a destination brand point of view.

4.3.1 Destination Brand Name

Cai (2002) is strongly supporting the importance of brand's name in the destination branding process. Research was done on the topic of brand names but just from a classical product branding point of view. No research has been done for the tourism destination brands, despite the fact that several researchers from this field recognised the importance of names in the destination branding process and opened some discussions.

The brand name is the first building block of a brand, to which are attached other brand elements and associations. In the case of destination names, the situation is a bit more complicated than in the case of product names. Products are created to satisfy or induce

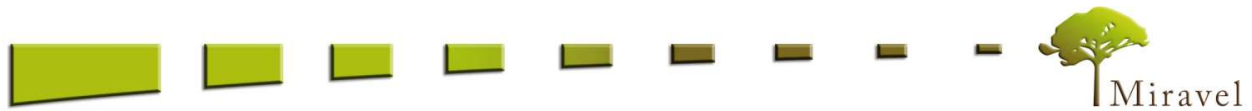


certain needs and therefore they have strategic names with a certain melodic or words that can describe the usage or type of the product. Furthermore, brand names create distinctive images, enhancing products' competitive position (Klink and Athaide, 2011) and offer a set of symbols and meanings embodied by products (Prebensen, 2007).

Destinations' names usually are not created especially to attract the consumer; in fact they are the result of time from a historical and geographical point of view. The names are usually related to the nearby region of the place, "partly to help the consumer identify where the destination is located" (Prebensen, 2007), and usually cannot be changed. On rare occasions, a place name has been changed to increase appeal to travellers, such as in the case of Elston, which was changed to Surfers Paradise in the 1993 (Pike 2005). Furthermore, destinations' names also have a past history as heritage, values, culture or perceived image which cannot be changed (Balakrishnan, 2009). This type of heritage is an intangible asset to the brand but in the same time can hurt the brand if it has a negative perception among external stakeholders.

In the case of smaller DMOs like, small hotels or resorts - where names were not fixed in history and are not related to the region – the decision for names are in the hands of the owners and they are responsible for the branding process right from the beginning. Therefore it is important to decide on a name which can represent, just like in the case of logos and slogans presented here below, the brand and send a message to the external stakeholder. In this case, the name is also a source of association attached to the destination and creates a first image of the place in the minds of visitors, as it relates to their general knowledge.

Research showed that a meaningful name is expected to express appropriate information about the product, or an important product attribute, or establishes the connection between the product and the product category. Both practitioners and academics agree that a meaningful name is a good option for small branding budgets while non-meaningful need more investment in branding and time to create associations in the minds of consumers therefore are fitted to companies with more financial resources. However, a



non-meaningful name gives the opportunity for marketers to build the desired brand image, being more flexible and with no boundaries for associations.

It is extremely important to define the target audience, as names can be interpreted in different languages and could become a source of negative image from the start. Therefore, if the name means a certain thing in a language, the decision-maker should make sure that the name does not have other negative meanings in one of the languages covered by the targeted population. If it is proven that the name has no significance in other languages, then according to Klink and Athaide (2011), the external stakeholder will base his first image and associations to the place on the acoustics of the name. Klink and Athaide proved in their research from 2011 on *Creating brand personality with brands names* that consumers are influenced by brands names. Their research showed that the position of certain consonants and vowels in a name will induce certain reactions and associations of attributes in the minds of consumers. Their finding was that brands can express their personality through their names.

Therefore, analysis of names can be a reliable source of brand associations in the both cases: when the name is linked to the region – as associations can be related to the region or having certain meaning in a language – and when the name is created from scratch or is a simple word from a certain language, not understood by foreigners who do not speak the language – associations are made based on the name acoustics.

4.3.2 Destination Brand Logo

This project does not have as objective to go deeper into the subject of destination's logos. It just briefly reviews the literature from this field trying to understand the role of logos in building a destination brand. Despite the fact that logos are an important part of destination branding, no research is focused on this specific topic, within the tourism industry.



Blain et al. (2005) agree with Berthon et al.(1999) that a brand is in fact “a symbol around which relationships are built”, making it an important component of the branding activities (Blain and Rithchie, 2005). They further explain that a brand has several main components (referring to Aaker’s 1991 definition of branding) like “logo, name, trademark, or package design, but logos often become a central brand image representation of products, services, or destinations”. Logos are “one of the main vehicles for communicating image, cutting through clutter to gain attention, and speeding recognition of the product or company” (Henderson and Cote 1998, according to Blain et al., 2005). However, in practice, logos are graphical elements, used by companies around the world to identify and differentiate themselves from the competition. In the tourism context, logos can help destinations to better communicate their identity, through effective associations, and give visitors a quick first glimpse of what could be/look like their experience there.

Blain and Rithchie conducted a research in 2005 on destination logo design. One of their research questions was referring to the reasons that DMOs, mainly from United States and Canada, give for destination logo design and development. The question offered eight possible answers and the most important three reasons were identified to be: “to support our destination image,” “provide a label that describes us,” and to “differentiate us from other destinations”. Blain and Rithchie further stated that “for destinations, the image is intended to convey the overall idea of the experience a visitor can anticipate at the destination”. (Blain and Rithchie, 2005)

As a logo, in the tourism industry, is generally representing a destination, it has to accurately reflect the image and experiences of the destination. In the same time, has to produces associations and certain expectations for future visitors, therefore DMOs have to make sure that the logo reflects the reality. Despite the power of a logo for differentiation in today’s competitive world, destinations are complex entities and is hard to incorporate all sorts of associations that a destination has just in one piece of graphical representation. However, logos are expected to express just a main idea behind a brand, and some of the ideas can also be attached to a meaningless symbol e.g.: nike logo.

4.3.3 Destination Brand Slogan

In the process of differentiation, besides an inspiring name and an attractive logo, brands can rely also on slogans to send their brand message in a more efficient and consistent way. A slogan is more important when the name is not saying too much to the external stakeholders. In the case of destinations, a place name is previously fixed in time, related to the geographical region or history, and cannot be easily changed. Therefore, in this case the slogan and the logo would be attached, together with their meanings and attributes, to the name of the destination creating a set of associations for the destination image.

According to Pike (2005), a slogan is a necessary public articulation of a destination's brand positioning strategy, providing a link between brand's identity aspired to by DMOs and the actual brand image held in the market. In other words, the slogan has to "point out what the destination stands for or desires to transfer to external stakeholders" (Wagner and Peters, 2009). Pike (2005) suggests that slogans should be a succinct message focusing on one or a few brand associations. This small and effective rule can be quite hard to follow as places are complex and multidimensional. Therefore some destination brands can end up with promoting some general messages without a strong meaning and maybe not representative for the brand and reality. (Egg. "Ohio – so much to discover"). However, the academic field lacks research on the subject of destinations' slogans, as part of destination branding concept.

4.4 Destination Brand Image

Brand image is one of the most popular subjects in the destination branding literature. Many academics and practitioners looked into this concept and adapted the classic brand image theories to the tourism field. Despite the great interest in this topic, researchers are not consistent with their understanding of brand image as the concept is constantly confused with destination identity (Qu H. et al. 2011).



It has been shown that image is customer's perception of brand identity which is created by the company. Therefore the marketers are creating an identity of the destination brand and communicating it through all brand components (see Figure 5 and Appendix V for details on brand components). Then, the consumer/visitor is interpreting the stimuli and the image of the destination brand is created in their minds. The next strategic step for marketers is to identify, through research, what is consumer's brand image on the destination and proceed with establishing and enhance brand identity based on the updated knowledge gained into their customers.

However, Cai (2002), adapted Keller's brand image definition for products, to the tourism industry and destination brands. Therefore, Cai defines the image of a destination brand as being "perceptions about the place (destination brand) as reflected by the associations held in tourist memory". Cai further explains that tourists' memories are just like networks where pieces of information (or nodes, how Cai is referring to – taking the concept "associative network memory model" described by Keller in 1993) are linked to each other. Going back to the concept of destination brand, one could think of brand components – referring to brand elements "in the form of a name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package, or a combination of these, of which the name is the first and foremost reference" (Cai, 2002) and place attributes – as being information nodes creating a network in tourists' minds, together with sets of associations attached to each node, enlarging the network and developing tourists' own perception of the brand image. It is important to mention that tourists' views or images of a particular place are unique, constructed from their own memories, associations and imagination of that place or product (Prebensen, 2006). Moreover, each time two nodes are linked together, the link between the two is strengthened. In this way brand associations are reinforced and the image is getting consolidated in consumers/tourists' minds.

In the branding literature, brand image is considered to be an effective differentiation tool, as long as the positioning statement is strategically chosen to target the right segment of the market. Balakrishnan (2009) is stating that positioning is achieved through brand



components (See Appendix V), which can be tangible or intangible attributes; and she further describes a good position to have the following characteristics:

- ❖ helps rationalize the decision making process by letting the customer link key attributes to that place;
- ❖ is a simple and truthful message with limited association;
- ❖ preferably is based on visitor's experiences.

A positive brand image is critical to create a recognizable destination brand. Research showed that strong, favourable, and unique brand associations can lead to a positive brand image formation. However, consumers perceive positive brand image when brand associations are implemented to suggest benefits of purchasing from the specific brand (Qu et al., 2011). Therefore, marketers should focus on promoting a brand through associations which suggest desired benefits for the consumer. Moreover, in the case of destination branding, the group of associations, as stated above by Balakrishnan, should be based on consumers' experiences and perceptions. Through their experiences, consumers develop certain association to the place and therefore the destination image is created. Further, this chapter will have a look into brand associations, as it is shown to have a key role in creating a brand image.

4.5 Associations

As previously discussed, associations are the connection between consumers and brands, influencing their evaluation of the brand and their choice for purchase or visit, in the case of destinations. Till et al. (2011) agree with Aaker that brand associations are “the heart and soul of the brand” and are defined as “anything linked in memory to a brand” (Aaker, 1991, 1996, according to Till et al., 2011). Furthermore, they state that associations (both intended and unintended) give meaning to the brand, and meanings are part of image formation process in minds of consumers.

In the branding literature, researchers presented different ways of categorising associations. Some would classify them into three main categories:



- ❖ Attributes – descriptive features that characterise a brand;
- ❖ Benefits – the personal value consumers associate with the brand attributes in the form of functional, symbolic, experiential attachments;
- ❖ Attitudes – consumers' overall evaluations of the brand. (QU et al., 2011)

Others would look at associations just from an attributes perspective (see below Figure 5 and Appendix V), using just two main categories:

- ❖ functional attributes – the tangible features of a product or service;
- ❖ emotional or symbolic attributes – the intangible features which meet consumer needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem. (Hankinson 2005)



Figure 5 Destination brand components (Balakrishnan, 2009)

And a few consider also the need of introducing a new and separate category: uniqueness. This category comes from the differentiation element presented in the definitions of destination branding: “*memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place*” (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998, according to Saraniemi, 2011), “*selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish*”(Cai, 2002), “*to communicate a destination’s unique identity*” (Morrison & Anderson’s, 2002, according to Qu H. et al., 2011). Moreover, Qu et al. (2011) stress the fact that uniqueness is important because influences the differentiation among similar destinations and gives travellers a reason why they should select a particular destination over alternatives. More exactly, unique associations are seen as competitive advantages that distinguish a destination, helping it to position itself not only on the market but also in the minds of travellers. Besides this, it has been discussed by



researchers that unique associations also contribute to the positive brand image formation. Therefore, in order to achieve a positive destination brand image, destinations have to induce unique associations through their marketing campaigns. A strong, unique image would increase the favourability of the overall image toward the destination (Qu et al., 2011).

Some studies focussed more on forming destination images based on attributes. Hankinson (2005) presents a list of most common destination image attributes identified in 18 studies reported in the leisure tourism literature (see Annex VI). He classifies the attributes under five categories of brand image attribute: economic, physical environment, activities and facilities, brand attitudes and people.

Going back to Keller's associative network theory, Till et al. (2011) explain that associations can be characterized by four main attributes:

- ❖ Strength – showing how strong is the link between associations and brand in customer's memory;
- ❖ Favourability – associations can be linked to brands with a negative or positive meaning. Some associations are seen as more positive or negative than others and the objective is to create more favourable associations;
- ❖ Uniqueness – some associations are common among brands within the same category but it is more important to identify the unique ones, revealing distinct and different brand features which are sources for competitive advantage;
- ❖ Relevance – how much people perceive the association as a valuable, important, and purchase decision driving feature for a brand.

