

Branding Liège: An Analysis of Four Presentations of A City



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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to establish knowledge on branding issues of the city of Liège in Belgium. It can be said that Liège is not too well known tourism destination in the international tourism market but according to several documents launched by the city, it has an ambition to become more recognised and to attract more tourists.

It is analysed in the work how is the city of Liège presented to its potential visitors on the Internet on four websites created and managed by the Liège Tourist Office, the VisitBelgium/Belgium Tourist Office, and the Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia (two websites). As it is possible to say that it is not clear what can be considered the brand of the city of Liège, the main research question of the thesis is: what can be considered the brand of Liège?

Since different websites introduce the city emphasising different aspects, the work is also trying to find answers to the questions, why is Liège presented differently by different tourism institutions, and what can be the consequences of dissimilar presentations.

In order to establish knowledge on the issues mentioned above, a content analysis of four websites is carried out, examining texts, images, logos, and slogans presented on the websites. Secondary data found on the websites is complemented by a small amount of primary data collected from the representatives of the institutions that have created the websites.

The data is analysed in the theoretical framework of branding, paying particular attention to two aspects of branding, identification and differentiation. As several institutions introducing the city to tourists are involved, some ideas on destination management in the context of branding are involved into the theoretical framework.

Analysing texts, images, logos, and slogans presented on the websites, the dominant attributes, i.e. the most frequently presented attributes of the city are detected. It is assumed that the dominant attributes may have a role to play in branding the city. In addition, the differences between the four presentations are examined, and the work is trying to find answers to the question why are different institutions presenting Liège from different angles, and what can be the consequences of presenting dissimilar information about a destination that is not too well known yet on the international tourism market.

Finally, based on the outcome of the analysis, the work is presenting several ideas about branding Liège, i.e. it is explained which attributes of the city can be involved into the creation of the brand of Liège.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this work is to address some issues concerning branding of the city of Liège, the principal town of Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium, and presentation of the city to its potential visitors on the official websites of local tourism institutions.

City of Liège has an ambition to become better known tourism destination in the international market, and to attract more visitors, considering itself a place with a rich tourism potential (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 19). At the same time, there is more than one official website on the Internet promoting Liège as tourism destination. The websites created and managed by the tourism institutions that can be seen as representing city level (Liège Tourist Office), region level (Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia), and country level (VisitBelgium/Belgium Tourist Office) present the city from different angles and accentuate different aspects of the city. Certainly, many similar aspects can be found as well. Still, it can be said that it is not clear what is considered to be the brand of Liège, what makes it different from other cities and worth of visiting. Moreover, it is possible to assume that different presentations offered by different tourism institutions may have an effect on the city's goal to become more recognized destination in the international tourism market, to increase visitor numbers and tourism revenue.

Based on the information found in the statistics collected by the tourism market analysts, and in travellers' opinions gathered by several institutions,¹ it is possible to argue that Liège does not belong to the first choice tourism destinations, and is not well-known destination in the international tourism market. Besides, according to the statistics of the Liège Tourist Office² and Maison du Tourisme du pays de Liège,³ a large majority (about 70-90%) of tourists visiting Liège come from Belgium or its neighbouring countries, the Netherlands, Germany and France.

At the same time, the city of Liège has expressed its aspiration to become more important tourist city and to attract more visitors, seeing itself as a place with a rich tourism offer. It is emphasized in a document issued by the city administration that the city's tourism potential and its tourism offer can be considered: "... *very rich and varied*" (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 19)⁴. The document created by the tourism federation of the Wallonia region (Fédération du Tourisme de la Province de Liège) which main city is Liège sees it in the same way considering the tourism offer of the region to be: "... *extremely rich and varied*" (Plan stratégique 2012-2015: 26).⁵

In the document created by the city of Liège, titled as "Projet de ville 2007-2015", one of the goals set to the city for the period till 2015 is to increase the number of tourists visiting Liège, including the number of tourists staying overnight, visiting the attractions of Liège, and/or attending events

¹ euromonitor.com, europeanconsumerschoice.org, virtualtourist.com, tripadvisor.com.

² Office du Tourisme de la Ville de Liège.

³ Both the Liège Tourist Office and Maison du Tourisme du pays de Liège have offices in the city centre, serving tourists and collecting visitor statistics.

⁴ "... Liège présentera une offre touristique très riche et très variée."

⁵ "Offre touristique extrêmement riche et variée."

organised in the city (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 18). The same objectives are stated in the most recent document concerning the future of Liège (Projet de Ville 2012-2022: 19). Developing tourism is presented as one of the most important domains in respect of the future of the city and its citizens (Ibid.). Increasing the number of visitors is set as a goal also by the Fédération du Tourisme de la Province de Liège (Plan stratégique 2012-2015: 43).

1.1 Ambition to Increase Visitor Numbers

One of the main starting points of this work is the issue that Liège has not yet established itself as an internationally well-known tourism destination but has an ambition to become more recognized in the tourism market, attract more visitors, and increase tourism revenue. Therefore, it is possible to say that it can be considered essential how the city is presented to its potential visitors in the promotional materials created by the local tourism institutions.

Promoting Liège as tourism destination is presented as an important goal of relevant institutions (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 19). In the development plan of Liège it is mentioned that the city is going to: “... *intensify its promotion*” (Ibid.)⁶ in order to attract more visitors. It is emphasized that: “*Redesigning the website of the City will ensure maximum promotion of our assets, particularly cultural, for the foreign public and in several languages*”⁷ (Ibid.).

In this work, the information available in English on the websites created by the institutions mentioned above will be analysed. In the document titled “Plan stratégique 2012-2015” it is stated that the main target markets of the region of Liège, in addition to Belgium's neighbouring countries (the Netherlands, Germany and France), are the United Kingdom (in Europe, followed by Italy and Spain) and the United States of America (outside of Europe, followed by China) (Plan stratégique 2012-2015: 18). Thus, it is possible to say that in this context the presentation of Liège in English can be considered very important as it addresses potential visitors coming from target markets. In addition, the information available in English can also be considered essential from the perspective of potential visitors from countries not mentioned here, and/or not speaking French, Dutch or German (the languages mostly used on the websites of the local tourism institutions together with English), and to whom English may be an important mean in information gathering.

1.2 Different Institutions Presenting Liège

In Liège, the tourist office of the city (Liège Tourist Office / Office du Tourisme de la Ville de Liège) is a part of the city administration (Ville de Liège), and its website is a sub-section of the website of the city. This matter is also reflected in its address, www.liege.be/tourisme.

Still, it is not the only (official) website introducing Liège to its potential visitors. Liège as a tourism destination is also promoted by VisitBelgium (Belgium Tourist Office) on the website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, and Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and

⁶ “La Ville, avec ses partenaires dont la Province, intensifiera sa promotion”.

⁷ “La refonte du site internet de la Ville assurera la promotion maximale de nos atouts, en particulier culturels, auprès du public étranger et en plusieurs langues”.

Wallonia⁸ on two different sites: www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html. Under the terms “local tourism institutions”, “local tourism developers” or DMOs (destination management organisations) used in this work, the institutions mentioned in this paragraph are understood. As mentioned above, it is possible to say that they are representing three different levels: city level (Liège Tourist Office), region level (Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia) and country level (VisitBelgium/Belgium Tourist Office).

The issue that attracted the attention of the author of this work is the matter that although there can be found numerous similarities in the ways how Liège is presented by different tourism institutions, the four websites often emphasize different aspects of the city. It is possible to say that different tourism developers present Liège as tourism destination from different angles. Moreover, it is difficult to say what is considered the brand of Liège.

1.3 Problem Formulation

The goal of this work is to establish knowledge about presentation of the city of Liège on the Internet on the websites created by the local tourism institutions (in their English versions), and to find answers to the following questions:

- What can be considered the brand of Liège?
- Why is Liège presented differently by different tourism institutions?
- What can be the consequences of offering dissimilar presentations of the city to its potential visitors?

In order to find answers to these questions, the work is first of all going to establish knowledge on the following issue:

- How is Liège presented to its potential visitors on the Internet by the local tourism institutions?

In order to answer these questions, a content analysis of the four websites mentioned above will be conducted. The following components will be examined: texts, images, logos and slogans (if there are any). The contents of the websites will be analysed from the perspective of destination branding. Prior to that, the concepts of brand and branding will be discussed, as well as the importance of destination branding. The latter can be considered especially relevant since Liège is a destination that has the aim to become more recognized. Moreover, several ideas concerning branding capital cities will be included into the work as Liège is the central town of Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium. Furthermore, as there are different institutions introducing Liège on the Internet, and presenting the city from different angles, some theoretical ideas concerning destination management will be used in this research.

⁸ Office de Promotion du Tourisme de Wallonie et de Bruxelles.

2. Methodological Considerations

This analysis of branding issues of the city of Liège is applying case study design that enables to carry out: “... *the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case*” (Bryman 2008: 52). The work is primarily a qualitative research. Still, it contains some quantitative aspects as well as the most frequently presented attributes in the presentations of the city will be examined. However, as the number of items that are treated quantitatively is not large, there is no need for the use of any special software to deal with the quantitative information.

The study is based on secondary data above all, collected from the websites of the institutions promoting Liège as tourism destination. Secondary data is complemented by a small amount of primary data gathered from the representatives of the tourism institutions that have created the websites under the observation.

The analysis of the data found on the websites can help to find answers to the questions how is Liège presented to its potential visitors on the Internet by the local tourism institutions, and what can be considered the brand of Liège. The data collected from the representatives of DMOs can help to understand why different institutions emphasize different aspects of the city in their presentations.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

It is possible to say that since Liège has not yet established itself as a well-known destination in the international tourism market but has an ambition to improve its position in the market and to attract more tourists, it can be considered very important how the city is presented to its potential visitors on the Internet, i.e. what kind of information is chosen to represent the city in order to make it attractive and worth of visiting.

Therefore, theoretical ideas of branding are considered relevant to include into this work. The theoretical framework of branding enables to analyse how the city of Liège is presented to its potential visitors: how are the elements considered important by theoretical approaches to destination branding presented in the case of Liège, which aspects of the city are emphasized by the local tourism institutions, and what kind of messages about Liège as tourism destination can be conveyed by the elements chosen. Furthermore, in the context of the theoretical framework of branding, several ideas concerning identification and differentiation in branding will be discussed in the theory chapter, and applied later in the analysis of the case of Liège.

The work is also going to explain why branding can be considered important to a tourism destination, and what can be specific features in branding cities, as well as capital cities.

Analysing the presentations of the city on the four websites mentioned in the introduction from the perspective of destination branding, it is possible to establish knowledge about branding Liège. As several differences can be found in the presentations created by different tourism institutions, the analysis of presentation of Liège in the theoretical framework of destination branding allows discussing what can be considered the brand of Liège.

Finally, some theoretical ideas of destination management will be shortly discussed in the theoretical part of this work with the purpose to deal with the issues concerning different institutions promoting Liège as tourism destination, having the same goal – to present the city to its potential visitors – but making different choices and emphasizing different aspects of the city.

2.2 Data collection

In order to establish knowledge about how is Liège presented to its potential visitors on the Internet, and what can be considered the brand of Liège, the information in English available on the following four websites will be analysed: www.liege.be/tourisme created by the Liège Tourist Office, www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege managed by VisitBelgium (Belgium Tourist Office), www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php administered by Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia, and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, also managed by Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia.

It is argued by Diekmann and Cloquet that websites can be seen as complex phenomena demanding: “... *methodological precision regarding data collection in order to ensure the liability of research*” (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 24). Among the four websites under the observation, the website of the Liège Tourist Office can be considered the most complex as it is offering the largest amount of data, presented in different sub-sections. Other websites analysed contain less data, consisting of the first page with links to the selected attractions.

In the context of this work, and in the theoretical framework of branding, the information presented on the first page of each website can be considered especially important since it may indicate what is decided to be the most important attributes of Liège to present to potential visitors, i.e. the first page may present the elements that can be seen as components of branding the city.

Only the English versions of the websites are analysed. The focus of the analysis is on all material offered, both textual and visual: texts, logos, slogans, and images. Images can be found in the format of pictures as well as in the form of video clips. The analysis of this information enables to examine which attributes of Liège are chosen to present by the institutions that have created the websites under the observation, and may help to understand what can be considered the brand of the city of Liège. In addition, it allows to discuss the similarities and differences between the presentations offered by the tourism institutions behind the websites. Finally, the outcome of the analysis of this information allows supposing what can be the consequences of the different presentations of the city on the Internet.

2.2.1 Composition of the Questions Presented to DMOs

In order to get primary data for answering a research question, why is Liège presented differently by different tourism institutions, representatives of DMOs that have created the websites presenting Liège to its potential visitors were contacted. All tourism institutions that have created the websites

under the observation were asked to participate in this research.

The questions presented to the DMOs were based on the theoretical ideas on destination branding and destination management that will be discussed in the theory chapter. The questions asked were mainly based on two sets of theoretical ideas presented in the next chapter of the work, concerning (1) identification and differentiation aspects of branding, and (2) the relationship between different stakeholders / destination management institutions.

It will be explained in the theory chapter why identification and differentiation can be seen as central concepts in branding. Basing questions presented to the representatives of the local tourism institutions on these aspects of branding may help to establish knowledge on the subject of branding Liège. As creating strong brand can be a mean to achieve a differentiated position in the market (Swan and Zou 2012: 4), it can be considered essential for a destination that has a goal to become more recognized, like Liège.

In order to understand why Liège is presented differently by different institutions, the questions based on theoretical ideas on destination management were asked. It is pointed out by Pereira *et al.* that unity, collaboration and synergetic interaction among stakeholders is essential in order to achieve a positive outcome of destination branding (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93). Therefore, the subject of possible collaboration was involved into the questions presented to the representatives of the DMOs.

The questions asked (in French) were the following:

- (1) Why are different aspects presented and emphasized in the presentations of Liège on four websites introducing the city to its potential visitors?
- (2) What can be the consequences of presenting the city to its potential visitors in different ways?
- (3) How could the institutions presenting Liège on the Internet collaborate in order to communicate the same message on Liège to its potential visitors?
- (4) What can be considered the brand of Liège?⁹

Prior to asking the questions, it was explained to the representatives of DMOs which websites were involved, and a summary of aspects of Liège presented by different institutions was presented.

The material gathered from the representatives of the institutions behind the websites introducing Liège can be found in the Appendices A, B and C.¹⁰

The data collected from the representatives of the tourism institutions presenting Liège to its potential visitors on the Internet may help to understand the reasons why there can be found

⁹ The questions in French: (1) La ville de Liège, pourquoi est-elle présentée différemment par les institutions qui ont créé les site web sous observation ? (2) Quelles peuvent être les conséquences d'offrir des différentes présentations de la ville à ses visiteurs potentiels? (3) Les institutions présentant Liège sur Internet, comment pourraient-elles collaborer afin de communiquer le même message sur Liège à ses visiteurs potentiels? (4) C'est quoi, l'image de marque (*brand*) de Liège?

¹⁰ The initial idea was to conduct semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the local tourism institutions. Due to several reasons, the author of this work had to change her work strategies.

differences in the presentations of Liège. At the same time, the information found in the answers of the representatives of the institutions behind the websites analysed in this work can contribute to establishing knowledge on what can be considered the brand of the city of Liège.

2.3 Methods

For this work, content analysis (textual analysis) is chosen to be used as method, complemented with questioning the representatives of DMOs as explained above. The content analysis of the four websites will be conducted, taking texts, logos, slogans, and images under the observation.

Analysing the information mentioned enables to understand how Liège is presented to its potential visitors, and to discuss branding issues of the city.

2.3.1 Defining Content Analysis

As it is explained by different authors, content analysis can be defined as a technique that allows making inferences from texts or other meaningful matters by identifying characteristics of messages (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 172, Fennell 2001: 406, Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23). In the following sections, the content analysis technique will be discussed. Furthermore, it will be explained what can be the subject of content analysis in the case of tourism destination presentations, and, more precisely, in the context of destination/city branding. Moreover, it will be discussed why content analysis can be an efficient tool in the analysis of destination presentations, and how it can help to answer the research questions of this work.

According to Pritchard and Morgan, content analysis is a technique that allows investigating cultural texts in order to understand: “... *how they help to create and reproduce meanings which in turn shape our knowledge of the social world*” (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 172). It aims to: “... *provide convincing readings of cultural texts, and to draw various conclusions from them, by looking at the texts themselves rather than at the ways in which people actually consume the texts*” (Ibid.). Furthermore, content analysis tries to apply a structured analysis to material that can be difficult and contentious to analyse, often concerning subjective cultural objects. Having long history of use in communication studies, content analysis has also been used in the analysis of the issues concerning tourism destinations (Ibid.). Applied to this work, content analysis technique enables to examine the content of the four websites mentioned above. At the same time, it allows making comparisons between the different presentations of Liège on the Internet. Furthermore, the outcome of content analysis of the information concerning Liège enables to discuss what can be the brand of the city.

It is explained by Stepchenkova and Zhan that in cultural studies: “... *imagery, including paintings, maps, videos, and even landscapes, is often considered as a form of ‘text’*” (Stepchenkova and Zhan 2012: 3). Content analysis is an attribute-based method that enables to analyse the appearance of certain themes and attributes, their frequencies, co-occurrence, etc. (Ibid.). Thus, content analysis may help to find out what can be considered the dominant attributes of a destination (Ibid.: 4). In the case of Liège, detecting the dominant attributes presented in its presentations may contribute to

a better understanding what can be considered the brand of Liège. The dominant attributes of Liège as tourism destination will be found out in the comparison of the content of the four websites.

It is pointed out by Fennell that there is a debate about how a content analysis should be taken in reference to quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Fennell, both approaches can be used (Fennell 2001: 406). In this work, the qualitative approach is chosen to be used above all. However, some elements of quantitative approach will be included in the analysis of the presentations of the city of Liège when trying to find out what can be the dominant attributes of Liège as tourism destination, and how can these attributes contribute to branding of the city.

It can be said that in the case of content analysis, the context of text (or any other meaningful matter) has an important role to play. Analysing a text (the words from interview, for example), not only the literal word is a guide to the researcher but also: “... *the context in which these words have been offered*” (Fennell 2001: 406). Applying this idea to the analysis of the case of Liège, it can be said that the purpose of the material presented can be seen as offering the context in which the words, pictures, etc. can be interpreted and understood. More precisely, the words, images, etc. can be seen as serving the purpose to present the city to its potential visitors, and to attract more tourists.

Applying content analysis method to this work, the analysis of the four websites will be conducted, taking texts, images, logos and slogans under the observation. It will be explained in the next paragraphs how the subjects of examination can be chosen in the case of the analysis of websites of tourism destinations, and what can be the purpose of the use of this kind of analysis technique in this context.

2.3.2. Limitations

It is argued by Choi *et al.* that: “*Content analysis is exploratory in nature and relies on subjective judgments to some extent*” (Choi *et al.* 2007: 128). Thus, from hermeneutic perspective the findings of content analysis can reflect the social context of the analyser (Gadamer 2004: 269-271, Bryman 2008: 532-533, Fairfield 2010: 10). From phenomenological perspective, the findings of content analysis can be seen as depending on background and life experience of the analyser; that can have influence on the selection of aspects he/she attributes significance in the process of analysis (Smith and Thomasson 2010: 6, Bryman 2008: 15).

The importance of the information available in the English versions of the websites was explained in the introduction of this work. Still, it is possible to argue that examining only the contents of the websites in their English versions disregards possible linguistic and cultural diversities that could be important material for comparisons and could contribute to a better understanding of the choices made by the tourism institutions that have created the information on the websites (Choi *et al.* 2007: 128, Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 24).

2.3.3. Content Analysis of Tourism Destinations

In this work, the ideas concerning content analysis of tourism destinations presented by Diekmann and Cloquet (2012), and Choi *et al.* (2007) will be used as the basis of the analysis. The authors mentioned offer methodological framework that can be considered suitable for the analysis of the case of Liège as they deal with different aspects of tourism presentations in the framework of content analysis.

In their work, Diekmann and Cloquet explain that texts, photos and other materials offered by cities on their websites to potential tourists can be seen as promotional discourse (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23). They see three groups of variables used in the city branding on the websites of cities. According to Diekmann and Cloquet: *“The website analysis determines whether these elements are present, and if so, how they are emphasised”* (Ibid.).

2.3.3.1 Three Groups of Variables Presented by Diekmann and Cloquet

In the following, three groups of variables the cities may use in their presentations on the Internet will be introduced. The analysis of the case of the city of Liège is going to use these ideas as the starting point of the work. It enables to establish knowledge on how is the city presented on the Internet by the local tourism institutions, and how does the information offered by different institutions overlap, or differ from the information presented by other institutions. Furthermore, it will be possible to discuss what can be considered the brand of the city of Liège as the variables pointed out in the work of Diekmann and Cloquet can be seen as possible components of branding.

1) **Logos and slogans** are often presented on websites. Logos and slogans can be seen as reflecting branding strategies of tourism destinations. The content analysis of websites of cities may ask the following questions: *“Does the city use a logo or a slogan? If yes, what does the city want to stress via its logo and slogan?”* (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23). If it is a capital city under the observation, it is possible to ask how is the signification of a logo or a slogan linked to the city's capital status (Ibid.).

Furthermore, a city can be branded not only through logos or slogans but also through the use of colours. Logos and slogans as well as colours used may have a link with the nation using the colours of the national flag, for example; or the national emblem (like maple leaf for Ottawa). Moreover, logos and slogans representing a city can use stylised images of the city, like, for instance, Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, or worldwide known images referring directly to a city, like Eiffel Tower in Paris (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 25).

One of the goals of the analysis of the case of Liège will be to find out what kind of images are used in the presentations of the city, and how are they used.

Slogans may represent the city as conveying a certain message about the experience the city may offer to its visitors. A city may be introduced as being “vibrant” or “trendy”, or using slogans like “New Zealand's capital of cool”, “Breathtaking Athens” or “Vienna now or never” (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 25).

In this work, it will be examined, what kind of experience can be communicated through the logos and slogans used in the presentations of Liège.

2) **Brands.** According to Diekmann and Cloquet, brand can address consumers' social, emotional and psychological needs, as well as build relationships with consumers as well as with stakeholders. Therefore, it can be said that it is important to analyse how cities are presented to their potential visitors in terms of branding. In the case of capital cities, it can also be significant how a city's capital status is reflected in its branding (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23).

As it is mentioned above, it can be said that in the case of Liège it is not clear what can be considered the brand of the city. Therefore, analysing the presentations of Liège from the perspective of branding will be one of the most important parts of this work. Relevant theoretical framework will be introduced in the theory chapter.

3) **Texts and images.** It is pointed out by Diekmann and Cloquet that the content analysis can examine how is a city presented in texts and images; are there any video materials provided by DMOs, what kind of images are chosen to present in videos, and what can be said about soundtracks of videos (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23-24).

If it is a capital city under the observation, one of the goals of content analysis can be to examine if a city presents itself as a "capital" in the texts or images, and if yes, how do the texts and images refer to its capital status (Ibid.). In this context, Diekmann and Cloquet see (cultural, architectural) heritage playing a major role in the presentations of a city (Ibid.). As Liège may be seen as the "capital" of Wallonia region, these issues can be considered important to analyse in the case of Liège as well.

It can be said that photos of monuments presented on websites of tourism destinations are often used to provide a first impression for potential visitors while other information (texts) offer more in depth information about a destination. In addition to monuments, it can be sightseeing, museums and/or heritage that are presented to a potential visitor in the form of texts and images (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 29).

In this work, it will be examined how are the variables pointed out by Diekmann and Cloquet presented on the websites introducing Liège to its potential visitors, and how can they contribute to establishing knowledge on branding Liège.

2.3.3.2. Quantitative Approach Used by Choi *et al.*

Several ideas presented by Choi *et al.* (2007) can be seen as in line with the ideas of Diekmann and Cloquet. According to Choi *et al.*, the texts and images used in promotional materials of tourism destinations can be seen as conveying messages about destinations projected by the institutions presenting destinations to their potential visitors (Choi *et al.* 2007: 120). At the same time, the work of Choi *et al.* can be used as an example of quantitative approach in content analysis referred to above (Fennell 2001: 406).

In their analysis of websites presenting Macau to its potential visitors, Choi *et al.* have chosen to: *“Identify the most frequently used words or phrases and word associations describing Macau as a tourist destination on Macau travel related websites”* (Choi *et al.* 2007: 121).

By identifying frequently used words and/or phrases, it is possible to establish knowledge about how DMOs would like potential tourists to see a destination. In this work, it can be considered very important to identify the most frequently used words and phrases used to introduce Liège to its potential visitors as it may help to answer the question what can be considered the brand of Liège.

Similarly, it will be analysed which objects (buildings, monuments, etc.) are used the most frequently on the images presenting Liège, and what kind of destination is projected through the use of these images, i.e. is the destination presented as a place that: *“... has many old buildings and heritage/historical attractions”*, or a place with rich natural attractions, offering cultural events, or any other way (Choi *et al.* 2007: 123). In the context of this work, it can be considered especially important to understand what kind of destination is projected to potential visitors of Liège through the images chosen to present by the local tourism institutions on their websites.

2.3.4 Content Analysis in This Work

In this work, content analysis can be seen as consisting of several sub-sections, related to each other. The goal of the content analysis of the case of Liège is to understand how is the city presented to its potential visitors; what can be considered the dominant attributes of Liège as a tourism destination, and how can the dominant attributes be seen as components of branding Liège. At the same time, the similarities and differences between different presentations available on different websites will be discussed based on the outcome of content analysis.

Four websites – www.liege.be/tourisme, www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php, and www.opt.be/contenus/liege_the_ardent_city_a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html – will be examined analysing the following information:

- (1) texts introducing the city,
- (2) images,
- (3) logos,
- (4) slogans.

In addition, it will be analysed how is the status of Liège as the “capital” of the Wallonia region reflected in the information offered to its potential visitors on the Internet.

As the issues of identification and differentiation are involved into this research since they can be found in several works dealing with branding introduced in the theory chapter, the information available on the websites under the observation is also examined in terms of identification and differentiation, i.e. it will be discussed how can Liège be seen as different from other destinations, and what can be considered characteristic (unique) features of Liège according to the presentations offered by the four websites.

Based on the ideas of Choi *et al.* (2007), the most frequently used words (or word associations or phrases) and the most often presented features or objects will be identified. This part of the work can be seen as using also quantitative approach to the material under the observation.