Marketing campaigns are usually used to strengthen consumers' associations with the brand but before launching the campaign is important to identify the right associations that should be reinforced in consumers' minds. It is important to have a set of associations which generates favourable perceptions, are unique – differentiating the brand among competitors –, and are relevant for consumers. However, not all the attribute that have these criteria should be chosen. Destinations should focus on a unique constellation of few



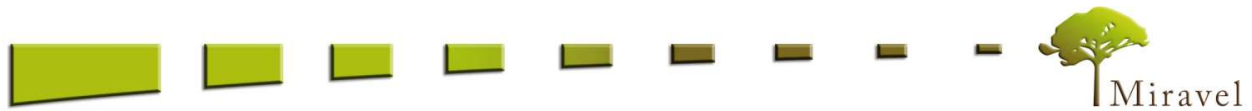
(three to seven) tangible and functional destination attributes rather than a “having it all” strategy (Woodside and Dubelaar, 2002, according to Hankinson, 2005). A large number of associations would influence the effectiveness of advertising campaigns (Till et al., 2011).

As brand associations were identified to be important parts in the brand building process, for both product and destination, marketing practitioners have to keep under control and strategically manage brand associations. Based on the importance for practitioners to monitor brand association, the academic field developed so called brand associations maps. A brand association map is a visual representation where a brand is presented as the center of a constellation of associations. The criteria for choosing the associations for the maps could be combined based on the objectives of the researcher doing the map, but Till et al. suggest that all four criteria presented above – strength, favourability, uniqueness, and relevance – are important to build a complete brand association map. However, these maps present marketers with a strategic, comprehensive and consumer driven view of their brand, and how their brand is differentiated from key competitors (Till et al., 2011).

Brand associations are central elements in the process of developing a branding strategy. The result of a successful branding strategy is a positive image on the market. Because associations are the core of brand image, they have to be carefully selected in order to represent the destination and the reality, not promising expectations that cannot be achieved. Therefore, the best way of identifying the associations that really represent the destination would be through researching directly the customers after experiencing the destination. Their perceptions of destination’s image can be illustrated on a brand association map, which are useful tools for decision makers.

4.6 Country of Origin

Balakrishnan (2009) is one of the researchers interested in developing strategies and models for destination brands from a leisure tourism perspective. She introduced in her model the concept of country of origin (COO), showing that it directly influences destination’s vision, positioning and differentiation perception, and its brand components –



seen as being intangible or tangible and symbolic or functional (see Appendix V). Therefore, country of origin influences visitors' perception of the destination brand. However, the main reason for presenting the COO concept in this chapter is because of the COO's influence on decision making for BT destinations. It was shown in the previous chapter that location, referring to country/region, is an important criterion in the decision making process. Therefore the researcher looks into this concept to get a better understanding of its effects.

As previously discussed, destinations are strongly linked to the geographical location of the place: city, region, or country – no matter the tourism segment. The country of origin of the destination is very important in branding a place especially if the place is unknown to the public. Research showed that consumers tend to form their perception of products based on the country of origin. The same behaviour was shown to happen also in the tourism field. If tourists are not familiar with the destination, they tend to use their perception of the country or region of the destination in order to form a first perception of the destination (Balakrishnan et al., 2011). Therefore, visitors' knowledge and image of the country of origin/ region affects their association for the destination.

According to Hankinson (2005), a negative country of origin image acts as a deterrent for visitors focusing on poor infrastructure, accessibility, security and lack of convenience whereas positive COO creates a differential advantage, becoming an intangible asset. A country of origin image could include attributes and associations to climate, culture, food, history, economic situation, geographical elements, or international prestige. As mentioned earlier, tourists will stop first at this kind of information to form a first impression and then continue their search for more details. In this situation it is important that the image of the destination to be related to the image of the country/region so it can "borrow" some of the associations (in the case of positive associations) in order to create a stronger impact on tourists' perception of the destination. Therefore, it is important to identify tourists' perceptions on the country of origin and use them in branding the destination, for a more efficient branding strategy, especially when budgets are low.

4.7 Destination Branding – a business tourism perspective

Destination branding was mainly researched by academics more from a leisure tourism perspective. There are just a few researchers who tried to approach the business tourism field, like Anholt, 2006; Hankinson, 2004; 2005; IMD, 2005 (according to Balakrishnan's Destination product taxonomy, 2009). However, in practice, place branding is currently not only applied for touristic places (countries, geographical regions or cities) but also to places such as shopping destinations or wellness retreats. Furthermore, marketers and governments already successfully developed many destinations associated to business tourism events.

The interest in destination branding within the business tourism industry comes from the need to increase the economy of places. According to Hankinson (2005), many former industrial cities, in both Europe and the USA, have regenerated their economies successfully through investment in developing their city brand as a centre for business tourism – travel associated with attendance at meetings, conferences, exhibitions and incentives events. Hankinson (2005) further states that city branding was reached through developing positive brand images linked to attractive attributes such as heritage and history, the character of the local people, associations with famous people, “capital” city status and international city status. He also gives New York and Glasgow as examples for successful branding transformations from post-industrial cities into vibrant leisure and business tourism destinations.

It is important to mention the fact that leisure tourism is a business to consumer activity and business tourism is a business to business activity. Therefore the two have different types of consumers with different needs. In the case of leisure tourism, tourists are interested in the touristic potential of the place, while for business tourist have other types of requirements like conference facilities, business tourism infrastructure, central location, major city, everything in close proximity, choice for venues etc. (Hankinson, 2005). However, despite the differences the two fields of tourism have, Hankinson's research showed that many of the business tourism brand image attributes are similar to those from



the field of leisure tourism. He identified the following clusters for brand image attributes: physical environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, strength of reputation, people characteristics and destination size. To show the similarity between the brand image attributes of the two types of tourism, Hankinson gives two examples: attributes relating to the physical environment, such as the overall attractiveness of the destination, its pace of life and feeling of security; and the role of people, the culture of the resident population, the character of the visitor market and accessibility.

Business tourists are considered to be also leisure tourists in certain moments between business activities. However, event organisers' decision for choosing a destination for a business event will not be based on touristic characteristic of the place but more on functional attributes required by the event (quality of the conference facilities, the choice of venues, the quality of hotel accommodation and accessibility). The ambience-related attributes have an important role in the selection process but still the functional attributes are the first decision criteria.

Hankinson's research showed that there are evident similarities between destination brand images from a business tourism perspective and the models of brand image in both the classical and tourism literatures. Moreover, brand images from business tourism perspective, can be represented just like showed in the tourism branding literature, by two dimensions: functional and symbolic. Therefore, business tourism destination brands can be created with the same types of associations as the ones used for leisure tourism but with a focus more on the different needs of the business tourism events.



4.8 Partial Conclusion

The literature showed that the activities of destination branding form a destination image in the minds of customers. The brand image of the same destination differs from tourist to tourist based on their experience with the destination. Academics say that receiving feedback from tourists, in form of quantitative or qualitative research, is vital for managing and developing the image of the brand and is more valuable when those tourists have experienced the destination. Their perception of the destination should be taken into consideration in order to identify destination's associations that describe the experience with the place, in order to further create the same associations through promotion and communication activities, as part of destination branding efforts, for the non-customers of the destination.

Looking at the destination brand concept from the side of non-consumers of the destination, they form their image of the brand based on their knowledge of the brand. The non-consumer is becoming aware of the existence of the destination through promotion and advertising, or word of mouth. If the first contact with the brand is made through advertising and promotion then is vital for the brand to activate through these materials the same associations that customers experienced and positively appreciated, creating a meaningful first image in the minds of non-consumers. Literature shows that the brand elements which have an important role in making a first impression of the destination are the brand identification elements: name, logo, and the slogan.

Another element which is not present in any of the definitions of destination branding but several models and frameworks explaining this concept present country of origin to contribute to the first impression of the destination. This is quite understandable because tourists, especially business tourists, are very affected by the location, in terms of physical distance, of the destination. Furthermore, the COO image has a first impact on the selection of the destination. If the image is positively appreciated by the non-customer, the chances to choose the destination are highly rising, whereas a negative image of the country would considerably lower down the chances for destination selection. The image of a country,



connected to the travelling destination, is not only based on people's knowledge of it but also on the physical distance that business tourists have to travel. As mentioned before, for the BT market, location and accessibility are important elements to consider when selecting a destination. Therefore, brands need to know the image of the country from customers' perception in order to plan their branding strategy. In the case of negative impact of COO on brand, the destination has to bring extra added value to convince the non-consumer to choose it.

The perspective that this dissertation takes over the destination branding concept is that destination branding is made not only through communication activities but also through the physical elements of the destination brand, behaviour, and other meanings attached to the destination. These elements combined result in creating an experience or a promise of an experience which creates a destination brand image. The associations and meanings attached to the image have to be consistent in all the brand elements, and also in promotion and advertising activities. This behaviour helps reinforcing the meanings and associations attached to the image.

5 Data Analysis

This chapter analyses the data gathered through primary research methods. The chapter starts with an overview over the field notes that researcher took during the Mindjuice seminar from 7-12 May 20112 at Domaine de Miravel, France.

5.1 Field Notes Analysis

This part of the analysis chapter is made based on the experience with the Mindjuice seminar group in the period 7-12 May, 2012. During this seminar, field notes were taken in form of texts and pictures to support researcher's memory and understanding of the event. The researcher took notes of the behaviour of the participants, their schedule and their impressions and reactions related to their stay at Domaine de Miravel. Base on researcher's mental notes and jotted notes (see Appendix VIII), the seminar experience of the Danish participants is analysed following the below structure:

- ❖ General presentation of the seminar;
- ❖ Access;
- ❖ Seminar needs;
- ❖ Participants' behaviour.

The general presentation of the seminar helps the reader better understand the event and the setting. The access is mentioned in order to understand the travel experiences of the participants. The specific behaviour part analyses participant's behaviour during their stay at Miravel, giving a BT consumer behaviour insight.

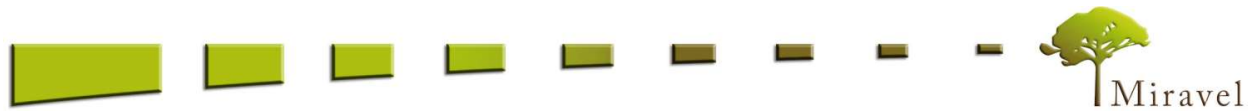


5.1.1 General presentation of the seminar

The seminar was organised by the Danish coaching company Mindjuice from Copenhagen. All the participants were Danes, except the yoga teacher who was American and another student-participant who was Norwegian. The purpose of the event was to give a professional training session to 22 participants. They all are professional trainers, enrolled in a one year professional team coaching education with Mindjuice, which will give them a higher status and recognition in the coaching field. Along the year, the group is having seminar sessions working on different themes regarding team coaching and Miravel was chosen as a location for one of them.

Two of the student-participants arrived at Miravel two days before the seminar with the purpose to explore the region and the nature. This behaviour is a common one among BT participants, as the literature is presenting it in the Business Tourism chapter. The group of teachers, including the event manager, arrived one day earlier in order to prepare together the last details of the seminar. The rest of participants arrived on the starting date of the seminar, as scheduled. They were accommodated in all the rooms from the Domaine, having single rooms or shared ones between 2 or 3 participants, and another two houses rented in the village of Vieussan. The two extra houses were needed because of the demand of single rooms and in this situation Domaine de Miravel was not big enough for this group of people.

The seminar looked to be very demanding for the participants, as their course schedule was very busy (See Appendix X). Each seminar day started at 6 o'clock in the morning with yoga sessions and ended at 9 in the afternoon. Between classes, participants had one 15 minute coffee break in the morning, breakfast break for 1 hour, lunch break of 2,5 hours, a 30 minutes afternoon coffee brake and the dinner break of 1,5 hours. Therefore they had in total 5 hours and 45 minutes of free time each day. Most of the activities performed in the seminar were held in the main meeting room of the Domaine. Some short sessions of group work were made on the 3 terraces of the Domaine (in front of the house, back of the



house, and on the first floor open terrace); and the teambuilding sessions were made outside in the garden.

5.1.2 Access

The participants had several options to take into consideration when planning their trip to Miravel. After discussing with some of them, all the options involved a combination of different means of transportation which made the journey tiring and long for some. During the discussions were identified the following travel connections:

- ❖ flight: Copenhagen – Paris, (2) train: Paris – Beziers, (3) taxi/car: Beziers – Miravel;
- ❖ flight: Copenhagen – Paris, (2) flight: Paris – Beziers, (3) taxi/car: Beziers – Miravel;
- ❖ flight: Copenhagen – London, (2) flight: London – Montpellier, (3) taxi/car: Montpellier – Miravel;
- ❖ flight: Copenhagen – Barcelona, (2) train: Barcelona – Beziers; (3) car/taxi: Beziers – Miravel;
- ❖ flight: Copenhagen – Barcelona, (2) car: Barcelona – Miravel.