The findings enable to find out the similarities and differences in the information on the websites under the observation. First, the similarities found can contribute to finding out what can be considered the brand of Liège. Second, the analysis of the differences found enable discussing what can be the consequences of different presentations offered to potential visitors of the city. The similarities and differences in the presentations may have an important role to play in the case of Liège, a city that aims to become more recognized tourism destination in the international market.

Analysis of texts, images, logos and slogans enables to establish knowledge on what attributes are chosen to represent Liège as a tourism destination. It will be discussed what this selection may indicate to potential visitors of the city and how can it help to understand what may be considered the brand of Liège. At the same time, the outcome of the analysis will form the basis for a discussion about possible consequences of the differences in the information offered by the four websites.

The findings of the analysis can help to understand what kind of destination is communicated to tourists through the selection of words, images and other information representing Liège. Since Liège has not yet established itself as an internationally well-known tourism destination as explained in the introduction of this work but has ambition to become more recognized and increase its visitor numbers, it can be said that the analysis of texts and images representing Liège can also contribute to assuming what can be possible consequences of different representations of the city on the Internet.

The content analysis of each website mentioned above will be complemented by a comparative part of the analysis, examining similarities and differences in the choices made by different tourism institutions. The work will also try to find answers to the question why there can be found differences in the presentations of the city. Moreover, based on the outcome of the content analysis it will be discussed what can be the consequences of dissimilar presentations of Liège on the Internet. The discussion of possible consequences of different presentations of the city will be given in the context of the goals set to Liège as tourism destination, i.e. taking the aim to increase its visitor numbers and the wish to become more visible in the international tourism market into consideration.

The analysis will be carried out based on the ideas of Diekmann and Cloquet (2012), and Choi *et al.* (2007), applying the theoretical framework of branding that will be introduced in the theory chapter of this work.

3. Theoretical Considerations

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of the analysis of branding issues of Liège will be introduced. Firstly, several theoretical ideas of branding will be discussed. It will be explained how brand can be defined, and what is understood under the term destination branding. It will be also discussed why branding can be considered important for a destination. Furthermore, as Liège is a centre of a region (Wallonia), several theoretical ideas about branding capital cities are included into the work. In addition, some theoretical ideas on destination management in the context of destination branding will be shortly discussed since there are different tourism institutions presenting Liège to its potential visitors.

3.1 Defining Brand

According to the American Marketing Association, brand can be defined as a: *“... name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”* (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41). In other words, brand can be seen as a: *“... name, symbol, or other marker that distinguishes one product from another”* (Tasci *et al.* 2007: 1529).

Creating strong brand can be a mean to achieving a differentiated position in the marketplace (Swan and Zou 2012: 4). As the city of Liège is seen by the local tourism institutions as a destination that has a very rich tourism offer as well as a place that has desire to become more recognized in the international market (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 18-19, Projet de Ville 2012-2022: 19, 26), it can be assumed that creating strong brand may contribute achieving a better place in the international tourism market.

3.1.1 Identification and Differentiation

It is possible to say that in the literature on brand and branding, two features can be found that may be seen as central: identification and differentiation. In the analysis of the case of Liège the aspects of identification and differentiation will also have an important role to play as it contributes to establishing knowledge on what can be considered the brand of Liège.

It is argued by Pike that in most brand definitions, the pursuit of differentiation is clearly expressed. According to him, most brand definitions can be seen as variations of that proposed by Aaker: *“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 1991 in Pike 2009: 857, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

Identification is described as related to the elements that can be seen as characterising the goods or services. Qu *et al.* see identification as: *“... the explication of the source of the product to consumers”* (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). In the tourism context, product generally represents something physical, which can be: *“easily modified”* but *“a place as a product is a large entity which contains*

various material and non-material elements to represent it" (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). Identification is also seen as related to creating loyalty and influencing purchase intentions (Stokburger-Sauer 2011: 1282).

In their explanation of brand, Morgan *et al.* broaden the understanding of differentiation and identification. According to them, brand can not only be seen as differentiating products (or places) from others in the market but also as representing a promise of value, inciting beliefs, evoking emotions and prompting behaviours. Brand may have social and emotional value to users. In addition, brand can have personality and it can speak for the user. In addition, brand may: *"... enhance the perceived utility and desirability of a product. Brands have the ability to add or subtract the perceived value of a product"* (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41). Among other issues, it will be analysed in this work what kind of values are promised to potential visitors of the city of Liège through the presentations offered by local DMOs on their websites.

The definitions of brand given above describe brand as a name, logo, trademark, design or other marketer. In their work, Moore and Reid explain that many elements can be included and combined in the creation of brand. According to them, pictorial symbols (like logos) can be accompanied by text and/or colour that differentiate one product from another. It is pointed out by Moore and Reid that brand is quite often a combination of pictorial symbol, text and colour, illustrating it with the example of Kodak where a picture and a text are accompanied by the combination of colours, yellow and red (Moore and Reid 2008: 421). In this research, it will be examined what kind of marketers are used in the case of Liège.

In some works on brand and branding, discussions on the relationship between brand and image can be found. The concepts of brand and image are seen as linked and the line between them often unclear. Although image formation is not branding, image building can be seen as a step closer to creating brand. While some authors find that the brand comes first, others think that: *"... image is how a brand is perceived"* (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 650). Pointing out the relationship between brand and image can be considered important in the context of this work as the author of this research was dealing with the issues of the image of Liège as tourism destination in her internship portfolio assignment. The research of the image of Liège had the following assumption as the starting point: on the markets outside of Belgium and its nearest neighbourhood, Liège does not have the image of tourism destination (Remme 2013: 2). The idea to deal with the branding issues of the city of Liège stemmed from the work analysing the image of Liège as tourism destination.

3.2 Importance of Destination Branding

It is argued by Swan and Zou that creating strong brand can be a mean to achieve: *"... a differentiated position in the marketplace, allowing a company to lower risks and enhance future profits"* (Swan and Zou 2012: 4). In the case of destinations, creating a brand may help to position a destination among other destinations, and to emphasize the uniqueness of the place (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 81). Still, one can argue that it is difficult to define what can be considered unique at a destination.

A strong destination brand can have: “... *a positive differential marketing effect*” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93), and may result in consumers retaining more information about the destination as well as reacting to the information in a more positive way. Moreover, a destination brand can assist visitors in consolidating and reinforcing their perceptions of the destination after the travel (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93).

Garcia *et al.* see destination branding as vital in the current destination management practice since destination brand may communicate: “... *the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience*” (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

3.2.1 Applying the Ideas on Branding to the Case of Liège

It can be said that branding can be seen as crucial for destinations having a goal to become more recognized and visited, such as Liège. Therefore, in the analysis of the four websites offering information to the potential visitors of the city it will be examined how can the information offered by local DMOs answer the question what can be considered the brand of Liège. Likewise, applying the ideas concerning differentiation and identification in branding to the analysis of the information about Liège enables discussing branding issues of the city of Liège.

At the same time, analysing the information offered to the potential visitors of Liège in the theoretical framework of differentiation and identification allows also to discuss differences and similarities between the presentations of the city created by different DMOs. Based on this discussion, it is possible to assume what can be the consequences of the differences in the presentations of Liège available on the Internet.

3.3 Explaining Destination Branding

Destination branding may be defined as: “... *a way to communicate a destination's unique identity by differentiating a destination from its competitors*” (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). Thus, it can be said that the aspects of identification and differentiation that can be seen as central in the definitions of brand in general are also essential in explaining destination branding.

As it is mentioned above, brand and image can be seen as closely related phenomena. Moreover, correlation can be found between brand and image of a destination as creating a brand for a destination may be seen as creating the desirable image to it. Creating a brand for a destination can be a complex process that may have influence on the image of a destination and on the way how a destination is differentiated from other destinations (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 82).

In the light of the ideas presented above it is possible to argue that the information available on the Internet may have crucial importance in the formation of expectations on a destination as well as on the formation of the image of a destination. Moreover, it can be supposed that differences that can

be found in the presentations of Liège may have consequences on how the city is perceived by its potential visitors, and what kind of image the city may have in the eyes of potential tourists.

While destination branding can be seen as a process used to develop a unique identity to a destination which, at the same time, makes it different from other (competitive) destinations, it can also be interpreted as a way to develop an emotional link between destination and tourists (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93).

Although creating an emotional link between places and their visitors can be based on both identification aspect and differentiation aspect of branding, differentiation aspect seems to prevail in the literature on destination branding. It is argued by Qu *et al.* that the key to branding is to make consumers perceive the difference between different places/brands, and to create a brand that allows perceiving a destination as a unique place that is: “... *hard to be replaced by other brands*” (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). Differences help tourists to evaluate a brand and to attach to it (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). However, as already mentioned above it is difficult to define what can be considered unique in a tourism destination as the perception of uniqueness can be seen as a subjective phenomenon.

According to Qu *et al.*, tourism destinations generally tend to emphasize points of parity such as high quality of accommodation, good restaurants, or well-designed public spaces. Still, it can be said that it is more important to understand what makes a destination different from other destinations; i.e. what associations of a brand can be advantageous over competitors (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466).

It is possible to argue that in the case of destinations that have not yet established themselves in the international tourism market as the first choice destinations, such as Liège, it can be especially important how are the features that can make a destination different from other destinations pointed out in the presentations offered to potential visitors. In this work, it will be analysed what kind of brand associations there can be found in the information on Liège offered on the websites under the observation, and what attributes are emphasized by local DMOs that can make Liège different from other city destinations.

3.4 Attributes of Destination Involved in Branding

A destination can be seen as a complex of tangible attributes such as beaches or historical sites, as well as intangible attributes such as culture, customs, and history (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). Therefore, branding a destination can mean taking attributes of different nature, both tangible and intangible, into consideration. Moreover, it is possible to say that destination branding combines products and services, as well as: “... *commoditization of people's culture and environment*” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 92).

Culture and history can be seen as having strong influence on the way how places are seen and represented (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 167). It is explained by Pritchard and Morgan that tourism representations: “... *do not exist in isolation but are intertwined in a circuit of culture*” (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 168). Thus, tourism representations can be seen as forming part of a circuit

which is continuously produced and reproduced. In the light of the ideas of Pritchard and Morgan it is possible to say that the relationship between tourism representations and the culture and history of a destination can make tourism representations an extremely interesting subject to study. In the analysis chapter of this work it will be explained how tourism representations and cultural and historical issues are related in the case of Liège. Moreover, it will be examined how cultural and historical issues can be seen as involved into the branding Liège.

As a combination of tangible and intangible attributes, destination can be seen as a complex phenomenon that makes the creation of a brand to a destination complex as well. It is pointed out by Qu *et al.* that due to the complex nature of destination, generalisation of the identity of a destination is inevitable when creating a brand (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466).

3.5 Destination Branding as Collective Effort

It is argued by Pereira *et al.* that different approaches to destination branding can be found in the tourism literature concerning institutions involved in the process of branding. The process of branding can be seen as a collective effort involving different stakeholders. At the same time, some authors: “... consider the concept of destination branding a myth and a misleading notion due to the lack of clear ownership and control” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93). Still, according to Pereira *et al.*: “The process of destination branding can only be successful if all the destination stakeholders are involved” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93).

As it is mentioned above, in the case of Liège several institutions can be found that offer presentations of the city of Liège to its potential visitors, and can be seen as involved in the process of branding the city. Therefore, the idea of Pereira *et al.* concerning the need to collaborate when branding a destination is an important starting point for this work as several differences can be found in the presentations of the city of Liège offered by different institutions.

However, it can be argued that it is difficult to say what can be understood under the expression “all the destination stakeholders”, i.e. which institutions can or should be involved into the process of branding a destination. While stakeholder can be defined as any group or individual who can affect the achievement of the goals set, or may be affected by the achievement of these goals, it is still a complicated task to define which groups or individuals can be seen as stakeholders in the tourism context (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). Despite of this rather vague notion, stakeholders can be divided into two groups as far as destination branding is involved, primary and secondary stakeholders, depending on their: “potential to cooperate with or to be a threat to DMOs” (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). Primary stakeholders are seen as having a strategic significance in the process of branding a destination while secondary stakeholders may become important for specific issues (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

As it is pointed out by Pereira *et al.*, in order to achieve a positive outcome of destination branding, unity, collaboration and synergetic interaction among stakeholders is essential, particularly because destination branding can be a: “highly complex and politicised activity” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93).

3.6 Branding Cities

It is explained by Diekmann and Cloquet that cities tend to position themselves as art and history entities, or business and conference tourism destinations, trying to develop relevant image through promotion and branding (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). Choosing markers they use when creating a brand, cities try to communicate with a huge diversity of potential visitors. Today, one of the most important communication channels is the Internet in its various forms (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 20).

According to Diekmann and Cloquet, a city is often presented as having one or two signature buildings or landmarks that should communicate distinctive identity of the place. Still, the cities all over the world tend to use similar schemes in their choice of landmarks presented to potential visitors. As a result, identity may become less distinctive, and cities can seem more standardised (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21).

In this work, the ideas of Diekmann and Cloquet concerning signature buildings and landmarks will be applied when trying to find out what can be seen as signature buildings or landmarks in the case of Liège, and how they can be involved in the branding of Liège. Moreover, it is possible to see a link between the ideas of Diekmann and Cloquet and the ideas concerning identification and differentiation aspects of branding discussed above. It is possible to say that the signature buildings or landmarks this work is going to identify in the case of Liège can also be seen as having a role to play when unique features of Liège are discussed, as well as in answering the question what can make Liège different from other city destinations.