During the arrival day it was observed that some of the participants organised themselves in two, three or four groups and shared together a rented car. Most of the rented cars had Spanish registration plates, meaning that the most preferred way of arriving to Miravel from Copenhagen was the last option presented above – flight to Barcelona and rent a car to arrive to Miravel. This is quite a logical decision as Barcelona is just 250 km away, the infrastructure is well developed and the Spanish and French landscapes are beautiful. However, there were complaints concerning the address of Miravel, which was not very easy to find following the indications on the website or even with GPS assistance. Therefore, Miravel needs to be more customer oriented when it comes to providing information on the website.

5.1.3 Seminar needs

Mindjuice seminar had the following needs:



- ❖ Accommodation space for 33 persons;
- ❖ A seminar room big enough to fit 33 people and with space for movement;
- ❖ Catering services for breakfast, coffee breaks, lunch, dinner and late evening snacks;
- ❖ No interruptions from Miravel staff;
- ❖ Space for open-air activities: teambuilding games and putting up a fire;
- ❖ Isolation from daily city life to maintain participants' attention.

5.1.4 Participants' behaviour

Participants were quite busy for the whole period of their stay at Miravel, waking up very early in the morning and finalising the classes at 9 in the afternoon. The only moments when they could have some more free time were the breakfast, lunch, and dinner breaks. Despite the crowded and tiring schedule, people were going for walks and bike rides to explore the surroundings, and once the swimming pool was opened, participants were swimming in it even during the breakfast break or in the short 15-30 minutes coffee breaks. The river and the garden were also positively appreciated and used in the breaks. The weather was very good and the three terraces were always filled with people, the house being empty during the breaks.

5.1.5 Summary

The field notes showed that the behaviour of the seminar participants falls within the description presented in the Business tourists' case. More exactly, business tourism events are gatherings of people for a business purpose, in this case a training sessions, but between business activities – training courses – business tourists behave like leisure tourists and appreciate the possibility of tourism potential of the place or its very close proximity. Furthermore, even though the BT literature do not position the atmosphere and image of the place on a high importance level, the business tourism event participants are interested, besides the functionality of the place, also in how does it feel being there.

5.2 Interviews Analysis

This section

5.2.1 Country of Origin Associations

Associations were grouped based on their meaning in relation to the region of Southern France. In the interviews, the region was more associated with nature, including: “wild nature”[R7] or “green nature”[R5]. The circle in darker colour represents the negative association “*far away*” [R6] that respondents attached to the region of Southern France when it comes to travelling there, with a departure from Denmark. Therefore indeed the location is important in terms of physical distance when selecting a BT event. Respondents [R5] & [R6] mentioned also that they felt “annoyed” when they found out that the seminar will be held in France referring to the economical side of the physical distance. Besides the economical element, Southern France does not have any negative association. However, when it comes to selecting a seminar destination the location of Miravel might cause some inconveniences, but it depends on which is the departure place.

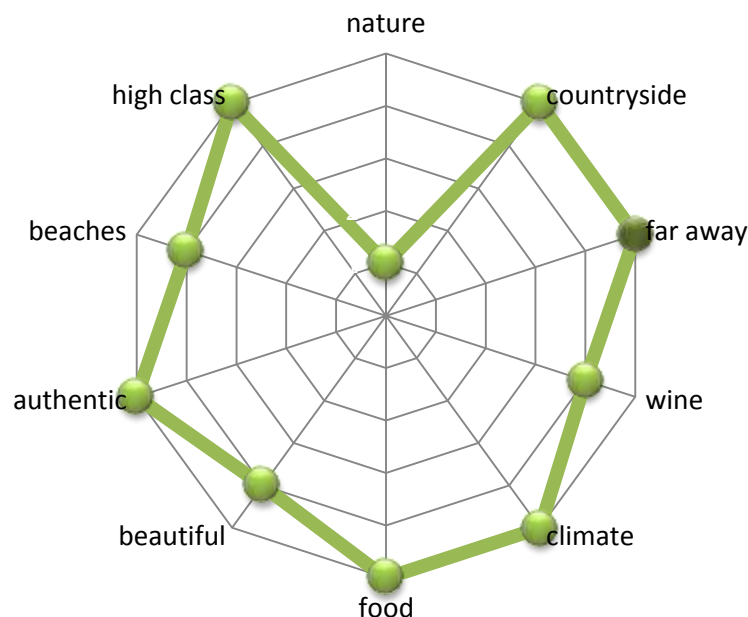


Figure 6 Southern France associations

5.2.2 Brand Name Associations

The brand name associations were identified from question number 13. Miravel, as a word/name, was found to have five main associations, and does not contain any negative ones. Respondents based their association of the word *Miravel* on their general knowledge and they suspected that the word has a Latin background, mentioning that it has something to do with one of the languages: Spanish, French, and Italian. Indeed Miravel is an Occitan word, an old dialect from the Southern France, meaning “beautiful view”. Furthermore, the word was more frequently described as being *refreshing* through associations like “cold water”[R2], “sparkling water” [R2], “mineral water”[R6]; or associated with *nature* through elements referring to “mountains” [R4], or “garden”[R4].

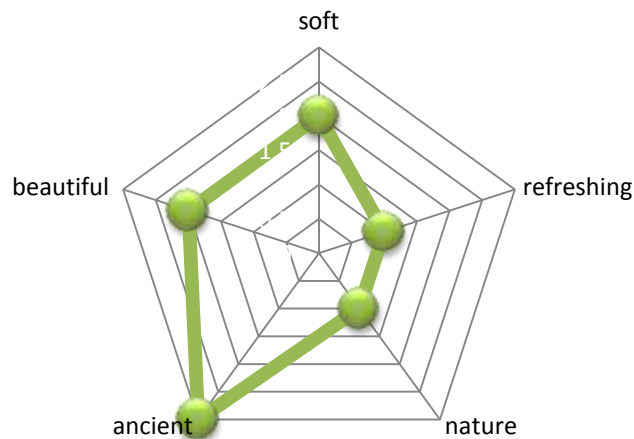


Figure 7 Brand name associations

5.2.3 Brand Logo Association

The brand logo association were identified from question 14. When the question was asked, respondents receive a link through Skype with Miravel logo. Most of the respondents did not remember the logo and some did not recognise the tree from the garden in the logo “Only when you told me I recognized the tree” [R2]. Therefore, Miravel should promote better its logo on the place. However, all respondents thought that the logo does not fully represent Miravel and their experience there. Respondent [R5] says “it’s more modern this logo than my experience of being there actually”. Almost all respondents

mentioned the fact that something is missing from the logo. Respondent [R3] says that *“For me the main building, the tree and the nature around it’s really the things I think about and the tree itself also represents the nature, but for me the main building is perhaps missing”*, and respondent [R5] is also mentioning the house missing from the logo: *“I would suggest to put the house somewhere in a yellow, fain [...] for me the house [...] is like the heart of Miravel”* together with [R6] *“I would build in a silhouette of the mansion”*. This reaction does not necessarily mean that Miravel should change the logo, but it does mean that the house with all its characteristics and meanings associated to it had a higher impact on the respondents than the tree from the garden. This could be explained through the fact that the majority of the time, respondents stayed in the house, or very close, having time to emotionally attach to it. However Miravel could try to better promote the story behind the logo.

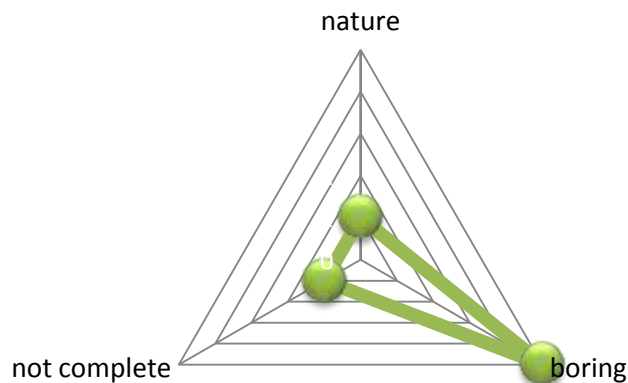


Figure 8 Brand logo associations

5.2.4 Domaine de Miravel Seminar Destination Associations

All the association for Domaine de Miravel as a seminar destination mentioned by the respondents were with a positive connotation. A considerable list of associations referring to Miravel’s characteristics as a good destination for seminars was identified from questions 4, 5 and 6. The characteristics were grouped in eleven smaller groups based on their meanings. However, the below list of groups could be regrouped as some of them are



very similar and very connected but in this way maybe some important characteristics and associations will be lost.

“Isolation” was found to best describe Miravel as a seminar destination, followed by *“nature”* and *“no distraction”*. The *“nature sounds”* element is connected to *“nature”* because the sounds were mentioned to come from nature, especially from the river and birds. In the same way the *“smells”* element is connected to *“nature”*.

From the context of interviews the *“countryside”* element is strongly connected with associations like *“no distraction”*, *“quiet”*, and *“isolation”*. Countryside is seen as the opposite of *cities* or *city life* and generates associations like *“no distractions”*, *“isolation”* and more important *“quiet”*. Therefore, Miravel is seen to be exactly the opposite of participants’ daily city life with *“cafes”*, *“internet connection”*, *“city noise”*, and *“daily problems”* to distract them from what they should focus on. According to [R1], they were *“removed from everything that is familiar”*. Furthermore, this statement is directly related to the *“no distraction”* element, therefore it seems that everything which is familiar and people are used to, represents a distraction.

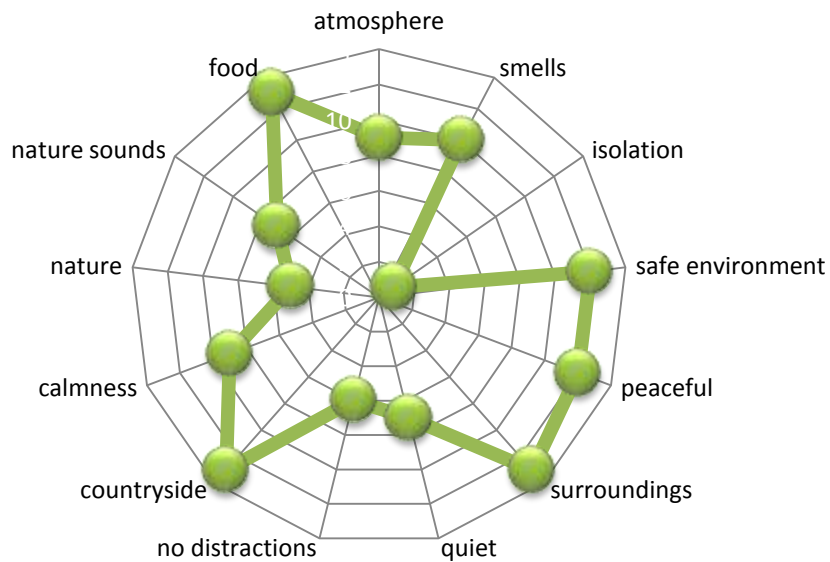


Figure 9 Miravel seminar destination associations

5.2.5 Seminar Destination Selection Criteria

All the respondents were already professional trainers, therefore the researcher wanted to know their view over how would they select a place if they would have to organise a training session. This corresponds to the question no. 7 from the interview guide. The majority of the respondents did not organise seminars and training sessions outside the company they are working in and usually their seminars are short and do not need a special place. However, when asked to suppose that they have to organise this event the most common characteristics that they were looking for were: “easy to reach” [R5] and “travel time”; “a place which is “special” [R3], with “beautiful surroundings” [R6] and “positive” [R3]; “away from a big city” [R6] with “no disturbance” [R5]. From their point of view, and in accordance with the BT literature, the location is a major variable. However, the respondents are also interested quite a lot in the image and atmosphere of the place. As discussed in the Business Tourism chapter, event managers are starting to pay more attention to the image and atmosphere of the place. With these trends, Miravel has chances to attract BT clients through building a strong positive image of the destination brand. Respondent [R4] said that a place for a seminar is chosen as long as “*supports the kind of*



work we do". This statement shows that the decision for a destination goes beyond functionality, facilities, economics, location and access or atmosphere of the BT destination. Everything has to be integrated and well sustained by destination's values and identify.

5.2.6 Domaine de Miravel General Associations

These associations were taken from questions about Miravel's advantages, question 10; general attributes, question 12; and respondent's answers related to their perception of Miravel and their experience at the Domaine, without asking any direct connection with the seminar activities. Of course it is extremely possible that their courses in the seminar influenced and accentuated certain characteristics of Miravel which otherwise would not happen.