It is argued by Diekmann and Cloquet that city branding is a complex task in which product branding theories can be difficult to implement. The complexity arises from offering a broad range of products and services such as accommodation, restaurants, museums, shopping, etc. which are difficult to develop and present in an integrated way, creating a coherent city product. Moreover, cities are: “... consumed simultaneously by a wide variety of consumers for different purposes” (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21).

Taking the fact that Liège can be seen as a former industrial town that tries to turn into tourist city¹¹ into consideration, it is interesting to mention that Bramwell and Rawding, analysing the attempts of five old industrial English cities (Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester, Sheffield, and Stoke-on-Trent) to turn into tourism destinations, have noticed that although significant differences can be found between the presentations of the towns, a certain standardisation is evident (Bramwell and Rawding 1996: 201). A standardisation can be found in a widespread use of big city images.

¹¹ It is stated by the city authorities of Liège that developing urban tourism can be seen as one way to change cities facing the decline of traditional industry: “*En ce qui concerne le tourisme urbain, il est un des moyens de reconvertir des villes qui font face au déclin de l'industrie traditionnelle*” (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 18).

Moreover, standardisation can manifest itself in the form of recurring themes such as appealing to better-off visitors (Ibid.: 215). Based on the ideas of Bramwell and Rawding, this work is going to find out what kind of image is chosen to communicate to potential visitors in the case of Liège, and how can it be seen as a part of creating brand of Liège.

In addition to signature buildings or landmarks used in the branding of a city, many other markers can be involved with the goal to build a link between the cities and their visitors, taking modern tourists' tendency to search for lifestyle fulfilment and different experiences into consideration (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21). It can be seen as related to the ideas of Morgan *et al.* presented above explaining that brand can also be interpreted as a promise of value, as well as a mean of evoking emotions and prompting behaviours (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41). Analysing the information offered on Liège, it will be examined what kind of experiences are promised to visitors of Liège, and how can experiences promised be involved into the branding of Liège.

3.6.1 City Branding as Collective Effort

In addition, several other factors may have a role to play making city branding a complicated task, such as overlapping administrative competences, political agendas and a high number of stakeholders to deal with. According to Diekmann and Cloquet: “... *organisations dealing with the development of the city brand – be they governmental, a development agency or a tourist board – very often only have small budgets at their disposal, have limited staff and exert little control over their organisational partners and the complete marketing mix*” (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21). Therefore, the suggestion of Pereira *et al.* concerning the need for close collaboration between stakeholders can be considered very important (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93). Moreover, it can be seen as an intriguing issue to deal with in the case of Liège.

3.6.2 Branding Capital Cities

As the city of Liège is the principal town of Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium, some theoretical ideas concerning branding capital cities can help to establish knowledge on branding issues of Liège.

According to Diekmann and Cloquet, capital cities can be seen as gateways to countries or political entities, being often important tourism destinations at the same time. A capital city may have a symbolic value. Moreover, major art collections and museums of national importance that may have an important role to play for national identity are often found in capital cities (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). Still, as far as tourism is concerned, capital cities may have: “... *a rather ambivalent attitude towards tourism*”, and in many cases: “... *tourism has not been a priority and has lacked appropriate attention from the authorities*” (Ibid.).

In this work, it will be found out how the status of Liège as the centre of a region is reflected in its presentations to the potential visitors on the Internet, and what kind of role it may have to play in branding of the city.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, the representations of the city of Liège in English available on the websites www.liege.be/tourisme, www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php, and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html will be analysed. A content analysis described in the methodology chapter will be carried out, applying the theoretical ideas on branding, destination branding, branding capital cities, as well as destination management in the context of destination branding, presented and discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, the information collected from the representatives of the institutions that have created the websites under the observation will be included into the work.

The aim of the analysis is to find answers to the questions how is Liège presented to its potential visitors on the Internet by the local tourism institutions, why is Liège presented differently by different tourism institutions, and what can be the consequences of offering dissimilar presentations of the city to its potential visitors. Finally, based on the outcome of the analysis it will be discussed what can be considered the brand of Liège.

In terms of methodology, the material under the observation will be analysed, divided and subdivided into groups based on the division offered by Diekmann and Cloquet. As it was explained in the methodology chapter, Diekmann and Cloquet see three groups of variables cities may use in their presentations on the Internet: logos and slogans, brands, and texts and images (photos, videos) (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23-29). Since one of the aims of this work is to establish knowledge about what can be considered the brand of Liège, the analysis of brand cannot be a part of this section of the analysis but will be based on the analysis of other variables: texts, images, logos and slogans.

4.1 Texts

According to Swan and Zou, creating strong brand can contribute to achieving a differentiated position in the market (Swan and Zou 2012: 4). As one of the main goals of this work is to establish knowledge on what can be considered the brand of the city of Liège, a great attention will be paid to the texts introducing Liège to its potential visitors on the four websites under the observation since they may include the elements that can have a great importance in branding Liège. Analysing the texts introducing Liège, it is essential to remember that Liège is a city that has ambitions to become more recognized as a tourism destination in the international market (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 18-19, Projet de Ville 2012-2022: 19, 26).

In the following, the texts presented on the four websites will be analysed. It will be examined which attributes are chosen to represent Liège to its potential visitors, and which similarities and differences can be found in the four presentations of Liège offered by different institutions. The dominant attributes, i.e. the most frequently presented attributes presented to the potential visitors of Liège will be found out. Finding out the dominant attributes in the four presentations of the city can help to establish knowledge on what can be considered the brand of Liège. In addition, the texts will

be analysed in the context of two important aspects of branding, identification and differentiation. Moreover, several other aspects of branding, discussed in the theory chapter, will be involved into this part of the work.

4.1.1 Liège Presented in Text: www.liege.be/tourisme

On the website www.liege.be/tourisme, the city of Liège is introduced as the following:

"As the most important tourist city in Wallonia, Liège has innumerable riches in store waiting to be discovered. The characteristic districts, the river Meuse, which transects from South to North, the abrupt and wooded hills surrounding it as well as its marked relief, providing a multitude of original perspectives give the city an exceptional charm.

A very current folklore kept alive by a positive-minded population, always ready for a feast, lively districts and a large number of restaurants all combine to make this an essential part of any trip to Belgium, not to mention its vigorous cultural and artistic life and a considerable architectural heritage.

The surrounding area also offers a vast array of options for walking and tourist visits."
(www.liege.be/tourisme)

The first step of the analysis of the text presented above will follow the example of Choi *et al.*, presented in the methodology chapter of this work, i.e. it will be identified which attributes are chosen to represent Liège to the potential visitors of the city on the website www.liege.be/tourisme. In the next sections of the work, the same procedure will be followed in the analysis of the other three websites under the observation. Next, the comparison of the attributes presented on the four websites will be presented, and it will be found out what are the dominant attributes representing Liège on the four websites.

It is possible to say that on the website www.liege.be/tourisme, the following attributes are chosen to represent Liège: "the most important tourist city in Wallonia", "innumerable riches waiting to be discovered", "the Meuse river", "characteristic districts", "marked relief", "folklore", "a positive-minded population", "lively districts", "a large number of restaurants", "vigorous cultural and artistic life", "architectural heritage", "options for walking" (www.liege.be/tourisme).

It is pointed out by Diekmann and Cloquet that capital cities are often important tourism destinations (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). In the presentation of Liège on the website www.liege.be/tourisme, the city's capital city status (the centre of the Wallonia region) is emphasized.

Several attributes presented can be interpreted in the light of the ideas of Garcia *et al.* according to which destinations may try to communicate a promise of memorable travel experience which is uniquely associated with the destination (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). It can be said that the

attributes like “characteristic districts” and “innumerable riches waiting to be discovered” may be seen as promises of a memorable experience that can make Liège different from other destinations.

The other attributes presented above will be dealt with in the comparison part of the chapter.

4.1.2 Liège Presented in Text: www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege

The website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege introduces Liège with the following text:

“Liege, just 1 hour away from Brussels by train, is a historical and cultural city on the Meuse river. As the birthplace of Emperor Charlemagne and writer Georges Simenon, this university city has a rich artistic and cultural heritage with an undeniable joie de vivre. The area surrounding Liege, particularly known for its cycling races, offers visitors easy access to the Spa-Francorchamps Formula 1 racetrack and the Henri Chapelle American Military cemetery, the largest in Belgium.

Liège is a historical city on the river Meuse, the birthplace of the Emperor Charlemagne & the writer Georges Simenon and at the crossroads of an important motorway network linking Paris, Amsterdam & Cologne-Germany, it is only a few miles away from Maastricht, Holland. By train, Liège is just two hours from Paris by Thalys or one hour from Brussels. This is the cultural center of Wallonia with an intense artistic life as well as an important architectural heritage.”

(www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege)

It can be said that the main attributes chosen to represent Liège are: “just 1 hour away from Brussels”, “two hours from Paris”, “a historical and cultural city”, “the Meuse”, “the birthplace of Emperor Charlemagne and writer Georges Simenon”, “university city”, “rich artistic and cultural heritage”, “*joie de vivre*”, “cycling races”, “Formula 1 racetrack”, “Henri Chapelle American Military cemetery”, “cultural centre of Wallonia” (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege).

According to Qu *et al.*, a product in the tourism context is generally a large entity containing various material and non-material elements (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). In the presentation under the observation, both material and non-material elements (attributes) are presented as well, with the emphasis on the material elements. Still, among other attributes, a non-material attribute that is difficult to define but may arouse attention as a factor that can make Liège a unique place to visit, “*joie de vivre*” – “joy of living” – of the local population is chosen to represent the city.

4.1.3 Liège Presented in Text:

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

The introduction to Liège on the website

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html is the following:

“Only 1 hour from Brussels, 1 hour from France, 30 minutes from Germany and 15 minutes from the Netherlands, Liege is an internationally-connected city.

The city of Liege is alive and bursting with energy around the clock, yet its wealthy historical past has not trapped it with traditions.

Its historical heritage has undergone successful renovations such as the very contemporary Liège-Guillemins Train Station designed by famous architect Santiago Calatrava.

The art of living in Liege

A host of folkloric activities animate the city all year long, such as the festival on 15 August, especially in the "Outre-Meuse" neighbourhood, which was one of Georges Simenon's (the Belgian Agatha Christie) favourite boroughs. Follow in his footsteps across the city and discover elements of his world of romanesque literature!

Join the crowds on Sundays along the Meuse and enjoy the La Batte Sunday Market. In the evenings, meet the friendly and hospitable locals in a bar or typical café.”

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html)

This website begins its presentation of Liège with the slogan “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps”, that will be analysed in a next section of the chapter.

The attributes chosen to represent the city in the introductory text are: “an internationally-connected city”, “alive and bursting with energy”, “wealthy historical past”, “historical heritage”, “Liège-Guillemins Train Station”, “folkloric activities animating the city”, “Outremeuse”, “Georges Simenon”, “the Meuse”, “La Batte”, “friendly and hospitable locals”, “typical café”

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html).

It is pointed out by Pritchard and Morgan that culture and history may have strong influence on the ways how destinations are presented (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 167). In the presentation under the observation, several attributes are representing the local culture, both from earlier epochs and from our times: rich historical heritage, and writer Georges Simenon who was born in Liège, as well as folkloric activities (of which the festivities of 15th August are the most well-known) and La Batte, a Sunday market having a long tradition and specific atmosphere (<http://www.province-de-liege.info/province/marches/marche-batte.htm>). It can be seen as in line with the idea of Pritchard and Morgan according to which tourism representations do not exist in isolation but are rather closely related with a circuit of culture (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 168).

4.1.4 Liège Presented in Text: www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php

On the website www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php, Liège is presented pointing out the following aspects:

“A dynamic commercial centre with modern pedestrian shopping streets, and a city known as the most francophile place in Belgium, Liege attracts many of its Dutch, French and German neighbours.

Situated at the crossroads of an important motorway network linking Paris, Amsterdam and Cologne, and being the 3rd largest river port of Europe, Liège is focused on being a European city of importance.

What's more, Liege is a City of Art, having seen the birth of Georges Simenon one of the most prolific authors of the 20th century, Zenobe Gramme, the inventor of the dynamo and the reputed composers and musicians A.Gretry, Eugene Ysaye and Cesar Frank.

Liege is also a green city proud of its many parks and public gardens.

Liege however is also “Outremeuse” (meaning beyond the River Meuse). There is a part of the city on the Right Bank of the river that represents a Liege of rebellious, anti-authority spirit. Its love of tradition and its attachment to the Liege dialect give it a unique atmosphere that culminates each year during the festivities of August 15th. ”

(www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php)

The following attributes characterising Liège can be found in the text: “a dynamic commercial centre with modern pedestrian shopping streets”, “the most francophile place in Belgium”, “attracts neighbours”, “situated at the crossroads”, “the 3rd largest river port of Europe”, “a city of art”, “Georges Simenon”, “Zenobe Gramme”, “composers and musicians”, “parks and public gardens”, “Outremeuse”, “the Meuse”, “rebellious, anti-authority spirit”, “Liège dialect”, “love of tradition”, “unique atmosphere”, “festivities of 15th August” (www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php).