"Nature" again is the most frequently mentioned as characterising Miravel and the experience here. This group is formed of tangible and obvious elements from Miravel landscape: trees, mountains, water; and also intangible attributes: "intimidating nature"[R7], "feel the power in the nature"[R7], "you can feel in away very small human being"[R7]. "Calmness" group of attribute, containing: "peace"[R6] & [R7], "oasis of tranquillity"[R5] was the second most mentioned group to describe intangible elements of respondent's perception of Miravel. The interviews uncovered a group with "special" attributes ("magical"[R4], "mystical" [R3], "fantastic"[R7]) addressed to Miravel as a place, showing that is different and has something special to offer to visitors: "positive emotions" ("harmony"[R4], "feeling good"[R7]). Another important part on this brand map is the association with "authenticity" containing elements like "history", "old", "ancient". When respondent [R6] was asked to express his opinion on what exactly makes Miravel authentic he explained: "you can see that it's got old doors, old windows, old trees, it's got like ... it's not perfectly arranged everything to be like a five star hotel"[R6]. The only negative association to the general appreciation of Miravel was the fact that is "boring" (on the below brand image map with dark colour symbol) described as "nothing happening"[R7] and "little to do"[R3]. This refers to the touristic potential of the place.

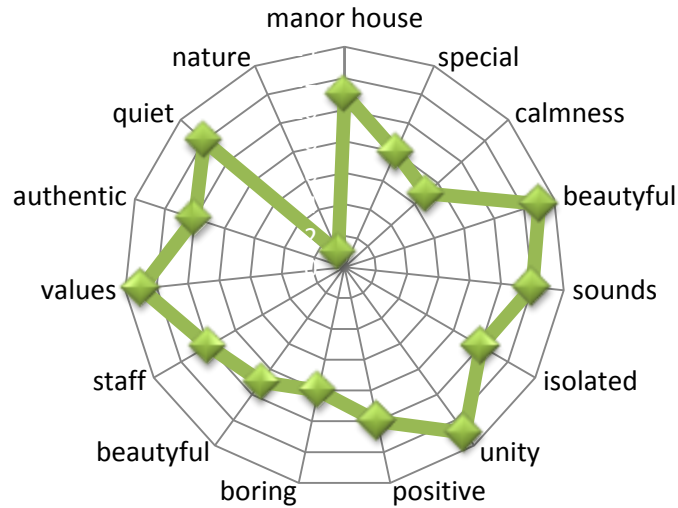
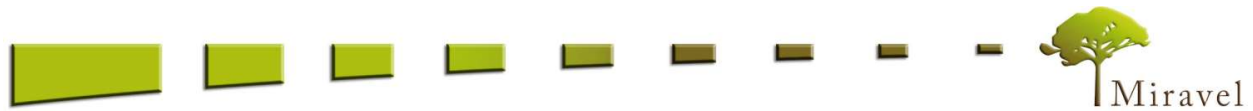


Figure 10 Domaine de Miravel General Association

5.2.7 Negative Association

The negative associations were directly extracted from the question no. 11 where respondents were asked to give critics to their experience at Miravel. Just a few of them were expressed and the most mentioned ones were organised in three groups: isolated (“secluded”[R5], “remote”[R3]) “boring” (“boring” [R3], “nothing happens here”[R7], “no restaurants”[R7]); and “hard to find” expressing complaints about the unclear indications from Miravel website. There were also complaints about the internet connection but its importance was rated to be very low. The “boring” element was not related to the seminar experience at Miravel but more with leisure tourism potential of the place, as it is in the countryside, far from any fun or social activities. Furthermore, some respondents attached the boring attribute to the younger visitors in the case of a family holidays “*I would love to come here with my family, but they have teenage children and they thought that they will be bored because nothing happens there*”[R7]. The “isolation” is mentioned as a criticism here just because is close related “hard to find” element. In fact Miravel is “hard to find” because is “isolated” therefore, the negative association is attributed to the Location of Miravel.



However, the “hard to find” negative association can be solved with more accurate indications and suggestions for easy travel in order to reach Miravel.

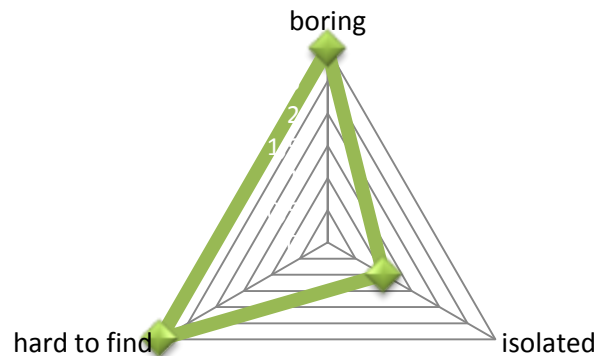


Figure 11 Miravel destination brand negative associations

5.2.8 Business Tourism Niches

Below are graphically presented the suggested types of seminars and trainings that would be suited to be held at Miravel, from respondents' point of view. The teamwork type of seminars was most mentioned and was related to the potential of the nature around Miravel to contribute to more successful seminars. There were also suggested more leisure types of seminars, like painting, cooking, sports, which directs Miravel towards a more targeted market. However, it seems that Miravel has great potential to be attractive and suited to these types of activities.



Figure 12 Specific niches for Miravel

5.3 Partial conclusion

Miravel was appreciated as having “isolation” to be the strongest and the most positive association in relation to seminar experiences. This association is related, from a semantic point of view, with the next in line strong association from Figure 9: “nature” and “no distractions. Miravel was also discovered to be “quiet” and “calm”, having a “positive” and “peaceful” atmosphere. This seem to be participants’ image of Miravel, and in the same time for these reasons, which were positively appreciate, Miravel is suited to be a perfect seminar destination. However, at least for the above mentioned ones (Figure 12)

6 Conclusion

This Master's Thesis started with five sub-questions which guided the research to arrive at this stage. On researcher's way through the project writing process gave answers to these questions, building up on them to reach the objective of this paper. From chapter number three researcher understood that business tourism is another segment of tourism – a very broad segment- which combines leisure activities with business purposes and requires travelling. By analysing this market, its niches and characteristics researcher identified two niches suitable for Miravel: seminars/ trainings and incentives. At a first glance, these two would be the most appropriate for Miravel to target. However, the research continues, reaching destination branding concept. Chapter four gives a list of definitions of the concept and goes also through other branding concepts helping researcher further understand the subject. It was concluded that destination image is the core of branding activities and the most important element to take into consideration when planning branding strategies. However it was also concluded that a destination brand image does not stand by itself and has a series of components some of them discussed and introduced in the interviews: country of origin, logo, name and their associations. The forth component which was identified as being important in the branding process is destination slogan. Domain de Miravel does not have this branding element yet and it is strongly suggested to create one. However, this was not possible until now because no research was made on visitors' perceptions and associations of Miravel. Now, as the company decided to reach the business customer the need for an appropriate slogan is more urgent. For the process of developing this branding element, this dissertation offers valuable theoretical information and also primary data analysis and interpretation. The slogan should encapsulate the experience that Miravel can offer, without being too general. Knowing the targeted market and it's special needs, a slogan can be an effective differentiation tool. The answer to the third sub-question can be used in the creation of a slogan. Chapter five is showing that the isolation of Domain de Miravel is in the same time, the strongest positive and negative association. Seminar participant appreciate the isolation because it makes them focused on



the seminar and in the same time enjoying a magical place. As already mentioned, the negative of isolation can be overcome with a better management of information. Chapter five revealed another important information – the fact that Miravel is considered to be “boring” with nothing happening around and also “safe”. This majorly affects the segmentation developed in the third chapter. A boring and safe environment – in this combination, would certainly not be attractive for the incentive market, where its customers are seeking for adrenaline and entertainment. However, the trainings and seminars are looking for this kind of environments.

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7.2 Appendix II

Price-list Tariff for vacation rentals, according to www.miravel.eu (01.05.2012, 19:12)

The main house (max 24 persons)

2011:

- * High season: 4 900 € /week
- * Mid season and Christmas/New Yaer: 3 950 € / week
- * Low season: please contact us
- * Long weekend in mid and low season: 2 400 €
- * Special offer: 12-16 persons in Mid Season: from 3 200€ / week
- * Special offer: 8-11 persons in Mid and Low Season: from 2 400 € / week

2012:

- * High Season: 5 100 € / week (two weeks privileged: 9 300 €)
- * Mid Season and Christmas / New year: 3 950 € /week
- * Low Season: please contact us
- * Long weekend in Mid and Low Season: 2 400 €
- * Special offer: 12-16 persons in Mid Season: 3 200 € / week
- * Special offer: 8-11 persons in Mid and Low Season: from 2 400€ / week (please contact us)

The Gîte 5 persons 2011 and 2012:

- * Very high season 650 € /week
- * High season 590 € /week
- * Middle season 535 € /week
- * Low season 480 € /week
- * Very low season 420 € /week
- * Weekend 250 €

B&B Rooms

- * 80 € / night for two persons with breakfast
- * 75 € / night for one person with breakfast



The calendar for the Gîte and Manor House follows the one of Gîtes de France (www.gites-de-france.com).

7.3 **Appendix III**

Interview Guide

Thank you for accepting to participate in this Interview.

My name is Anca and I will coordinate this interview. The whole session will be recorded and all the data will be treated confidentially, and will be used only for academic purposes. I would also like to point out that your opinion is important because it will bring great value to this research.

I am a M.Sc. student at Aalborg University and I am currently working at my master thesis project which is the reason why we are here today. My research, as a main topic, is about business tourism destination branding. Therefore my questions will be focused on your perception Miravel and the requirements of business tourism. First we will start with some general issues before we will deal with more specific subjects concerning this research problem.

I. Start

1. Please tell a little bit about yourself and your role in the seminar

II. Country of origin

2.a. What did you think of when you first find out that the seminar will be held in the Southern France? (For participants)

2.b. What was your perception of France, and of the Southern France before coming to Miravel? (For decision makers)

3. How did your perception changed after coming to Miravel?



III. Miravel in a business tourism context

- 4.a. Why do you think the seminar is held at Miravel? (Participants)
- 4.b. Why Miravel was chosen for the seminar? (Decision makers)
- 5. How do you think the venue (kursus sted) influences the quality of the seminar?
- 6. How the fact that the seminar was held at Miravel influenced the quality of the seminar?
- 7. Supposing that you have to organize a seminar, what would be the most important criteria when selecting a destination for the event?
- 8.a. What other activities are you interested in when going to this kind of seminars? (Sports, sightseeing, history, culture, shopping, relaxing)?
- 8.b. How important are these for you, as part of the whole seminar experience, on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)?
- 9. When you think of Miravel, what other types of seminars do you think are suited to be held here, and why?

Attributes and association for Miravel

- 10.a. What would be the biggest advantage of Miravel, from your point of view?
- 10.b. How important is this factor for you, on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)?
- 11.a. What would be the biggest criticism for Domain de Miravel?
- 11.b. How important is this factor for you, on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)?

Brand Identification

- 12. What are the attributes that first come to mind when thinking about Domaine de Miravel France and your experience there?
- 13. What the word Miravel, makes you think of?
- 14. What do you think of when you look at this logo?
(Participants receive a link through Skype of a image containing the logo of Miravel?)

7.4 Appendix IV

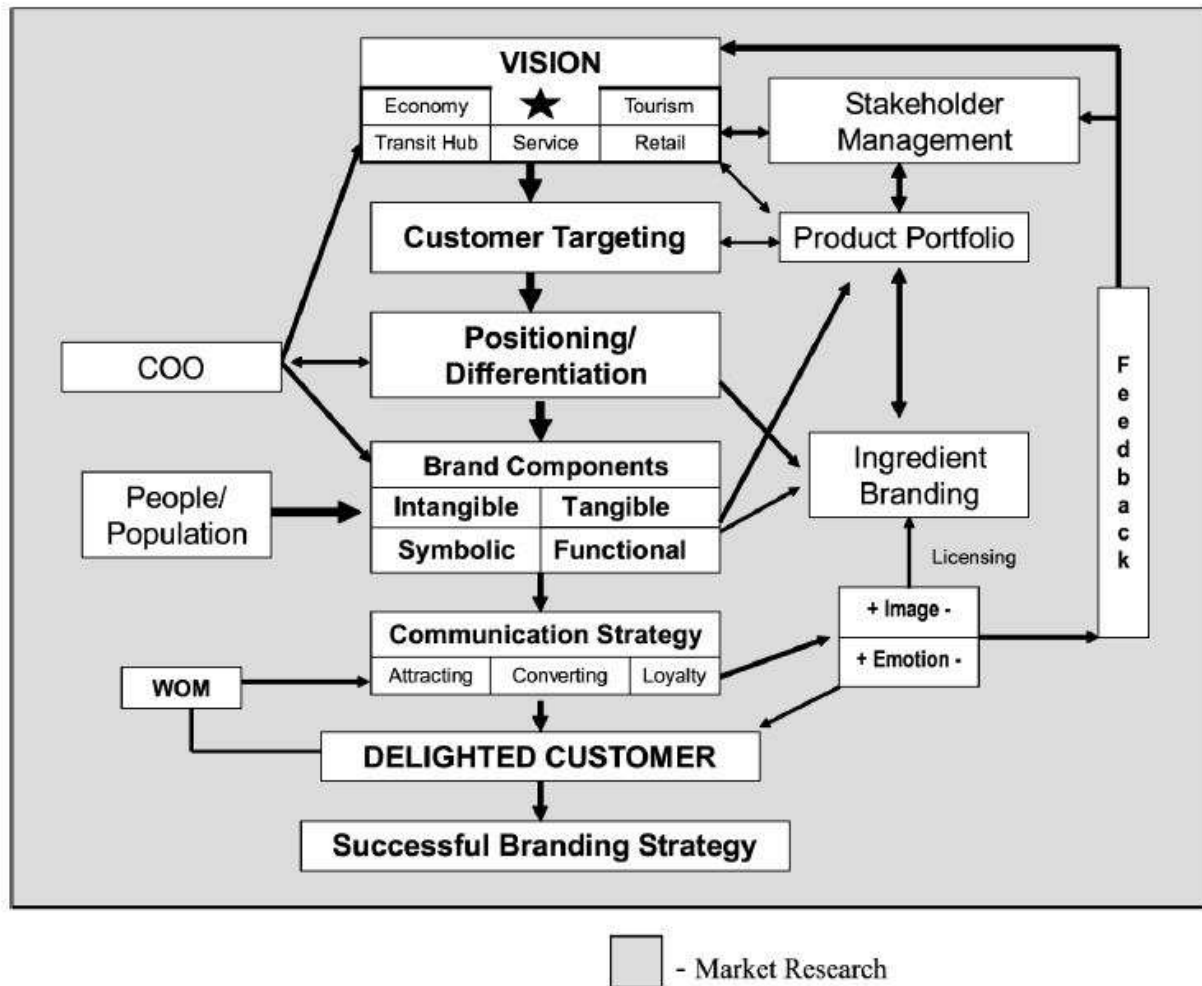


Figure 13 Branding strategy for a destination (Balakrishnan, 2009)

7.5 Appendix V

Table 7 Destination brand components (Balakrishnan, 2009)

	Authors
<i>Tangible; visual; functional elements</i>	
Name, logo, trade mark, graphics	Rowley, 2004; de Chernatony and Riley, 1998
Symbols	Moorthi, 2002
Slogan, adjectives	Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Moorthi, 2002
Colors	White, 2005
Service delivery process/servicescape	Robledo, 2001; Warnaby and Davies, 1997
Postcards, pictures, movies, ads – images; information	Trueman <i>et al.</i> , 2004; O'Cass and Grace, 2003; Woodside <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Human, 1999
Buildings architecture, facilities, places of interest, scenery; attributes	Correia <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Hankinson, 2004; 2005; O'Cass and Grace, 2003; Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Leisen, 2001; Warnaby and Davies, 1997
Souvenirs, shopping items	Leisen, 2001; Warnaby and Davies, 1997; Gordon, 1986
Heroes and heroines	Reichheld, 2001
Functionality,	Hankinson, 2005; Warnaby and Davies, 1997; Pearce, 1991
Ingredient/associated brands, sponsorships, events	Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Moorthi, 2002; Woodside <i>et al.</i> , 2002.
<i>Intangible and symbolic elements</i>	
Perceptions of image	Hosany <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Runyan and Huddleston, 2006; Hankinson, 2004; 2005; Knox, 2004; Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Palumbo and Herbig, 2000
Service satisfaction	McDougall and Levesque, 2000; Warnaby and Davies, 1997
Personality of place, culture, heritage, ambience	Hosany <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Runyan and Huddleston, 2006; Hankinson, 2004; Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Moorthi, 2002; Leisen, 2001; Chen and Gursoy, 2001
Relationship, bond, familiarity, interaction and empathy	Kayaman and Arasli, 2007; Bang <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Moorthi, 2002
Relevance, representational; self-image congruence	Jamal and Goode, 2001; Sirgy <i>et al.</i> , 1997
Personal and social values, self-personality; lifestyle, self-expression	González and Bello, 2002; Jamal and Goode, 2001; Davis, 2002
Needs (physiological; safety; relationship; self-esteem and fulfillment needs)	Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Pearce, 1991 – see travel career ladder
Emotions/mood/senses	Wood, 2007; Roberts, 2005; O'Cass and Grace, 2003; Davis, 2002; Jamal and Goode, 2001; Pritchard and Morgan, 1998
Legends	Reichheld, 2001
Image/roles of people associated with service delivery or destination	Ball <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hankinson, 2005; Grace and O'Cass, 2003; Katzenbach, 2003; Moorthi, 2002; O'Cass and Grace, 2003; Pawitra and Tan, 2003; Warnaby and Davies, 1997
Occasion association, experiences, ambience	Hankinson, 2005; O'Cass and Grace, 2004; 2003; Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Schreuer, 2000; de Chernatony and Riley, 1998
Perception of others perception (WOM, public relations, publicity)	Hankinson, 2004; Wangenheim and Bayón, 2004; O'Cass and Grace, 2003; Bansal and Voyer, 2000
Value/expense perceptions	Cunningham <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Hankinson, 2005; Pawitra and Tan, 2003
Association with other brands	Rangan <i>et al.</i> , 2006

7.6 Annexe VI

Table 8 Destination image attributes (Hankinson, 2005)

Attribute category	Author(s)
<i>Economic</i>	
Commercialised/not commercialised	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Expensive/inexpensive	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)
<i>Physical environment</i>	
Physical environment/economic development	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Attractive/ unattractive	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Busy/quiet	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Relaxed/fast pace of life	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Weather/climate	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Resort atmosphere	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Boring/interesting	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Natural state	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)
Comfort/security	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)
<i>Activities and facilities</i>	
Food	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Suitability for children	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Suitability for different types of vacation	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Tourist facilities and infrastructure	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Accessibility	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Interest/adventure	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)
<i>Brand attitudes</i>	
Overall appeal	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
<i>People</i>	
People	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Culture	Embacher and Buttle (1989)
Trendy/not trendy	Walmsley and Jenkins (1993)
Lack of language barrier	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)
Cultural distance	Etchner and Ritchie (1993)

7.7 Appendix VII

Table 9 Mindjuice seminar time schedule, 7-12 May, 2012

Programme: Mindjuice Miravel, 7 - 12 mai 2012						
hr /jour	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi
6.00-7.00		Yoga 1	Yoga 1	Yoga 1	Yoga 1	Yoga 1
7.00-8.00		Yoga 2	Yoga 2	Yoga 2	Yoga 2	Yoga 2
8.00-9.00		Petit-dèj.	Petit-dèj.	Petit-dèj.	Petit-dèj.	Petit-dèj.
9.00-10.30		formation	formation	formation	formation	Check-out & Au Revoir
10.30-10.45		pause	pause	pause	pause	
10.45-12.30		formation	formation	formation	formation	
12.30-14.00		pause repas	pause repas	pause repas	pause repas	
14.00-15.30		formation	formation	formation	formation	
15.30-16.00		pause	pause	pause	pause	
16.00-18.00	Arrivée & check-in	formation	formation	formation	formation	
18.00-19.30	diner	diner	diner	diner	diner	
19.30-21.00	formation début 19.00hrs	formation	formation	formation	formation	
21.00-21.30	formation fin collation	formation fin collation	formation fin collation	formation fin collation	formation fin collation	
<i>Sous réserve de modifications</i>						



7.8 Appendix VIII

Field Notes

Discussions and observations from the MINDJUICE seminar

05.05.2012

First discussion with 2 of the participants, after making a tour of the property, on the topic of: What are the benefits of having the seminar at Domaine de Miravel?

"It is a beautiful place in the middle of the nature, away from cities and other distractions. Is like a beautiful prison, with no easy way out to the civilization" ... "Oasis for the seminar." ... "It is a great trip to arrive here because is not accessible. It is good exercise for group work to organize the trip to the Domaine." ... "It is an excellent environment for the seminar. It wouldn't be the same if the seminar it would have been held in Denmark. This is something else, new, different from what we are used to." ... "I have never seen a place like this"

They left their luggage in the reception room of Miravel, together with their electronic equipment (mobile telephones, photo cameras, iPods, and watches) and went in the mountains with their tent, sleeping bags, a bit of food and water, for two nights and returned on the starting day of the seminar.

06.05.2012

The teachers came by plane to Paris, took the train to Beziers and from there took a taxi to Miravel. They arrived at 11 in the night – complaining about their long and tiring trip. They were receive with a small snack with French natural products.

07.05.2012

Arrivals started around 2 o'clock and people were coming by car: taxi or rented car - many Spanish registration plates. People complaining about their connections and hard time trying to find Miravel but happy to arrive and see the place and its view. Room repartition of the people. Participants were happy to see the rooms and the bathrooms. Everybody was staying on the front terrace of the house after their arrival. Beautiful weather. The dinner was served and people were happy with the food. People asking about wireless internet connection. Complaints about the cold rooms, asking for heaters or extra blankets. Preparation of the seminar room. Covering the TV with a white cloth not to distract the participants. Chairs positioned in circles.

08.05.2012

Problem in the morning with the hour of the breakfast. Bike trips in the lunch break. Walks in the garden. Teambuilding in the garden. Drinking a lot of coffee and tea in the breaks. Sun bathing and swimming in the river. Playing table tennis. People complaining about the internet connection. 2 complaints about the cold rooms. People lying in the sun. Trainers asking for printing services.

09.05.2012

Changes in the morning planning of breakfast. Breaks outside on the terraces, in the sun or shade of trees. Bike trips. Outdoor seminar group sessions. People lying in the sun. People playing games around the fire in the garden, during the night. Complaints about the hot water in some rooms.

10.05.2012

Opening the pool day. Participants were very happy about that and many were swimming in the pool. Teambuilding session in the garden. Participants were asking new towels. Dinner was prepared in the eating room but everybody was taking the plates and eating outside.

11.05.2012



Last seminar day. Changes in the seminar schedule. People were swimming in the river, swimming pool, biking, walks in the garden during breaks. Last dinner in the seminar – prepared outside with flowers. It was served 3 types of wine (very appreciated – people asking for more). Participants applauded Miravel staff for the good service and good food.

12.05.2012

Participants had breakfast later than usual. They appreciated the French cheese. Some participants showed their appreciation for the food “We received a lot of love from this kitchen”. Everybody left until 12. Some participants forgot some things behind.

7.9 Appendix IX

The logo of Miravel is represented by the below graphic figure of a pine tree. The story behind the logo is that the tree represented here is actually a very close reproduction of a real pine tree from Miravel garden. The owners decided to use the exact shape of the tree because it is the biggest tree around the Domaine and it can be seen from far away, making it a symbol of the place.



Figure 14 Miravel logo



7.10 Appendix X

[R1]

1.[01:10] Role in the seminar

I am the yoga teacher. I don't participate in their classes. I just have yoga sessions with them.

2. [01:22] Perception of France

I've been to France before so I think the first time that I came to France was in 1996. But it was Paris, so coming to the countryside ... it's beautiful, it's quiet, it's a very ideal setting. I've never been to the southern France so I didn't really know what to expect but it has such a good reputation that I knew that it would be good. But my only other experience in France was Paris, so it could not be more completely different.

[What did you know about Southern France before coming?]

I don't know, I thought more of the beach. Like Saint Tropez, Cannes, you know. Yes, my perception of South was more the beach area and not so much wine country. But I actually like the isolation here. I think the beach can be incredibly touristic and populated and I didn't realized that there was such a vast country in the South where you don't see anybody. So it's really refreshing, it's nice.

So what did I felt when I found out that I will come to the Southern France Well I came here last year and I didn't know what to expect so I was very open. I came blind so it's been nothing but a good experience. So to come back a second time ... WAAW! Knowing what I know from last year, was just ... it's the highlight of my year. So I was so happy to come back, and it's so familiar and you know it's such a nice relief to be here and I feel very lucky.

4.a. [04:07]

Because it's so isolated and because the energy is so good and I think that the seminar is about transformation and it's about growth and it's about change and I think that when you are in a safe environment, all of those things can happen more naturally. If you were somewhere else, where there is a lot of distraction, your energy is either misguided, or misdirected and here there's nowhere to go, nowhere to hide. It's very contained, so the process is more powerful, more deep. So it's just being removed from everything that is familiar. The distraction. And all you do is listen to the birds, so it's a calming energy in you're being supported and you're being taken care of, so it's the perfect environment for this seminar.

5.[05:22] importance of location

It's about the isolation and the quiet. And nature is incredible healing. This is really good for your soul. The birds, the river, what more you want?