In this case, it is interesting to mention that it is chosen to stress that Liège is a tourism destination attracting tourist from the neighbouring countries of Belgium, as shows the statistics of inbound tourism presented in the introduction of this work.¹²

It was mentioned above with the reference to Qu *et al.* that tourism presentations can involve both material and non-material elements (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). This idea can be seen as being in line with the idea of Pereira *et al.* seeing tourism presentations as consisting of tangible and intangible attributes (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 92). In promotion or branding of destination, tangible and intangible (material and non-material) attributes can be combined resulting in commoditization of local people's culture and environment (Ibid.). It is possible to say that in the text available on the website www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php, Liège is introduced more in terms of intangible attributes (francophile place; rebellious, anti-authority spirit, unique atmosphere, love of tradition, etc.) than tangible attributes (large river port). At the same time, in contrast to other websites under the observation, www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php begins its presentation of Liège, introducing

¹² Statistics of the Liège Tourist Office and Maison du Tourisme du pays de Liège.

the city as a commercial centre and good place for shopping.

4.1.5 Dominant Attributes Found in the Presentations

It was explained in the methodology chapter of this work that in content analysis both quantitative and qualitative approaches can be used (Fennell 2001: 406). This work is a qualitative research above all but in order to answer the research question concerning possible brand of Liège, some quantitative approach is chosen to use as well, based on the work of Choi *et al.* (2007), discussed in the methodology chapter of this work as well. In the following, the dominant attributes found in the presentations of Liège on the four websites under the observation will be compared to each other, and the most frequently used attributes will be found out (Choi *et al.* 2007: 121). As a result, a list of the most frequently used attributes will be composed. It is possible to assume that the most frequently presented attributes found on the websites under the observation can have an important role to play in branding the city of Liège. Thus, finding out the dominant attributes can contribute to finding out what can be considered the brand of Liège. At the same time, it shows the similarities of the choices made by the institutions behind the websites introducing Liège to its potential visitors. Later in the work, the differences between the presentations will be analysed.

4.1.5.1 Three Attributes Presented On All Four Websites

It is possible to say that there can be found three attributes represented in all four presentations of the city of Liège: (1) the river Meuse and/or Outremeuse, a district located in an island surrounded by the Meuse and its branch,¹³ (2) cultural and artistic heritage, and (3) attributes related to the population of Liège.

(1) The river Meuse is mentioned both as a natural phenomenon (www.liege.be/tourisme) and as the host of one of the largest river ports of Europe, as well as in relation with the district named after the river Meuse, Outremeuse, which is also the place where many folklore activities and the festivities of the 15th August, mentioned in the texts, take place.¹⁴

(2) All four websites point out that Liège has a rich cultural and historical heritage, presenting both tangible and intangible attributes (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 92). The attributes such as “architectural heritage” (www.liege.be/tourisme), “rich artistic and cultural heritage”, “a historical and cultural city”, (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege), “historical heritage”, “wealthy historical past”, (www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html) can be seen as referring to the churches and other historical buildings of Liège together with the past of the city as a religious centre of the region (<http://www.liege.be/tourisme-en/histoire-et-folklore/histoire-de-liege>). “A city of art” presented on the website www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php can be interpreted as referring to numerous art museums of Liège, as well as to the art created in Liège both in the past and today

¹³ marchespublics.wallonie.be/fr, www2.ulg.ac.be/liege/flash/carte_outremeuse.html

¹⁴ www.liege.be/tourisme, www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php

(www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php). In addition, the website www.liege.be/tourisme emphasizes that Liège is a city of “vigorous cultural and artistic life” (www.liege.be/tourisme).

Three websites of four mention famous people related to Liège in their introductions to the city:

“the birthplace of Emperor Charlemagne and writer Georges Simenon”

(www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege), “Georges Simenon”

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), “having seen the birth of Georges Simenon, one of the most prolific authors of the 20th century, Zenobe Gramme, the inventor of the dynamo, and the reputed composers and musicians A. Gretry, Eugene Ysaye and Cesar Frank” (www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php). The website

www.liege.be/tourisme dedicates the whole subsection (“A short history of Liège. Some famous characters”) to well-known people who have their roots in Liège, or have worked there (<http://www.liege.be/tourisme-en/histoire-et-folklore/histoire-de-liege>).

The choices made by the institutions that have created the websites under the observation can be seen as illustrating the idea of Pritchard and Morgan, according to which culture and history may play an important role in the ways how destinations are presented to their potential visitors (Pritchard and Morgan 2001: 167).

(3) In varied formulations, all four websites present attributes related to the population of Liège: “A very current folklore kept alive by a positive-minded population, always ready for a feast”

(www.liege.be/tourisme), “*joie de vivre*” (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege);

“friendly and hospitable locals”

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html) that can also be seen as the main creators of a city that is “alive and bursting with energy”, as well as organisers of the “folkloric activities animating the city” (Ibid.); on the website

www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php the people of Liège are presented as having “rebellious, anti-authority spirit”, moreover, behind city’s “unique atmosphere” mentioned on the same website also its population can be seen (www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php).

4.1.5.2 Other Frequently Presented Attributes

Three websites of four consider it important to emphasize the location of Liège in the very heart of Europe, its position near big centres like Paris and Brussels, as well as the fact that Liège is easy to access: “just 1 hour away from Brussels”, “two hours from Paris”

(www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege), “Only 1 hour from Brussels, 1 hour from France, 30 minutes from Germany and 15 minutes from the Netherlands, Liege is an internationally-connected city”,

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), “situated at the crossroads of an important motorway network linking Paris, Amsterdam and Cologne” (www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php).

Two websites present information in a way that can be seen in the light of the ideas of Diekmann

and Cloquet, explaining that in the branding of a capital city its role as the gateway to a country or a political entity can be pointed out, as well as the fact that major art collections that can be tourist attractions at the same time are often found in capital cities (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). In the introductions to Liège it is said that Liège is “the most important tourist city in Wallonia” (www.liege.be/tourisme), and “cultural centre of Wallonia” (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege).

According to two websites of four, Liège can also be a destination offering a large variety of places to eat: “a large number of restaurants” (www.liege.be/tourisme), “meet the friendly and hospitable locals in a bar or typical café” (www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html).

4.1.6 Differences in the Presentations

In the previous paragraphs, common traits of the presentations of Liège on the four websites under the observation were detected. Later in this work, it will be discussed how could the attributes found on all or several websites contribute to finding out what can be considered the brand of Liège. In the following, some differences between the presentations will be analysed.

It is interesting to notice which attributes the four websites do present in the very beginning of their introductions to the city of Liège. Two websites of four present a slogan to Liège, which will be analysed below in this chapter. In the case of the website www.liege.be/tourisme, it is “Liège, a city, a spirit”, and on the website www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, the slogan “Liège, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps” is the first introduction to the city of Liège. It is possible to assume that for a potential visitor, the slogan may serve as a title or context that has influence on the understanding and interpreting the text it is followed by.

The website www.liege.be/tourisme is introducing Liège with the following sentence: “As the most important tourist city in Wallonia, Liège has innumerable riches in store waiting to be discovered” (www.liege.be/tourisme), emphasising its status as the centre of the Wallonia region (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). It is also possible to say that in the second half of the phrase, it is implied that Liège is a destination that is “waiting to be discovered”, i.e. it is indicated that Liège is not well enough known in the international tourism market, as it was explained in the introduction of this work, and has a goal to become more visited (Projet de ville 2007-2015: 19). In the light of the ideas of Morgan *et al.*, the expression “Liège has innumerable riches in store waiting to be discovered” can be interpreted as a promise of value (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41), i.e. it is hinted to the potential visitors that Liège is a destination that has something special to offer to tourists, and it can be a new experience for visitors.

Two websites of four begin their introductions with accentuating the location of Liège: “Only 1 hour from Brussels, 1 hour from France, 30 minutes from Germany and 15 minutes from the Netherlands, Liege is an internationally-connected city” (http://www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), and

"Liege, just 1 hour away from Brussels by train, is a historical and cultural city on the Meuse river" (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege). In the latter, two features analysed above as dominant attributes of the presentations of Liège are also indicated.

At the same time, the website www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php introduces Liège as: "A dynamic commercial centre with modern pedestrian shopping streets, and a city known as the most francophile place in Belgium, Liege attracts many of its Dutch, French and German neighbours" (www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php), presenting the city as a great place for shopping, a representative of the French-speaking cultural space, and a tourism destination that is known in its nearest neighbourhood above all.

It is possible to say that the introductions to Liège offered by the four websites are in several aspects communicating the same message about the city but presenting Liège as tourism destination differently by many others. It can be said that despite of similar features, a certain discrepancy can be found in the ways Liège is presented to its potential visitors by different institutions.

In addition to the very first information presented in the texts, several other differences can be found. The website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege considers it important to inform a potential visitor that: "The area surrounding Liege, particularly known for its cycling races, offers visitors easy access to the Spa-Francorchamps Formula 1 racetrack and the Henri Chapelle American Military cemetery, the largest in Belgium" (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege), presenting categories of attributes not mentioned by other websites under the observation. However, the website www.liege.be/tourisme informs that the surroundings of Liège offer "a vast array of options for walking and tourist visits" (www.liege.be/tourisme).

Only the website www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php points out in its introductory text that Liège is: "a green city proud of its many parks and public gardens" (www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php).

Later in this chapter, it will be discussed what can be the consequences of dissimilarities in the presentations of Liège offered to its potential visitors. In addition, the work is going to find answers to the question, why are different aspects accentuated in the presentations of Liège created by different institutions.

4.1.7 Identification and Differentiation in the Case of Liège

It was pointed out in the theory chapter of this work that in literature on branding, two features can be seen as central: identification and differentiation. According to Qu *et al.*, branding a destination can be seen as a way how it is communicated to tourists what makes a destination unique, and what makes it different from other destinations at the same time (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). Moreover, according to the argument of Qu *et al.*, to make consumers perceive the difference between places is the key to branding. In branding, it can be considered crucial to present a destination in a way that

allows perceiving it as a place that, according to Qu *et al.*, is unique and hard to be replaced by others (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466).

In the introductions to Liège analysed above, several attributes can be found that can be seen as presenting Liège in a way which aim is to show what makes Liège unique, and differentiates it from other destinations. It was pointed out that there can be found three attributes present on all websites analysed: the river Meuse and/or Outre-Meuse, a district located in an island surrounded by the Meuse and its branch; cultural and artistic heritage, and attributes related to the population of Liège. Still, it is argued by Diekmann and Cloquet that many city destinations tend to position themselves as art and history entities (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). It is possible to say that cultural and artistic heritage of Liège can be a pull factor for many visitors. At the same time, it is hard to say if it can be considered an attribute that makes Liège unique and different from other destinations as it is difficult to define what can be considered unique. However, it is possible to say that several concrete masterpieces in Liège may be unique.

Thus, in the context of identification and differentiation in branding, it is possible to say that another dominant attribute, the mentality of local population (partly related to the Outre-Meuse district) may be a feature that can make Liège unique and, as it is put by Qu *et al.*, hard to be replaced by others (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466).

According to Morgan *et al.*, presenting a place as being different from others, it is possible to do it in a way that can be seen as a promise of value that should enhance desirability of a tourism product (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41). Seeing it in line with the ideas of Garcia *et al.*, a destination can be presented as the promise of memorable travel experience, uniquely associated with the destination (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). Looking at the dominant attributes found in the presentations of Liège in the context of these ideas, it is possible to say that the values promised to potential visitors of Liège can be memorable experiences springing above all from the mentality of the population of the city, described in the presentations as being “positive-minded and always ready for a feast” (www.liege.be/tourisme), “friendly and hospitable” (www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), having “*joie de vivre*” (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege), and “rebellious, anti-authority spirit” (www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php); the features that all together contribute to creating “unique atmosphere” (Ibid.) of the city.

In the theoretical framework of branding, particularly in the context of identification and differentiation, it is possible to say that together with the mentality of the local population, considered to be an asset of the city, “folkloric activities animating the city” (www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), or “A very current folklore kept alive by a positive-minded population” (www.liege.be/tourisme), especially the festivities of 15th August (www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php) with their centre in the Outremeuse district, can be the attributes that make Liège unique destination that is hard to be replaced by others (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). In addition, the activities and events in Liège can be seen in the light of the idea of Diekmann and Cloquet, explaining that modern tourist is often seeking for lifestyle fulfilment and different experiences (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21), i.e. characteristic

events and local folklore may offer experiences that can be experienced only in Liège. Moreover, there can be found the attributes on three websites of four that can be seen as a promise of lifestyle fulfilment as far as food experiences or physical activities are concerned: “a large number of restaurants” (www.liege.be/tourisme), “typical cafés” (www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), “options for walking” (www.liege.be/tourisme), and “cycling” (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege).

4.1.8 Some Typical Attributes Not Used in the Presentations of Liège

There are several attributes considered rather typical in the literature on branding as far as tourism destinations, particularly cities are concerned. It is possible to say that the presentations of Liège do not emphasize several attributes considered typical.

It is pointed out by Qu *et al.* that tourism destinations tend to: “... *emphasize points of parity such as high quality of accommodation, good restaurants, or well-designed public spaces*” (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466), but focussing in these attributes does not contribute to presenting destination as different from others, i.e. it does not show the advantages of a destination over competitors (Ibid.). In the case of Liège, it is possible to say that the presentations of the city on the four websites under the observation do not have a tendency to emphasize points of parity mentioned by Qu *et al.*.

In their work, Diekmann and Cloquet have reached a conclusion that cities also have a tendency to present themselves as business or conference tourism destinations (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 19). Despite of many conference facilities found in Liège, this aspect is not presented in the presentations under the observation.

Analysing old industrial cities in England – Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester, Sheffield, and Stoke-on-Trent –, trying to become tourist cities, Bramwell and Rawding have pointed out that a certain standardisation can be found in the presentations of these towns. Above all, a tendency to use big city images can be found, as well as recurring themes such as appealing to wealthier visitors (Bramwell and Rawding 1996: 201, 215). In the case of Liège, it can be said that these tendencies cannot be found in the presentations of the city.

In summary, it is possible to say that the presentations of Liège have rather a tendency to emphasize unique aspects of the destination instead of presenting features several authors consider typical in the case of city destinations.

4.2 Images

The analysis of images presented on the four websites under the observation is generally following the same procedures applied in the analysis of texts. It will be found out what kind of images are chosen to be presented to potential visitors of Liège, and what can be considered the dominant

attributes, i.e. the most frequently presented objects on the images found on the websites.¹⁵ Like in the case of texts, finding out the dominant attributes in the form of images can contribute to establishing knowledge on what can be the brand of Liège. In addition, the aspects of identification and differentiation will be involved into the analysis of the images on the four websites as well.

4.2.1 Liège Presented in Images: www.liege.be/tourisme

On the website www.liege.be/tourisme, a panoramic view of the city can be found on the top of the first page. As it was mentioned in the introduction of this work, the website www.liege.be/tourisme is a sub-section of the website of the city of Liège. The same image, a panoramic view, is present in all sub-sections of the website of the city (www.liege.be):



Figure 1. Panoramic view of Liège (www.liege.be).

It is possible to say that in this case, big city image, mentioned in the work of Bramwell and Rawding, is used in the presentation of Liège (Bramwell and Rawding 1996: 201). At the same time, it can be said that the image under the discussion is in accordance with the text introducing Liège, referring to “... *the river Meuse, which transects from South to North, the abrupt and wooded hills surrounding it as well as its marked relief, providing a multitude of original perspectives give the city an exceptional charm*” (www.liege.be/tourisme).

Next to the introductory text on the website www.liege.be/tourisme analysed above, a slide show of small-scale photos can be found, presenting mostly architectural heritage of the city. More and bigger photos can be found in the brochure available via a link under the introductory text, as well as in a sub-section of the website under the title “Liege pictures”. The website www.liege.be/tourisme offers also a virtual tour of the city.

4.2.2 Liège Presented in Images: www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege

The website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege introduces Liège with a mosaic, an assemblage of images presenting the following objects: St. Paul Cathedral; Liège-Guillemins Railway Station (one of biggest train hubs in Europe, designed by the world famous Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, as it is explained in the section “Liege Must Sees” that follows the

¹⁵ The photos on the first pages of websites, introducing the city, will be analysed. In the sub-sections of the website www.liege.be/tourisme, many photographs can be found. Due to limited volume of this work, all information available cannot be included into the work.

introductory text analysed above in this work); the Sunday market La Batte and the Grand Curtius art museum; Coteaux de la Citadelle (a part of the historical city centre), and the Crown Plaza Hotel.

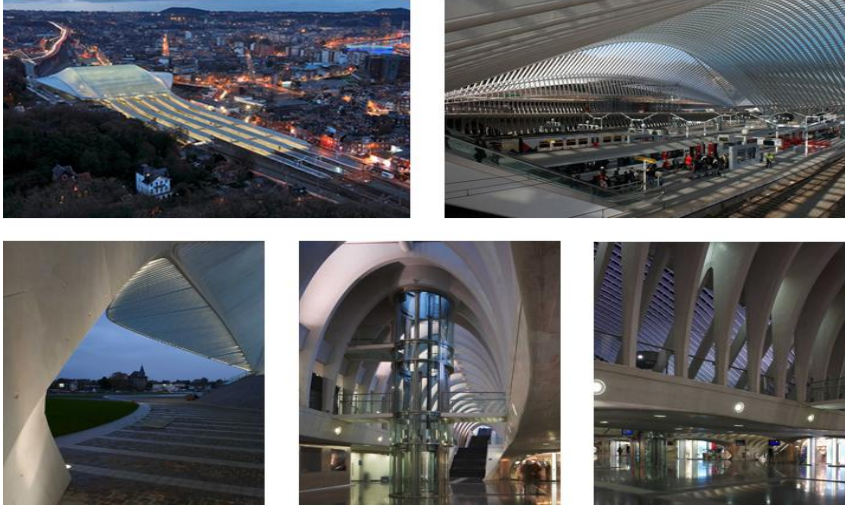


Figure 2. Liège-Guillemins Railway Station. <http://www.eurogare.be/en/liege-guillemins-station.html?IDC=146>, available via link on the website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege.

It is pointed out by Diekmann and Cloquet that cities often try to communicate with a huge diversity of potential visitors (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 20). It is possible to assume that presenting many different aspects of the town in a mosaic of images – modern and historical Liège, culture, traditions, and accommodation –, the website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege has an aim to address potential visitors with different interests.

4.2.3 Liège Presented in Images:

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

The website www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html presents a slide show of images of Liège on the top of the page. The following objects are represented: views on the river Meuse and the city, typical marionettes of Liège (the Tchanchès), the Prince-Bishops' Palace, the Grand Curtius museum, the upper part of the facade of the Opéra Royal de Wallonie, Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, some examples of historical architecture, a café, and Belgian waffles

(www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html).

In this case, it is also possible to say that different aspects of the city are presented to its potential visitors, and a tendency to communicate with a large diversity of potential visitors can be found (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 20).

A video can be found on the website,¹⁶ introducing five cities in Wallonia. Liège is represented by the Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, an example of modern architecture.

4.2.4 Liège Presented in Images: www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php

On the website www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php, Liège is introduced by eight small images, presenting the following objects: two pedestrian streets, Place du Marché (Market Place), the monument of Georges Simenon, St. Paul Cathedral, a view from the river Meuse, the baptismal font of the St. Bartholomew's church, and the Steps of the Montagne de Bueren:



Figure 3. Steps of the Montagne de Bueren (www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php).

In this case as well, it is possible to say that different aspects of the city are presented with possible aim to show the diversity of Liège to its potential visitors.

4.2.5 Dominant Attributes Found in the Images

It can be said that the number of attributes presented by the images in the introductions to Liège is smaller than the number of attributes presented in the texts analysed above.¹⁷

Three dominant attributes can be detected in the images presented on the websites under the observation. (1) The river Meuse is represented by several images (www.liege.be/tourisme, www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php). (2) Liège-Guillemins Railway Station is presented on two websites (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html), as well as (3) St. Paul Cathedral (www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php).

It is possible to say that while in the texts introducing Liège the historical heritage of the city is pointed out, the most dominant attribute found in the images, the Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, is representing the most modern architecture of Liège. At the same time, it can be said that

¹⁶ www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

¹⁷ More attributes could be found if the content of all sub-sections of the website www.liege.be/tourisme would have been analysed.

among the images presented, street views are dominating, introducing different districts of the city.

4.2.6 Identification and Differentiation in the Case of the Images of Liège

If the Liège-Guillemins Railway Station can be considered the dominant attribute in the presentations of Liège in the form of images, it is possible to assume that making this choice, the institutions behind the websites have had an intention to select an object that can be considered unique when presenting the images of the station. It is possible to presume that a large-scale architectural object designed by Santiago Calatrava, an architect known around the world¹⁸ can be an attribute that may differentiate Liège from other city destinations. In line with the ideas of Pereira *et al.* and Qu *et al.*, it can help to emphasize a unique aspect of Liège, and make the city different from its competitors (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466, Pereira *et al.* 2012: 81).

At the same time, it is possible to say that presenting images of the Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, the DMOs show another aspect of Liège – Liège as a big modern city with several examples of contemporary architecture. Thus, the city is presented from different perspectives to its potential visitors, as a historical city with rich architectural heritage, as well as a place that has something to offer for tourists interested in modern design. In the light of ideas of Diekmann and Cloquet, it can be said that the three most frequently presented objects in the images may be seen as landmarks or signature buildings of Liège that should communicate distinctive identity of the place (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21).

4.3 Logos and Slogans

It is pointed out by Diekmann and Cloquet that logos and slogans are often presented on the websites of tourism destinations, and can be seen as reflecting branding strategies of destinations (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23). The idea of Diekmann and Cloquet can be seen in line with different definitions of brand introduced in the theory chapter, defining brand as logo, distinguishing name or symbol, design or other marker that can be identified with a product, differentiating it from its competitors, and contributing to achieving a differentiated position in the market (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41, Tasci *et al.* 2007: 1529, Swan and Zou 2012: 4, Pike 2009: 857, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

4.3.1 Logos

The only website presenting a logo for Liège is www.liege.be/tourisme, created by the Liège Tourist Office:

¹⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/08/architect-santiago-calatrava-valencia>,
<http://www.visitbelgium.com/?page=liege>.



Figure 4. Logo of the city of Liège.¹⁹

According to Diekmann and Cloquet, content analysis can find answers to the questions what does a city want to stress via its logo, and what message may a logo convey about the experience a city may offer to its visitors (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23, 25).

As it is explained in a document issued by the city of Liège, the logo of the city is inspired by the Perron, a monument in the city centre that has symbolical value to the citizens of Liège due to several historical events and the collective memory, dating back to the Middle Ages.²⁰ The Perron can also be seen as the symbol of freedoms of the citizens of Liège and autonomy of the city (www.grandcurtiusliege.be/histoire-et-architecture/le-quartier/la-place-du-marche-et-le-perron, <http://www.liege.be/telechargements/pdf/tourisme/borchure-generale-angl-ot2012.pdf>). It is also explained that: “*Paris has its Eiffel Tour, London has Big Ben, Liège has its Perron*” (Charte graphique de la Ville de Liège 2007: 7).²¹

The shape of the logo can be seen as imitating the shape (silhouette) of the Perron:

¹⁹ The same logo is used by all the services of the city, and its use is regulated by the rules set by the city administration (<http://www.liege.be/vie-communale/communication/la-charte-graphique>).

²⁰ Le Perron, que symbolise le logo, est indiscutablement l’emblème de Liège. Il représente la Ville, rappelant avec force les libertés liégeoises acquises de haute lutte au cours de l’histoire. Le monument qui l’incarne trône fièrement au cœur de Liège, devant l’Hôtel de Ville, comme pour rappeler aux édiles les valeurs d’une Cité que l’on dit volontiers ardente. Reconnu et identifié par tous, solidement ancré depuis des siècles dans la mémoire collective et affective des Liégeois, le Perron s’impose sereinement comme un choix incontournable (Charte graphique de la Ville de Liège 2007: 7).

²¹ Paris a sa Tour Eiffel, Londres a Big Ben, Liège a son Perron (Ibid.)



Figure 5. Le Perron.

It can be said that via the logo presented on the website www.liege.be/tourisme, inspired by the Perron, it is emphasized that Liège is a historical city that values its history, traditions and architectural heritage. At the same time, it is difficult to say if the logo can convey this message to potential visitors of the town because it needs more knowledge and closer examination in order to recognize the relationship between the monument of Perron and the logo presented on the website of the Liège Tourist Office. Thus, it is possible to say that the logo representing Liège is using a stylised image of an important monument of the city (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23, 25) referring to Liège as a historical city but it is difficult to say how potential tourists could interpret it. Analysing the logo and the messages it can convey in the theoretical framework of branding, particularly in the light of the ideas of Morgan *et al.* according to whom brand can represent a promise of value (in this case, promising a destination of historical and architectural heritage), it can be argued that it is difficult to say how can the logo work as a promise of value for potential visitors of Liège who are not familiar with the meaning and background of the logo, and with the history of Liège (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41).

In the context of two important features in branding, identification and differentiation, the logo inspired by the Perron can be seen as referring to: “... *the source of the product*”, i.e. a feature that can be identified with the city of Liège, and as an element that can be seen as characterising the city (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). In line with the ideas of Qu *et al.* it can be seen as representing both material (a monument, architectural heritage) and non-material (symbolic value, history, collective memory)

elements (Ibid.). Thus, it can be said that the monument of Perron and the logo referring to the Perron may be considered significant elements in the context of branding.

It is explained by Moore and Reid that in branding, pictorial symbols like logos can be combined with other elements, like colours (Moore and Reid 2008: 421). In the case of the logo presented on the website of the Liège Tourist Office (and the city in general), not only the shape of the logo is an important feature that may help to differentiate Liège from its competitors but also the colours that can be used in the representations of the logo (Moore and Reid 2008: 421, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647); in this case, ruby red, black and white.²²

According to Diekmann and Cloquet, a city's capital status can be reflected in its logos and slogans. It is possible to say that in the case of the logo inspired by the Perron, the status of Liège as a centre of the Wallonia region is not directly indicated (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 23).

As it was mentioned above, the website www.liege.be/tourisme, created by the Liège Tourist Office, is the only website presenting a logo. The website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, created by the Belgium Tourist Office, does not use any logo. The websites www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, managed by the Belgian Tourist Office, use the logo of the office on the page presenting the information on Liège.

Still, taking the importance attached to the Perron by the city of Liège into consideration, and analysing the logo inspired by the Perron in the theoretical framework of branding, it is possible to say that the Perron may have a role to play in branding Liège.