8.a. [05:52] activities

On breaks I go walking, I explore the nature, tracking, I get lost. I read, I write. I draw. I am very good at being alone and entertaining myself so take a bath, just relax. But you know, being outside, taking some sun, eating. I would also be interested in sight-seeing. I wish I had one more week where I was not working, where I could actually see other things and find out what is here.

9. [06:58] Types of seminars

Yoga retreats, yoga or fitness retreats. People who want to do a detox, this is perfect. An art retreat so people want to do some kind of retreat where they paint, they do some kind of art activity. I think it would be good for couples, families, a cooking course. The possibilities are endless. You can do bird watching. You could study the nature and the plants and the flowers with an expert from here. Sport activities, canoeing, kayaking, bike riding, tracking, more like a boot-camp fitness training, anything.

11.a. [08:37]

The biggest criticism? I don't think I could say anything bad. The internet is slow but when you're here, who cares!! You know, it's not that important. I mean if I had to be specific and complain about something, but no, no complaints, really, not at all. Or maybe a bigger variety of books but I am being very like ... you're making me think.

10. a. [09:27]

The nature and the food. The food is incredible ... It's quiet.

12. [09:38]

It's quiet, people, the nature is incredible, the staff is always really nice. It's such like a nice environment. Such a nice place to come to. The weather is great ... I mean look, I'm getting like super dark

[R2]

1.

My name is Rasmus and I participated in the Mindjuice Master Coach seminar which is part of a bigger education less than a year. We went to Miravel to have a seminar which was very depth going work with participants. It demanded some more focused and some more being together the whole group so going to Miravel was ... I think a good choice.

2.

I was very happy to hear this because I like southern France. I traveled a lot in this area and I always love to come back. So it is my second home. I associate Southern France with food, a lot of food, good wine, little bit the ocean also, not too much. It is definitely there but I am a food lover.

3.



I think first of all ... they know each-other: the owner and director of the coaching company. And besides from this fact they have some understanding of the way Mindjuice does its work and they wanted as little interference as possible so we didn't noticed anyone but ourselves out here, which is one of the good conditions that could happen there. I mean not a hotel there had other customers – this might be like – they were interrupting, who we had to share food with, and here we had to be like our group, only our group being together – that would give the best result for sure. So I think that was part of the isolation strategy, to have the whole place for ourselves in the middle of nowhere.

4.

In my case, since I am an architect, I am very interested in details, and a lot of small things. The room has a big effect on how I feel during the whole thing. So I always notice all the bad things that the others do not notice. That makes me more comfortable during this. It doesn't stress me. To me luxury is a thing that you don't notice. So, if you have a stereo and you hear a bad sound – it's a bad stereo. But if you have the perfect luxury stereo it just plays as you wanted to and you don't have to give it too much attention. The same with this location, it just gave me what I needed without me asking for anything.

5.

I think ... I mean I didn't had the event in other places, but I am pretty sure that if we had been in Denmark for example in some seminar location here it would had been somewhat different in the fact that we did not had to travel. I mean, the way we got there ... it's a little journey and you have to activate yourself to get to that point, you can't just drive your own car and you get there. There is a kind of physical distance which in your head is somehow ... when you change location you somehow activate part of your brain. When you get to Paris, you get amazed by the Eifel tower, things that you don't get amazed by staying in Copenhagen. Though we have also good wine and good meat – but we do not appreciate it in the same way because you're home. So you are more affected by habits. By traveling a bit, you kind of open to everything. Everything seems bigger and new. You activate your brain in a different way. You get out of your comfort zone.

6. [07:28]

What would I look for if I had my own seminar? .. I think that if I have to be in the same scale, as this seminar .. I mean with all these people meeting up for this time. I would definitely look for a non-interrupted place like interruptions not just referring to other people but also to internet connection, noises, staff and the food being weird. I think that I would choose from things that had a good foundation for us, the participants. Having peace and quiet for whatever we are doing. Isolation I would call it. I have this picture in my head, staff walking around in secret corridors, in an old castle. For this kind of workshops this would be the best. We have to focus so much on our inner self, inner life. The other people sometimes in the course were interrupting and you have to dig pretty deep in those courses, you go layer by layer and if people talk about the weather or some superficial stuff you kind lose some of the effect. You have to stay focus in this deeper level of understanding. It would be very important to have this peace and quiet.

7. [10:35]



I mean for the teambuilding you could have some sports events. The biking is pretty nice. It was nice to have this option to go around and see the area. And the kayaking. For this area, there are a lot of things that you can do. But if it is a seminar, the culture is not so important. Depending of what you do, of course, but in our case, we could have held it anywhere where we could have isolation but if we had to travel a little bit to get there. [Sports activities] was a good way to start the whole thing. It was a big challenge for me to do this kayaking. So maybe it will challenge other people too.

9. [12:16]

I'm thinking like food, cooking experience, a wellness thing ... team building things because it's so remote. It good to have this: Now we're here to get to know each other very good and we are uninterrupted. Now it's us.

10. [13:10]

Surroundings, peaceful, like instant peaceful thing. You just feel, nothing is distracting you. When I got there, I turned off my telephone, the first thing, to get the full experience. That's definitely a huge plus. It's a time out, you're out of the rat race instantly. And normally if you go to like a beach, these kind of holiday destinations you still have people trying to sell you things, you have a lot of interruptions. Here is like the mountains, the water and the house, some good food. From there you can plug in whatever you want to the team.

11. [14:23]

The snacks looked kind of the same. But this was some minor thing.

12. [15:32]

Definitely the feeling home kind of sensation. Even if I've never been there is a good welcoming sensation. It is like a meditative state of mind. I felt safe pretty fast. Good feelings. Definitely positive feelings.

12. [16:49]

For me, it reminds of ... we have a fruit here in Denmark which is called "Mirabel". Which is what I think of. It's small and kind of sour. You can eat them but I never know when it is so either I eat them too soon or too late. I don't really like them. Nobody buys them, you just pick them from the tree. Miravel ... Some sparkling water maybe ... refresh ... cold water.

13. [18:42]

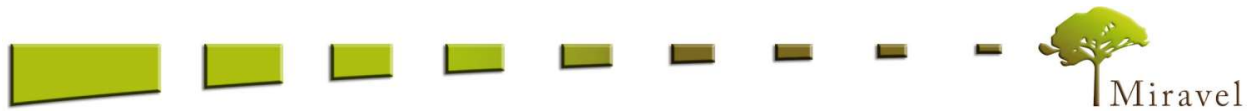
Shadow under the tree. Sitting in the shadow under the tree ... drinking coffee. The sun is like in the top of the tree. Now that you say it, I can see the similarities. Only when you told me I recognized the tree.

[R3]

1. [10:26] Role

I was a student and actually not much more than that. You know ... we were I don't know ... 24 students. And in my student class I was just like everyone else with no particular role.

2. [10:50] perception about SF



[First of all, have you ever been in the Southern France before?]

Yes, once for many many years ago, maybe 20 years, more than that actually, I was 18 years old. Then we drove along the coast. I was in Niece and Monaco, but we were in Nice for five days and other than that I have never been.

[What did you think of when you found out that the seminar will be held in the Southern France?]

Well actually I had heard about it before actually decided to take the education because my ex-girlfriend she took it last year. So I knew about it already. I don't know what I thought. She told me so many beautiful things about the place so I just kind of ... I was very relaxed and I was pretty sure that it would be very fine and great.

[What are your associations with Southern France?]

Oooo Beaches, yeah ... that's the Mediterranean and beaches. I think that when thinking about the Mediterranean France it's you know, places like Monaco and Nice and the film festival – Cannes. You know, places like that are kind of high class, expensive and that's not the places I seek actually. It was wonderful to come to the Southern France and experience something else, which I really much more enjoying in my life: nature and calmness and you know countryside and stuff like that.

3. [13:02]

[So now your perception of Southern France changed?]

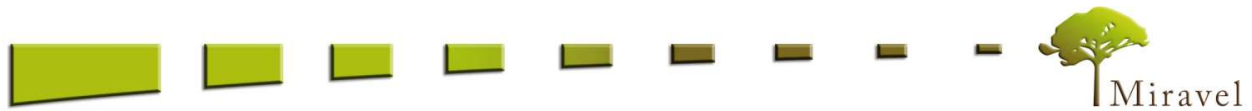
Absolutely! Now I can feel the difference.

4. [13:25]

Well ... I've heard a story but of course it's the calmness, magical side, but I also think it has a lot to do with Francois. His belief about this place is a combination I think. It's a very very beautiful place, they could have chosen it anyway but I think Francois has his own ... you know it has something to do with that as well. So not only that the place looks good but his way of feeling about the place. He does not want to be just a hotel, so his way of working with it, I think that also has a part of it. That's what I can feel myself that it really did a difference.

6. [14:40]

Well if I compare it to the Danish countryside, of course there is a difference because we were in another country, people were traveling and all that but maybe the difference wouldn't be that big but the difference between a city and being on a countryside like that ... that make a huge difference I think. There's nothing to disturb us so we could be troubled or happy or just, you know, mindful after yoga or whatever, always there was nothing to disturb that feeling, so we could be with what we had. We could be with the troubles or the happiness. There are no cars. There were cars on the road but not very many, There was no sound of traffic,



there was no city sounds, there were only the calmness of the nature, the river, ... the river actually does the difference to me because it's moving. You know, the nature didn't move, it was just there. So I think it was ... very good picture on what life is. It is calmness, it is nature but it's alive, it's changes, like the river always change. Actually 24 hours a day. So I think the countryside in Denmark Could had given something of the same feeling but still, traveling to another country, being on traveling for many hours before getting there of course also builds up. There is also different trees, different food, you know.

5. [16:28]

I think it means a lot to many people. What we were trained in those days, for us it was a lot. It was challenging. Well for many people, maybe for everyone. So Having a place like that where everything was so positive, you know it was beautiful, good service and you know all the kind of things like that. Was very important for us to have a positive view on the process we were in. You know, if the place wasn't ok, In the process we were in, very , you know, self developing process, a place that's not ok, that will also trigger something that can be used in a process like that. But I think that for seminars which are not about self development I think it's important that everything is ok. Because otherwise we will not open for information we get from the seminars. I think is really really important.

7. [18:40]

I think actually that economy means a lot, and travel time is actually economy as well. So actually it has to be close. But I am team-leading teams where we do not have seminars like that. So we never really have the need to be away or something. So we just do it at work, really. It's always short seminars, short. Everything is not for many days. But I know what I would like if I have to choose. That's something else. To really make the seminar to make a difference for the people joining the seminar, I would like it to be in a place which is special, which makes the seminar special, and which makes everybody enjoying the memory of it. Maybe also the information presented there it would also used positively. I am pretty sure, so yes, that would be what I would like. But again it's an economically question. I think that's on top of the list, I am afraid. Time and money, you know?

8. [21:13]

Oh yeah sure. As long as they have time. We didn't have time. It was long days, but yes people will always you know ... take their time. When the seminar often takes place in a place like that people do different things. Some people would be in the pool, some you know ... go into the nature, go for walking, it's very common I think. Some people would look at television or something like that. I don't think you had one, did you? If I had the time, I think I would have done something.

[Do you think it is an important element in choosing a destination, the fact that you can do some other things than just having the seminar?]



I don't think so. I don't know. People are mostly focusing in having a good seminar. The place should be positive, good. Should not be any disturbing things. People should be happy in the seminar, and positive thoughts and feelings about the seminar. And if the spare time people have can be used for external activities that actually could be also a positive thing. I think it's a minor priority. I think I would prefer longer seminars to really use the time we have. If I didn't or couldn't have longer seminars, maybe people didn't want to or all the information was too heavy so people who really need a break, then I perhaps should had arranged something playful in the evenings. And of course, when thinking about that, activities would be something I could support the team-building process.

9. [24:28] Seminars

When I think about the place itself it's so It's kind of far away. I think that the distance alone attracts some kind of seminars but it really doesn't matter I think. You know ... the place it's just beautiful, it would have influence on every kind of people I think. Any kind of seminar could also be there. I think it has something ... seminars ... soft things in life: about relations, people, self development or taking care of people all soft things. It fits very well in a place like that. The things we did actually need a place like that.

10.

That it's so remote. There is nothing happening, it's not the café in the town. There is one but we didn't see it. I mean there is nothing you can't do anything and I think that is great for seminars because the things that's presented has the time and people can really take it in. Even if we were to end at 4 o'clock there is still a little to do. So there is time and calmness to actually make all the information be a part of yourself. You're not just driving home, getting to the same home with your family. You really have the chance to think about what you have learned. I think the remoteness is a great advantage.