4.3.2 Slogans

It is explained by Pereira *et al.* that in the case of tourism destinations, creating a brand can help to position a destination among other destinations, and may communicate a message to tourists that emphasizes the uniqueness of the place (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 81). These arguments can be complemented by the ideas of Tasci *et al.*, according to whom brand (name, symbol or other marker) helps to distinguish one product from another (Tasci *et al.* 2007: 1529). Moreover, these ideas can be related to the ones presented in the work of Diekmann and Cloquet, according to which slogans may represent a city as conveying a certain message about the experience a city may offer to its visitors. As already mentioned above, this idea, in turn, can be seen as in line with the ideas of Morgan *et al.* seeing brand as promise of value for potential visitors. Moreover, Morgan *et al.* have explained that brand can evoke emotions, have social and emotional value to users, and increase

²² According to the document titled as "Charte graphique de la Ville de Liège", the combinations of colours that can be used in the representations of the logo are ruby red and black on white background, ruby red and white on black, and black and white on ruby red (Charte graphique de la Ville de Liège 2007: 11). The logo can be complemented with a slogan "Une ville, un esprit" (Ibid.). The slogan (in its English version) will be analysed in the next section of this work.

perceived value of a product (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41). In the following, two slogans created for the city of Liège will be analysed in the light of the ideas presented in this paragraph, i.e. it will be examined how these slogans can convey messages about the city in terms of uniqueness, distinguishing it from other cities, and promising value for potential visitors. The two slogans under the observation can be found on the websites www.liege.be/tourisme and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html.

In their work on city branding, Diekmann and Cloquet explain that cities may be introduced through pointing out different qualities, such as being “vibrant” or “trendy”, as well as using slogans emphasizing different qualities, such as “New Zealand’s capital of cool” (Wellington) or “Breathtaking Athens” (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 25). In line with the ideas of Garcia *et al.* it is possible to say that the slogans of this kind can be seen as communicating the promise of a memorable travel experience (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). Moreover, the slogans can help to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of memories of the destination experience (Ibid., Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93).

4.3.2.1 Slogan “Liège, a city, a spirit”

The slogan presented on the website www.liege.be/tourisme (Liège Tourist Office) is “Liège, a city, a spirit”.^{23 24}

It is possible to argue that the keyword to understanding the slogan is “spirit”. One can say that the message of the slogan is not clear without some additional information but its wording can arouse curiosity to know what is the spirit mentioned in the slogan. The explanation can be found in other texts on the website, explaining that Liège is a place of “exceptional charm”, where folklore is “kept alive by a positive-minded population, always ready for a feast”, and a city of “vigorous cultural and artistic life” with “a considerable architectural heritage” (www.liege.be/tourisme). Thus, in the light of the ideas of Garcia *et al.* and Morgan *et al.*, the slogan “Liège, a city, a spirit” can be seen as a promise of travel experience offering a special atmosphere created by the local population and supported by traditions and cultural heritage (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). At the same time, one can argue that the slogan “Liège, a city, a spirit” may perform better as a mean that can help to: “... *consolidate and reinforce the recollection of memories of the destination experience*” as it is pointed out by Pereira *et al.* (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93), i.e. it may help to review the experience of the spirit of Liège after visiting the city. It is possible to presume that for a potential tourist with no actual visiting experience or prior knowledge on Liège, the message of the slogan “Liège, a city, a spirit” can be rather vague.

²³ In French: Liège, une ville, un esprit.

²⁴ In its French version (Liège, une ville, un esprit) the slogan is often used as a part of the logo (Charte graphique de la Ville de Liège 2007: 11) described in the previous section of this chapter.

4.3.2.2 Slogan “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps”

On the website

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, the following slogan is offered for the city of Liège: “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps”. One can argue that it is a combination of two slogans, the last one explaining and broadening the meaning of the first. The phrase “Ardent city” can also be found in the materials concerning Liège on the websites of several other institutions: Eurostar (<http://uk.eurostar.com/uk/travel-to-belgium/travel-to-wallonia/travel-to-liege/>); the Archéoforum, an infrastructure in the centre of Liège (<http://www.archeoforumdeliege.be>)²⁵, Liège Expo 2017 (<http://www.liege-expo2017.com/en/the-candidacy/why-an-expo-in-liege-in-2017.html>)²⁶, and others.

It is possible to say that the message and the promise of value included into the slogan “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps” is clearer than the message and the promise of value of the slogan “Liège, a city, a spirit”, and do not necessarily need further explanation. Still, in the introductory text presented on the website

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html it is explained that Liège is “alive and bursting with energy around the clock”, and a place where “folkloric activities animate the city all year long”.

Thus, in the light of the ideas of Morgan *et al.*, Tasci *et al.* and Garcia *et al.*, it is possible to say that the slogan “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps” can perform as a promise of value in the form of travel experience where activities and events are concerned (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41, Tasci *et al.* 2007: 1529, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

It is possible to say that the slogans are created with a goal to present Liège as a destination which uniqueness lies in its events, activities and attitude of life of its population. In line with the ideas of Pereira *et al.*, it can be interpreted as a wish to position Liège among other destinations based on these attributes as they are considered unique and characteristics of Liège by the institutions presenting the slogans (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 81). In addition, it may be interpreted in the light of the ideas of Qu *et al.* according to which a destination can try to communicate its unique identity by differentiating itself from its competitors (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466). It is possible to argue that the second part of the slogan presented on the website

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html, “a city that never sleeps” can be seen as having an aim to differentiate Liège from other cities.

The website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege titles its introduction to Liège as

²⁵ An infrastructure measuring 3725 m² under the Saint Lambert Square, the largest of that kind in Europe. The Archéoforum is a combination of museum and event venue, presenting the archaeological vestiges from prehistory to the most recent times (<http://www.archeoforumdeliege.be>).

²⁶ Liège was one of the two candidate cities for organisation the Expo 2017. Several projects started during the candidacy period (<http://www.liege-expo2017.com/en/the-candidacy/why-an-expo-in-liege-in-2017.html>).

“Linger in Liège, Belgium” that can hardly be seen as a slogan. The website www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php does not present any slogans.

4.4 Reasons of Dissimilar Presentations of Liège

Analysis of four websites presenting the city of Liège to its potential visitors has shown that there are many similar or the same attributes presented by the institutions managing the websites under the observation, but also several differences can be found. Moreover, it is possible to say that it is not clear what is considered to be the brand of Liège.

4.4.1 Lack of Collaboration

Dissimilarities between four presentations of the city of Liège can lead to an assumption that the institutions that have created the presentations are acting independently of each other; it is hard to see any signs of collaboration between the institutions behind the websites. Looking at this issue in the context of branding, and taking the fact that Liège is not yet too well known tourism destination into consideration, the possible consequences of offering dissimilar presentations will be discussed in the next section of this work.

In order to find answers to the research questions of this work, all institutions behind four websites under the observation were contacted. Still, it can be said that the Liège Tourist Office was the only institution that was seriously interested in participating in this research.²⁷

In the theory chapter of this work, it was explained that in the tourism context it can be difficult to define who the stakeholders involved into branding process are. However, it is possible to say that destination stakeholders can be groups or individuals who can affect the achievement of the goals set to a destination (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).²⁸ Moreover, it was explained that according to Garcia *et al.*, it is possible to divide destination stakeholders into two groups, primary and secondary stakeholders (Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647). In line with the ideas of Garcia *et al.*, it is possible to say that the institutions behind the presentations of Liège under the examination can be considered primary stakeholders as they can be seen as having a strategic significance in the process of branding the city (Ibid.). According to Pereira *et al.*, destination branding can: “... *only be successful if all the destination stakeholders are involved*” (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93), but often there can be found a problem of lacking clear ownership and control over branding issues (Ibid.).

Answering the question, why is the city of Liège presented differently by different institutions, a representative of the Liège Tourist Office explained that on the website of the office, it is chosen to present architectural, cultural and folkloric heritage of the city. At the same time, the city of Liège has no rights over the information offered by other websites; the Liège Tourist Office could only

²⁷ All three institutions were contacted repeatedly but for the reasons that were not specified, only two of them participated in this work, one with a very short reply.

²⁸ In this case, it is possible to see the aim to become more recognised in the international tourism market as a goal set for the city of Liège.

react if information presented was wrong²⁹ (Appendix A, Liège Tourist Office). It can be seen in line with the argument of Diekmann and Cloquet according to which organisations presenting destinations to tourists have often very little control over other organisations involved (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 21).

The information presented in the previous paragraph can be complemented by an explanation given by another representative of the Liège Tourist Office, according to whom the four websites under the observation are managed independently of each other, and do not communicate the same message about Liège. Moreover, there is not yet a tourism concept created for the city of Liège, nor common promotion strategy³⁰ (Appendix B, Liège Tourist Office). At the same time, the respondent finds that the messages communicated by different websites are not contradictory but emphasising different aspects of the city³¹ (Ibid.).

It was explained in the theory chapter that according to Pereira *et al.*, for achieving a positive outcome of destination branding, unity, collaboration and synergetic interaction among stakeholders can be considered essential, particularly because presenting a destination can be a highly complex activity, sometimes even politicised (Pereira *et al.* 2012: 93). Answering the question, how could the institutions behind the four websites under the observation collaborate with each other, a representative of the Liège Tourist Office found that it would be ideal if other institutions presenting information on Liège consulted the city of Liège (Liège Tourist Office) before publishing information concerning Liège on the Internet³² (Appendix A, Liège Tourist Office).

Another respondent found that there is nothing that could hinder the city of Liège from communicating with all institutions involved into promoting Liège if it was decided to do so by a tourism strategy; still, first of all a tourism strategy for the city should be created³³ (Appendix B, Liège Tourist Office).

Thus, it is possible to say that one of the reasons why Liège is presented to its potential visitors on the websites under the observation, emphasising different aspects of the city, is the fact that the institutions offering information on the city do not collaborate with each other, and therefore communicate different visions of Liège.

²⁹ L'office du tourisme de Liège n'a pas de droit de regard sur la manière dont la ville de Liège est présentée sur les autres sites web. Nous pouvons juste réagir lorsqu'une information publiée est erronée.

³⁰ Les 4 sites que tu mentionnes sont gérés de manière indépendante et la Ville de Liège ne transmet pas de message unique ni suffisamment percutant pour emporter l'adhésion à une image commune. Comme je te l'ai déjà dit, il n'existe pas encore de concept touristique, ni de plan stratégique global de communication et de promotion, même si la réflexion a été entamée.

³¹ Et il faut reconnaître que les messages ne sont pas contradictoires, les sites étrangers mettant l'accent sur les personnages ou événements connus internationalement.

³² L'idéal serait que chaque institution nous transmette la page relative à notre ville pour vérification avant la mise en ligne.

³³ Il me semble que rien n'empêcherait la Ville de Liège d'entreprendre une opération de communication vis-à-vis de tous ses partenaires de promotion, si le plan stratégique global en décidait. Mais il faut d'abord réaliser ce plan.

4.4.2 Addressing Different Markets

Another reason of dissimilarities between four presentations was found in the responses of the representatives of the institutions that have created the websites under the observation.

A respondent explained that four websites are created taking different markets into consideration, and addressing different targets³⁴ (Appendix B, Liège Tourist Office). According to a representative of the Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia, and a representative of the Liège Tourist Office, the website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege is created for the American market, www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php is addressing British tourists, and www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html is a general site in English³⁵ (Appendix C, Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia; Appendix A, Liège Tourist Office). Thus, looking at the information presented having different targets in mind, the information on Liège can be seen in the light of the idea of Diekmann and Cloquet according to which a concept of “external city” can be applied to presentations of cities to their potential visitors, i.e. information about a city is structured and a destination is promoted in a way that could probably meet different market needs, and perform at the international level (Diekmann and Cloquet 2012: 20).

It would be interesting to know if there is any research based on which the decisions what kind of information to present to different markets (on different websites) are made. Unfortunately, the author of this work did not get any information about this issue.

In summary, it can be said that another reason why Liège is presented differently on different websites is the aim to address different markets and present information about the city that could be attractive to tourists coming from different regions of the world (Appendix A, Liège Tourist Office).

However, it is possible to argue that presenting dissimilar information about Liège with the goal to address different markets can be considered a problematic issue since the information available on the Internet can be accessible from all regions of the world, and a possible visitor from Great Britain or Sweden, for instance, does not know that the presentation of Liège offered by the website www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege is created for the American market.

4.5 Possible Consequences of Dissimilar Presentations

The respondents that participated in this research were also asked what can be possible consequences of dissimilar presentations of Liège on the Internet. According to a respondent, there are no consequences as all information presented about the city is valid, and there is no

³⁴ Si l'on veut être plus positif, on pourrait penser que les différents opérateurs mettent en avant des thématiques supposées être particulièrement attractives pour leur public cible, de différentes provenances géographiques.

³⁵ La page internationale du site général en anglais.

contradiction between different sites³⁶ (Appendix A). Another respondent finds that: "... *a kaleidoscopic image may reinforce the idea about richness and diversity of the assets of Liège /.../, the idea that there is something for everyone*"³⁷ (Appendix B).

Still, it is possible to argue that finding different information about Liège, even if it is not contradictory as it was put by a respondent, potential visitor of the city can get confused since it may not be clear what kind of destination is the city of Liège.

4.6 Possible Brand of Liège

Above, it was analysed how is Liège presented on four websites under the observation. In addition, using both data available on the Internet and the data collected from the answers of the representatives of the institutions that have created these websites, the work tried to find answers to the questions why there can be found different aspects of the city emphasized by different institutions, and what can be possible consequences of dissimilar presentations of the city. In the following, the work tries to find answers to the question what can be considered the brand of Liège on the basis of the analysis of the presentations of the city, and the opinions of the representatives of DMOs questioned.