11. [27:15]

Well the remoteness is a problem as well, because it would had been a lot of other people who wanted to have the seminar but just can't because it's too remote, too expensive to do the travel, You know. So it's a blade with two sides, I think that's about it. I thought it was a great place. Maybe some people would think it's boring because it doesn't happen too much and could be a challenge for some people. But I never get bored in a place like that because I just sense all the beauty, I like that. I like to live in the country side. So I seek places like that. But I am just saying that some people, tot the Mindjuice group, some other people maybe would think:"Ah, a countryside place? Why we couldn't do it in a city where we could have a drink in a bar?" You know, things like that. Some people would think that places like that are boring. They might need a place like that but they might not know it.

12. [28:55]



That's the stairs. The stairs between the house and the garden. [PICTURE] It's not the stair itself, it's just the distance between the garden and the house. You had to do this little walk to get to the garden, I think that very small distance was something very mystical and magic, and it's also the tree standing there. It's kind of meant something to me. I think this is a very personal view.

13. [30:00]

Doesn't that mean beautiful or something, I don't know. I think it means beautiful It does now!! I don't know what it means.

[Do you know in which language means beautiful?] I don't know if it means beautiful. Of course it's in France and it should be French. I don't know. It sounds like a Spanish word as well. I have actually now idea. I don't speak French. It's a very light word, it's not heavy, satisfaction. I got everything I needed on Miravel as well. Miravel sounds like that.

14. [31:38]

Oh yes, the beautiful tree. I think of something else. There is something missing there in the logo. I am missing something. I think it's the main house, main building. I think so. Because the tree is so light green at one of the ends, and the light green I don't remember ... it was darker, the nature was das darker than that. So it is a little too light and makes me think it's something else. I can recognize the tree but it's not true. The very light green color it's not true for me. But I haven't been there all year round. So I don't know. Maybe leafs are very green earlier in the spring. So I am not sure what I think other than that. I think having the tree [in the garden] it's so right. It's a guardian, it protects the place. Or it's a symbol of protection. This is how I look at it. For me that tree was bigger than any other tree in the woods and I am sure that's not true but that was the feeling when I was there. It was so huge. There is something missing in the logo. What is the tree protecting? The tree is part of something and it's not there. So I think that's what I am missing but it's a very personal. I am talking about the logo because I have been there.

[Did you know that this was the logo of the place?]

No, I am not sure I have seen it. Maybe I had. Is it on the homepage? I have been on the homepage many times. Maybe I have seen it but without noticing it. Now that I have been there, I know that there's something missing. For me the main building, the tree and the nature around it's really the things I think about and the tree itself also represents the nature, but for me the main building is perhaps missing and that's it

[R4]

1. [01:02]



Well I was there as a teacher and as a coordinator. Is like being the responsible person for the whole arrangement. Not just the teaching but the whole arrangement around it was my responsibility. So you could call me a course manager.

2. [As I know you also organize the same seminar here, last year. Before that time, have you ever been in the Southern France?]

I was at Miravel in 2008 because I read a newsletter from them from an ecological hairdresser. She has been visiting the mill and I was quite interested in that picture and the way she was writing about the place. At that point I was working as an editor and reporter in a newspaper. Like two weeks I ended my job there to be a part of Mindjuice and to work as a coach and teacher, so I talked my editor into letting me go there and write an article about green tourism. So I went there with my family for 4 days. And in the minute I walked into the mill I was like we are going to do courses and seminars there with Mindjuice.

[What did you think of the Southern France before coming to Miravel?]

Well I've been traveling to the Southern France since I was a kid. So I know the region quite well and my perception is that the food, the weather is lovely, the nature is beautiful and the French are interesting people but also a bit difficult. And that's still my perception.

[After coming here at Miravel, did you change your perception about the region?]

Not really. Well yes you can say that I did. Yes I did because Miravel is very different, not very touristic. It's very authentic. But my perception of Southern France has always been that it's very authentic even if you go to places that are very touristic, filled with tourist, it's still very authentic. Well it's also different to work with people that you know. I mean I know Francois and that means that creates a closer relationship. They are very friendly and very open, very service minded. Which is different from my perception of French people in general.

4.b. [05:23]

Well very much the values that are connected to Miravel. The values about ecological living, I think that kind of value goes very much hand in hand with the values of Mindjuice, so I mean the place is stunning, it's beautiful. But it's not just that. Because I think there are many places in France where you can find a little castle close to a river and situated in beautiful mountains but there is something about the atmosphere at Miravel that really hits me with something. There is also the way of work at the mill, I mean it's so respectful, it's such a fine co-creation of modern thoughts, modern architecture with old architecture. The values connected to the mil ... It's like stepping in into a sacred place.

6. [07:27]



Of course we could have the seminar in many places in the world and would be very effective but the place really supports the kind of work we do. It supports the calmness, the time of reflection, the atmosphere. Because, what I think the kind of values connected to Miravel is that **everything is important**. Every plant, every flower, every piece of food, everything is important. **Everything is valued**. When we go there we work with that all parts of a human being is valued also our dark sides. So what we do there, for one week we work with integrating the whole view, like also the parts you don't like and that's really supported by those beautiful, magical surroundings based on wholeness.

[The practical part of Miravel, influenced your decision of having the seminar here?]

That's pretty important as well, the facilities, but as I said you can find that in many places. Is the atmosphere that comes from the values, so I think the most important thing about Miravel is the values. It's the way that the place it's taking care of. Everything is so integrated. I mean even the pool looks like something that has been situated there for 2.000 years ago. That's quite amazing!

8. [10:07]

Could be, it depends on what your seminar contains. It's not important for us.

9. [10:24]

Well all kind of seminars that are based on reflection. **You can't go to Miravel and not get in touch with something you normally don't get in touch with in your daily busy life**. Actually I consider going there with our business training. So we will take a group of group leaders that are very very busy to come down there for one week and they will really get a different perspective on their life. All kinds. I mean, yoga, meditation, spiritual work, experiential work, emotional work. It's very good for that.

10. [11:38]

The biggest advantages. It's a little bit difficult. When you go there with a business seminar, for instance we will going to go with our leaders, right? For a business seminar. They will all expect to have a single room. And that's a little bit ... I mean then we can only be like 20 people maximum. Maybe less.

[So the biggest advantage would be that people will get something different than they expect?]

I don't think they will be disappointed. Is just that when we leave from Copenhagen they all expect to have a single room. And we wouldn't be able to provide that, that's why we go down there with a very small group of participants and then of course that extends the price. Because normally when you work with business people they won't be willing to share a room. So we could do that with this group of people. But I mean if you work with a director or with an executive, they wouldn't mind paying a 200 extra euro for a single room.



[Would that be an advantage?]

What do you mean as an advantage? I don't get that.

[Referring to the best thing about Miravel.]

The best thing? The best thing about Miravel is that ... well I need to go back to the same answer again. I mean it's the values, the whole foundation in terms of what Francois and Birgit create with this brand. To re-build the original mill into a modern space without ruin ... the respect of old traditions. That I think it's really succeeded. You feel when you go there, you feel you're connected to history. You feel connected to universe. You've got the sky, you've got the river, you've got the mountains, you've got the woods, the sun, everything. It's just like, it's filled with harmony.

11. [15:51]

Well that's about the rooms, I mean. And another challenge is also that the staff working there are not like used to work together with each-other every-day. So it's kind of a group of freelancers. They come from different kind of, you know, backgrounds and I can see that it takes a couple days for that team, you were part of as well, to get together. So need to find out how is it to work with Ariane, how is it to work with Miriam, you know all this kind of people. And you can sense that. I can sense that very clearly. I didn't think it was a problem, but I mean it's just something you need to know when you go there. That is not an established team you work with. You really need to be aware that you have to communicate a lot. You have to put any kind of irritation or frustrations aside. Because, I mean ... You as a customer you need to know that also ... you can't just treat people like ... on a normal conference hotel. You really need to work with them. I think you did fine in that but we also have experience with working with different kind of teams. I don't think all kinds of seminar would be able to do that.

12. [18:25]

Well I would say like a sense of holiness, holism.

13. [19:31]

A garden, water, mountain, nature.

[Do you think these attributes are reflecting your experience here?]

Yes, definitely. I mean it reflected my experience, but the experience was higher than I expected.

14. [20:24]

The logo, I think that's pretty much says it. I think I like the logo. I think the logo is fine.

[Do you think that the logo represents the place?]

I need to look it up. No not at all.

[But what makes you think of, just the logo?]

A garden. I think it should contain something I mean ... a symbol. So if you look at the logo of Mindjuice, you know that? So we've got like this circle and actually it represent 9 temperaments, the nine types which is the system we work with. And if you look at the small drops: singularity combine with the huge drop it looks like a little human being. Even though people won't know that when they are looking at it for the first time, there



is something about colours, something about a circle, about being whole. That I think is very important. I mean if I should work on a logo I'd be more like holistic. Because what our participants experienced there in that week it was a full body experience. But of course that's also because it's combined with our training which is very deep and you know ... normally people would not go into a training like that. But even if I went to Miravel for holiday with my family, I would still have a full body experience. You get in contact with something

[R5]

. [02:39] Role

I was participating in the seminar as a student and we worked on finding our vision, life vision and we talked about our shadows, about our dark shadows so I was a student and I participated in every classes.

4.a. [03:14]

It made perfectly sense to me to leave my hometown, Copenhagen, and travel to a destination where there's calm, nature, the sounds of the river, the birds, to see the trees and the herbs and all that. So it made perfectly sense when I arrived that this is all about. So I think we were there because of the ... we were secluded, the feeling of being secluded from the rest of the world. To be in a oasis of tranquility actually.

2.[04:13]

I was a bit annoyed. Yes, I couldn't see the reason why I had to go all the way to the Southern France to do a week of seminar that they could just as well held in Copenhagen. That was my first thought.

3. [04:37]

Yes, It actually already changed on my way to ... we went to Barcelona, and rented a car there, and already on the trip towards Southern France something happened.

[Have you ever been to the Southern France before?]

No, never.

[What was your perception about this region before coming?]

Well, a wine region, a very beautiful, green nature but never been there. I've been to Italy and Spain but never to Southern France. But most certainly I knew it was beautiful. That's what I expected anyway.

[After your experience here, did you change your impression?]

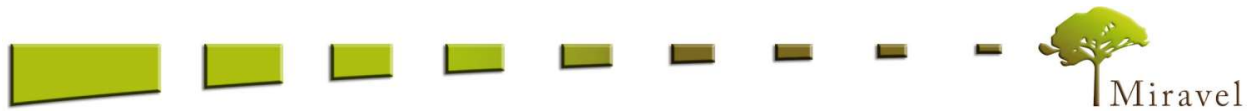
Well yes and no. I was positively when I got there. Of course everything was very beautiful. I didn't expect to be something that it wasn't. My expectations were fulfilled. Maybe even more than that.

[Did you check Miravel's website before coming?]

Yes I did and that already helped a little to me feeling a little bit annoyed to go to France. Because I liked the site and **I could already see from the pictures that it was a beautiful place.**

6. [06:47]

For me personally it had a high impact. It influenced the seminar positively. Most certainly. For me it was perfect just as it was. I divided a room with a girl there. Normally I would probably prefer to stay in a single room but I wanted to do something different. And it made perfect sense as well. It was all about unity and working together and bonding. And the fact that we were outside in the nature as well playing around and



inside the room was with the river running through, the pool, it was just .. it was all . I would prefer it like that rather than being in a hotel where you have the perfect room with all the equipment. It wouldn't fit in. It wouldn't make any sense.

7. [08:50]

Well, probably that it's easy to reach and that the setting is calm and there aren't too many things going on. I liked the fact that was no TV. It's important to be a bit secluded from the outside world when doing a seminar like that.

8. [09:50]

Yes, definitely the possibility of moving around on a bike or having hiking trails or the ability to go for a run or a walk. And the river, you can go for a dip in the river. Or swim in the pool. Even though we didn't had that much time off, it was really nice to just have half an hour where you could go into the river and have a swim. So I think yes it's very important that there is nature where you could use the nature, because it's a way of feeling both your body and your emotions and your thoughts clearer. Even though we don't have too much time, I still appreciate them.

9. [11:11]

Yoga events, most definitely. And also .. we did a lot of teambuilding. It's perfect for that. With more time you could use nature even more. Go hiking or running, kayaking on the river. So teambuilding definitely as well. I could see any company with the urge to do some team-building going to Miravel and going back feeling a lot better.

10. [12:00]

I think it's more things, It's of course the location, with both the building and the rooms and the nature around it. The staff there, the kindness and the availability was definitely something big as well for the whole experience. What I felt when I got there was that I could just leave everything behind. And I was taken care of. I didn't have to think about what I am going to eat, do I have to go to buy something. Everything was just in a flow. So I guess that's the biggest advantage.

11. [13:42]

Maybe getting there. It was a fine trip going there and very beautiful but we had little problem finding it so ... we didn't have a GPS. And we just printed out the indications from your site and that could be a bit clearer maybe. I guess that's the biggest criticism.

12. [14:41]

Unity and Space, the ability to be relaxed and open, and the flow of the nature. It is as if I became part of nature there.

13. [15:38]

It actually makes me think of something Italian. I lived a lot in Italy and I don't know if it makes any sense but "mirar" I guess in Spanish as well, "to look at something". That's the first thing that comes to my mind. Something ancient, something old.

14. [16:50]

[Do you remember the logo of Miravel, how it looks like?]

Yes, but it's not this. Is it? I thought it was more yellow the tree.



[What do you think about this logo? It represents Miravel?]

Yes and no. I recognize the pine. I immediately remembered the nature there. But it's more modern this logo than my experience of being there actually. I mean ... now that I've been there, I like it. But If I hadn't been there, it doesn't really fit into the surroundings. As if this logo it's a bit too clean, somehow. I like the tree. There's something about the white and Miravel in black that doesn't really fit with my experience of it. Well I would suggest to put the house somewhere in a yellow, faint, not anything ... I like the simplicity of it but it is as if ... at least for me the house was really ... it was the first thing I saw when we came driving. And it's where we lived and it's where we ate and it's like the heart of Miravel. I like the tree there because it's beautiful and the story of it and everything, that for me the house could be there behind Miravel in some faint, just as a faint drawing or something.

[R6]

1. [01:30]

I was a participant in the seminar. That was it.

2. a. [01:45]

I thought it was a long way to go. I did not really liked the idea. At the first I kind of got the idea that it was a good thing to be away from home, to focus more on the seminar, not have the all the things you do and kind of get off the seminar. We could just go as well to another 10 minutes drive location and not spend thousands of euro to go to South of France. I was a bit annoyed with the whole thing before I got there.

[What did you think of Southern France before coming here?]

Nothing really, just seemed so far away. I knew only that it was good wine, there is nice climate.

3. [02:55]

Basically I have the same view. It is a beautiful country. The countryside is very beautiful. But I didn't spent time to walk around. I was just at Miravel's place. So I cannot say too much about Southern France really.

4. a. [03:55]

I think it was because the whole atmosphere around the place is very much in sink with what the seminar is about and I think it was very very well thought location for that kind of seminar. And just relaxing and getting in touch with the nature really, listening to the water, good food, just enjoying being in the canyon. It was a really comfortable place to be, and a really secure place to be. We had the mountains surrounding you, it was like really really safe. That was my experience.

6.[05:06] Miravel contributing to the quality of the seminar

I think it contributed in some ways that ... when you're dealing with the things that we were dealing at the seminar and you get out and everything is just very beautiful surroundings, in which you have a variety of different smells and experiences, I think it kind of emphasizing the results a bit and also it was ... the whole atmosphere around was really really nice and calm, down to earth. It was just what we were looking for the seminar, to be in touch with your emotions. It would not have worked in a common environment, that's for sure. So there is something authentic about the place, it wasn't perfect ... the chairs and stuff like that but it was just great.

7. [06:45] organizing a new seminar.

I would have the same seminar I would definitely choose a place like that. You know, away from the big city, some nature around you. You know, like places beautiful to watch and just ... I would definitely choose a place like that if I could.

8. [08:10] extra activities

I would not care too much about shopping really because if you were going just on a holiday I think a little bit of local shopping would be cool ... to go to a local store and buy stuff like that but when are you in that space it



doesn't feel like you have to buy this and this and that like when you are in a big city. And sport activities ... well I saw that there were lots of things to do but there was not a lot of time really. Like mountain bikes and pool and everything. And you can play badminton also, everything. There was a lot of things to do but we just didn't have the time. I would have loved to play some petanque.

9. [09:25] other types of seminars.

I think some health, something about health, you know. Some cooking seminars, learn how to cook French food seminars. Master chef. Yoga seminars I think would be awesome. But also like team building seminars, there is all that place available, a lot of team building and ... painting seminars perhaps where ... teaching people how to paint. I would be a perfect surroundings, there are various place to stand, I think that would be the perfect place to do that.

[Would you be interested in coming here for these kinds of seminars?]

I would probably be interested in coming and teaching them.

10. [11:09] Advantage

That is authentic. It has a lot of history and also that is a bit secluded so you don't run into other tourists. And It is the perfect place for relaxing really, just relaxing.

[Would not this be too boring?]

No, I think that if you come with that in mind. I don't think it's the perfect place to take your kids on an exciting holiday because they might be bored. But for people who just want to take some time off and have a beautiful time, I think it's a beautiful place.

11. [12:20] Criticism

That is so secluded as well. I think it could be updated with the GPS coordinates to be listed down on the website. Bade on the address it's hard to find. When I put the address on my GPS it didn't showed anything. I just used the coordinates from the website and I think that it was only breakfast on the seminar. I think it would be better to have the abilities to cook there. I was under the impression that we would have brunch in the morning and that was it.

12. [15:00] attributes

It would be something like spectacular view, nice atmosphere, authentic environment, peace of mind.

[What do you think it makes it authentic?]

That it's not ... you can see that it's got old doors, old windows, old trees, it's got like ... it's not perfectly arranged everything to be like a five star hotel. It's like it was built and we just maintain it, to keep it working and it just has this feeling that it is authentic.

13. [16:55] Miravel

It makes me think that I had a good time and about the view I had from the balcony ... and peace of mind.

[And when you think just of the word Miravel, what does it say to you?]

Miravel ... It does not say me anything. I was just associating it with the feeling. I don't know what it means or if it means anything.

[Does it sound good?]

Ye ye ye ... it sounds good. Sounds soft.

[Do you think it is an appropriate name for this place?]

Yes, I guess it's the name of the house, the old house. Yes, I don't think it should be "chateau de something". I think Miravel is great, really.

14. [18:20]

[Do you know what is the logo of Miravel? (the respondent was waiting for the link to charge)]

Yes, it's the tree I think. Yeah, exactly ... the tree.

[What do you think about this logo?]



Now I understand that the tree is the big tree on the spot. But otherwise ... I think it's a bit ... I think that the thing that goes out on the left side of the tree a branch or something, that should not be there. And I think there is too much space between the letters, according to the font ... and I would build in something else, I would build in a silhouette of the mansion. Maybe something with the river. I don't know.

[Do you think this logo represents the location here?]

No. It is a fine logo but ... It doesn't say anything about what it is. I have no idea ... maybe is a tree maybe is a mineral water ... I don't know. Maybe has something to do with what Miravel means but ... I think it's a bit ... looks a bit fast finished to me, you know. So the tree could be ... I would suggest to change it.

[R7]

1. [02:21]

I was in Miravel last year as a student and this year I came as a trainer so I am trainer for the new students, but I am not a teacher.

[So last year when you came to Miravel, was the first time here in the Southern France?]

I've been more to Niece and Provence, in that part of France. I've never been to Languedoc and that area.

[What did you think about the Southern France before coming here for the first time?]

I knew that that part is more, I don't know if you could say wild. It's not so ... I think some part of Southern France and some parts of Provinces are like a fairytale or something like this, with a lot of tourists. I knew it wasn't so developed area. I didn't know too much about it.

[Now after your second experience here what can you say about this region?]

It's really really nice. I really wanted to go back after last summer and I really think that Miravel is a fantastic place and when we came by car from Barcelona, it was fantastic to come here in the area and to see that now we are going into the mountains. The water is here. It's really something very very special. I think it's really the last part, the last half hour, three quarters where you drive into that area where it's really something, really special.

4. [05:03]

I know that one of the teachers knows maybe Francois or somebody, or maybe she has been there, I don't know. But she was the one who found the place and actually I was very very much against it last year because it was so complicated to get there. We had to go by different flights. There is no direct flight from Denmark. So that's way I was thinking why we could not found a place, there are a lot of conference places where we could have a conference or southern Sweden or do we have to travel the most of the day but I was convinced last year when I came to the place and also this year. It's really a magical place.

6. [06:08]

I think it is ... when you are developing yourself you need silence and you need not to be interrupted and I don't know if you know anything about shadow work, because that was what they deed. But it's all bad qualities we have in life, which hold us back. It was really a tough part of the education, so that was why people were crying so much. And I think it's very good when you go into things inside yourself. It's good to find a place where you are not so interrupted. If we have been in a city for example, people would have been for a café in the breaks. When you are at Miravel, you are at Miravel. And of course we were a little bit around but the nature is so beautiful and it's so quiet in a way and I think that's very important for that kind of courses.



7. [08:07]

I think I have already arranged a lot of different seminars in Denmark and most of them were because we had to be close to Museums, so we had to find a big city close. But I think if you are working with personal development, you want to discuss things in silence and Miravel is the place, because you are out of contact and you are so far away. That would be very interesting if that kind of seminars you want to make.

8.a. [09:15]

Actually I asked one of the teachers, who is responsible for the education, why don't we use the area? Why don't we go into the forest or go down by the river because we were sitting in that room most of the time and I think if I should make a seminar, I would use the area much more. I think the last day we saw people in canoes, sailing by ... I don't think I would dare to do it but that might be interesting. Just walk around because it's so beautiful place. I also talked with Francois in the last evening and asking about if there are some caves and if they have been people living there. And he said yes, there were people living there for 25.000 years. For a historical person, I think that's very interesting.

8.b. [10:48]

I think it would be very interesting. Maybe it would be interesting into going into the small church nearby Vieussan, where I lived this time at the top of the hill, mountain, it was not a hill. But I think I would use more the environment.

9. [11:35]

I think just like the Mindjuice personal development, but it could also be discussing themes, philosophic themes, intellectual themes and maybe, I am not a person who loves climbing in the mountains, maybe you could use your body much more. I don't know if it's possible to do that in those mountains. So if you are looking for a cultural place, I don't know if there is any interesting museums, churches. I don't know if that's nearby. I don't know if you will find that. But I think when you come there, you should stay there. You should not have a bus going out some place and then come back. It should really be that kind of seminar where you stay there, discussing things. Maybe painting ... that kind of things.

10. [13:14]

The Nature, the mountains and the river, the sounds smells, the quietness, even though the water is making noise but you feel calm in a way when you're there and far away.

11. [13:45]

You made some wonderful food for us but if people would like to go to restaurant, I don't know if there are restaurants nearby. I don't know ... but that's maybe because I don't know the area. I was talking with some of the others that I would love to come here with my family, but they have teenage children and they thought that they will be bored because nothing happens there. I thought ok, that might be a wonderful thing for teenagers to be in a place where you don't have a lot of things going on, the music and all that entertainment. But there are a lot of other places where you can find that. I think the biggest quality of Miravel is quietness.

The travel that we did this time, going to Barcelona, was much better than the one we did last year where we traveled to London and we were in all 4 airports in London. We came with one flight and then driving through London in a taxi, and it was not a lot of time. And then going to Montpellier and when we got home, I think it was from Beziers. And that was I think complicated and luckily we made it. So I think the way of driving from Barcelona to here, it's a nice trip. I can't drive a car and I don't know if I was standing in Barcelona I don't



know how should I get there is I did not know somebody who could drive a car. In that way it's a little bit complicated.

12. [17:18] Attributes

Calmness and beauty, peace, but I think it's also rough. I think the landscape is both very very beautiful but it's also ... you can feel in away very small human being. Especially when you are coming from Denmark where is so flat, no mountains and no rivers which go so fast. You can feel the power in the nature too. The beauty and the power of the nature.

13. [18:34] name

Just the name of it ... I don't know what it means. I found another place in Arizona, where there is a retreat so maybe it's a name of something but I don't know what it means Miravel.

[How do you find the word to be?]

It is a very beautiful word, I like it. It sounds ... Miravel ... it's a beautiful word, name. What does it mean, if it means something?

[It means "beautiful view"]

Aaa ... ok, that gives a good meaning. I would have loved to know that.

14. [20:01]

I know which tree it is, we were sitting under it where we played and had a fire. It's a beautiful tree. But if I hadn't been there I think I would have presumed it was in some kind of forest. I don't get that feeling of this wonderful place. I think it's a little bit boring and old fashioned logo.

[Do you think it represents the location?]

In a way the tree is really very beautiful but maybe I would have used something from the building or ... I don't know If I didn't know anything about this ... I don't know what kind of ... is it a school for children who are playing in the forest ... and I don't know what Miravel means. It doesn't get any information of what it is. It would be very interesting to send that logo to the students to see if they have noticed it, if everybody had noticed that tree.

[What do you think is unique about this place?]

I think there is a special spirit in that place. I don't know. It's nice to be there. And that has to do with the quietness, the nature, the wonderful food. And the rooms and the place. It's not just one thing, it's a mix of all these things