Defining brand, different authors have seen it as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, other marker, or combination of several markers that can identify goods or services and differentiate them from those of others (Morgan *et al.* 2004: 41, Tasci *et al.* 2007: 1529). Destination branding is seen as a complicated task that may involve both tangible attributes (beaches, historical sites, etc.) as well as intangible attributes (culture, customs, history). According to Qu *et al.*, destination branding can be defined as a way how a destination's unique identity is communicated, differentiating it from other destinations (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466).

Answering the question what can be considered the brand of Liège, a representative of the Liège Tourist Office found that the brand of Liège is not yet established³⁸, being a work in progress at the office (Appendix B). Another respondent presented three attributes that can be seen as the brands of Liège: Liège as the most important tourism destination of Wallonia, valuable historical heritage, and legendary friendliness of its citizens together with their love of feast³⁹ (Appendix B).

Identifying the most frequently presented attributes in the presentations of Liège, it was found out that in the texts all four websites pointed out the river Meuse and/or the Outremeuse district, cultural heritage, and attributes related to the population of Liège. In the images, the river Meuse,

³⁶ Il n'y a pas vraiment de conséquences car tous les arguments de présentation de Liège sont valables et ne sont en aucun cas contradictoires d'un site à l'autre.

³⁷ Si l'on veut être positif, une image en caléidoscope pourrait renforcer l'idée de la richesse et de la diversité des atouts de Liège, ce qui est une réalité. L'idée serait : "Il y en a pour tous les goûts..."

³⁸ L'image de marque n'a pas encore été bien établie.

³⁹ Première ville touristique de Wallonie. Patrimoine historique prestigieux. Convivialité légendaire + esprit festif.

Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, and St. Paul Cathedral were detected as the dominant attributes. A logo was found, inspired by the Perron, an example of city's cultural/architectural heritage that can be related to mentality of people of Liège at the same time.⁴⁰ Two slogans, "Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps" and "Liège, a city, a spirit", can be seen as trying to communicate a particular mentality of the population of Liège.

It is possible to say that the dominant attributes found in all data presented in the analysis are the following: (1) attributes related to the population of Liège ("A very current folklore kept alive by a positive-minded population, always ready for a feast"⁴¹, "*joie de vivre*"⁴², "friendly and hospitable locals"⁴³, "rebellious, anti-authority spirit"⁴⁴, especially related to the Outremeuse district⁴⁵; "unique atmosphere"⁴⁶, "legendary friendliness" and love of feast⁴⁷; both slogans; symbolic meaning of the Perron), and (2) cultural/architectural heritage (of which Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, St. Paul Cathedral and the Perron can be the representatives).

Trying to answer the research question, what can be considered the brand of Liège, it can be said on the basis of the information presented above that one possibility to brand Liège is to create a brand based on the attributes related to the mentality of its population, and/or its cultural and architectural heritage. It can be assumed that based on these two attributes, a brand can be created that enables to communicate Liège as a destination promising a memorable travel experience uniquely associated with the city (Qu *et al.* 2011: 466, Garcia *et al.* 2012: 647).

In addition, it is possible to say that one of the most important factors that can be taken into consideration when branding Liège is the fact that Liège is not yet well known tourism destination in the international market. Thus, Liège can be seen as a city with long history and cultural heritage dating back many centuries, but a new destination in the international tourism market at the same time. Therefore, the aspect of "freshness" can be involved into branding of Liège. This idea may be related to a part of the introduction to Liège, presented on the website www.liege.be/tourisme, pointing out that: "*Liège has innumerable riches in store waiting to be discovered*". Thus, it can be considered an option to present Liège to its potential visitors as a historical city that is "waiting to be discovered".

⁴⁰ www.grandcurtiusliege.be/histoire-et-architecture/le-quartier/la-place-du-marche-et-le-perron, <http://www.liege.be/telechargements/pdf/tourisme/borchure-generale-angl-ot2012.pdf>.

⁴¹ www.liege.be/tourisme

⁴² www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege

⁴³ www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

⁴⁴ www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php

⁴⁵ www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php

⁴⁶ www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php

⁴⁷ Appendix A

5. Conclusion

The aim of this work has been to investigate how the city of Liège is presented to its potential visitors on the websites created by the Liège Tourist Office, the VisitBelgium/Belgium Tourist Office, and the Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia,⁴⁸ and to establish knowledge on the following issue: what can be considered the brand of Liège. Moreover, as several dissimilar aspects can be found in the ways Liège is presented by different institutions, the work had an aim to find answers to the questions, why is Liège presented differently by different tourism institutions, and what can be the consequences of offering dissimilar presentations of the city. It is possible to say that a context of the analysis of the presentations of Liège was the aim to make the city more recognised in the international tourism market and to attract more visitors, as it was explained in the introduction of this work.

The data available on the websites under the observation was analysed in the theoretical framework of branding and destination branding, paying particular attention to two aspects of branding, identification and differentiation. A content analysis of the four websites was conducted, examining the following components: texts, images, logos, and slogans. In addition, some issues of destination management in the context of branding were discussed as several institutions introducing Liège to tourists were involved.

The study was based on secondary data above all, collected from the websites promoting Liège as tourism destination. A small amount of primary data was gathered from the representatives of the tourism institutions that have created the websites analysed in this work. Using mostly a qualitative approach, the work applied some quantitative approach as well in order to find out what are the dominant attributes of Liège as tourism destination chosen to be presented to tourists by the institutions that have created the websites under the observation.

The following components of presentations of Liège were examined: texts, images, slogans and logos. In the case of texts and images, the dominant attributes, i.e. the most frequently presented attributes were found out. It is possible to assume that the most frequently presented attributes may have a role to play in branding Liège. Based on the outcome of the analysis, it can be said that all institutions behind the websites under the observation have chosen to introduce Liège to its potential visitors through the following attributes presented in texts: (1) the river Meuse and/or Outremeuse, a district located in an island surrounded by the Meuse and its branch, (2) cultural and artistic heritage of Liège, and (3) attributes related to the population of Liège (their *joie de vivre*, friendliness, love of feast and folklore, rebellious spirit). In the case of images, the following attributes were found out as dominating in the presentations: (1) the river Meuse, (2) Liège-Guillemins Railway Station, and (3) St. Paul Cathedral. Two slogans were found: “Liège, a city, a spirit”⁴⁹, and “Liege, the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps”,⁵⁰ as well as a logo inspired by the

⁴⁸ www.liege.be/tourisme, www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege, www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php, www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

⁴⁹ www.liege.be/tourisme

Perron, a monument with symbolic importance to the citizens of Liège.

It was presumed that the attributes mentioned above can be involved in branding Liège.

However, based on the findings of this study, it is possible to say that several dissimilarities can be found between the four presentations. Different websites are often presenting or emphasising different aspects of the city. It was presumed in the work that dissimilarities between the presentations can be confusing to potential visitors of Liège. Besides, it can be assumed that in the case of a destination that is not yet established itself in the international tourism market, dissimilarities found in presentations of the destination may leave it unclear what kind of destination it is.

The work tried to find answers to the question why is the city presented differently by different institutions. Based on the outcome of the analysis it is possible to present three reasons behind dissimilar presentations: (1) lack of collaboration between the institutions that have created the websites, communicating different visions of the city, (2) the websites are created with an aim to address different markets, and (3) it is not clear yet what is considered the brand of Liège. As far as the aim to address different markets (American, British, etc.) is concerned, it was assumed in this work that it can be considered a problematic issue as there are no mechanisms on the Internet that could distribute certain information about Liège in one region of the world, leaving it unavailable to potential tourists from other regions.⁵¹

Finally, based on the analysis of the four presentations, and the data collected from the representatives of DMOs, it was discussed what can be considered the brand of Liège. It is possible to say that the brand of Liège can be related to the mentality of its population, considered to be particular and making Liège a unique place, and/or its cultural and architectural heritage. In addition, it was suggested that branding Liège can involve the aspect of “freshness” as Liège is a city with a long history and rich cultural/architectural heritage, but can be a new place to discover in the international tourism market.

⁵⁰ www.opt.be/contenus/liege_the_ardent_city_a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

⁵¹ The author of this work was willing to establish more knowledge on the issue of differences found in the presentations but relevant data at her disposal was limited due to the matter that all institutions involved were not interested in participation in this research.

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Appendices

Dans mon memoire, j'analyse l'information présentée en anglais sur les site web suivants :

www.liege.be/tourisme

www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege

www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html

Les site web mentionné ci-dessus mettent l'accent sur différents aspects de Liège et les alentours de la ville :

www.liege.be/tourisme: "the most important tourist city in Wallonia", "characteristic districts", "marked relief", "folklore", "a positive-minded population", "a large number of restaurants", "vigorous cultural and artistic life", "architectural heritage", "options for walking";

www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege: "1 hour away from Brussels by train", "a historical and cultural city", "the birthplace of Emperor Charlemagne and writer Georges Simenon", "university city", "joie de vivre", "cycling races", "Formula 1 racetrack", "Henri Chapelle American Military cemetery";

www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php: "a dynamic commercial centre with modern pedestrian shopping streets", "the most francophile place in Belgium", "attracts many of its Dutch, French and German neighbours", "at the crossroads of an important motorway network", "the 3rd largest river port of Europe", "a city of art", "Georges Simenon", "Zenobe Gramme", "composers and musicians", "parks and public gardens", "Outremeuse", "rebellious, anti-authority spirit", "love of tradition", "a unique atmosphere";

[http://www.opt.be/contenus/liege the ardent city a city that never sleeps/en/4155.html](http://www.opt.be/contenus/liege_the_ardent_city_a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html): "the Ardent City, a city that never sleeps", "an internationally-connected city", "alive and bursting with energy", "wealthy historical past", "Liège-Guillemins Train Station", "folkloric activities", "Outre-Meuse" and "Georges Simenon", "La Batte", "friendly and hospitable locals".

Appendix A

Dominique Jamar, Liège Tourist Office

La ville de Liège, pourquoi est-elle présentée differemment par les institutions qui ont créé les site web sous observation ?

Le site de la Ville de Liège, dont l'office du tourisme est un des services, présente la destination LIEGE (la ville) avec son potentiel touristique (patrimoine architectural, culturel et folklorique) + les produits touristiques (promenades, attractions ...).

Les autres sites sont plus vastes et évoque la province de Liège (voire la Wallonie dans son ensemble), et non seulement la ville. L'office du tourisme de Liège n'a pas de droit de regard sur la manière dont la ville de Liège est présentée sur les autres sites WEB. Nous pouvons juste réagir lorsqu'une information publiée est erronée.

Quelles peuvent être les conséquences d'offrir des différentes présentations de la ville à ses visiteurs potentiels?

Il n'y a pas vraiment de conséquences car tous les arguments de présentation de Liège sont valables et ne sont en aucun cas contradictoires d'un site à l'autre.

De plus, en fonction de la provenance du site (OPT Grande Bretagne, OPT USA, OPT Allemagne ...) la perception de la ville est différente. La sensibilité germanique est différente de la sensibilité anglaise et la hiérarchie des points forts de la ville varie en fonction de cela.

Analyse : www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege : site de l'OPT USA. L'accent est mis sur ce qui pourrait attirer des touristes américains à venir à Liège : Simenon (auteur mondialement connu), tout ce qui aborde la guerre car les Américains ont libéré la Belgique et de nombreuses familles ont des parents ou des amis venus combattre chez nous ...

www.belgiumtheplaceto.be/liege.php : site de l'OPT Grande-Bretagne. Idem, l'accent est mis sur ce qui pourrait attirer des touristes anglais à venir à Liège.

Les institutions présentant Liège sur Internet, comment pourraient-elles collaborer afin de communiquer le même message sur Liège à ses visiteurs potentiels?

Quoi qu'il en soit, le message reste bon.

L'idéal serait que chaque institution nous transmette la page relative à notre ville pour vérification avant la mise en ligne.

C'est quoi, l'image de marque (brand) de Liège?

Première ville touristique de Wallonie. Patrimoine historique prestigieux. Convivialité légendaire + esprit festif.

Appendix B

Christine Wirtgen, Liège Tourist Office

La ville de Liège, pourquoi est-elle présentée différemment par les institutions qui ont créé les sites web sous observation ?

Les 4 sites que tu mentionnes sont gérés de manière indépendante et la Ville de Liège ne transmet pas de message unique ni suffisamment percutant pour emporter l'adhésion à une image commune.

Comme je te l'ai déjà dit, il n'existe pas encore de concept touristique, ni de plan stratégique global de communication et de promotion, même si la réflexion a été entamée.

Si l'on veut être plus positif, on pourrait penser que les différents opérateurs mettent en avant des thématiques supposées être particulièrement attractives pour leur public cible, de différentes provenances géographiques. Et il faut reconnaître que les messages ne sont pas contradictoires, les sites étrangers mettant l'accent sur les personnages ou événements connus internationalement. Cela me semble être une bonne chose de s'appuyer ainsi sur la notoriété.

Quelles peuvent être les conséquences d'offrir des différentes présentations de la ville à ses visiteurs potentiels?

Encore une fois, si l'on veut être positif, une image en caléidoscope pourrait renforcer l'idée de la richesse et de la diversité des atouts de Liège, ce qui est une réalité. L'idée serait : "Il y en a pour tous les goûts..."

Les institutions présentant Liège sur Internet, comment pourraient-elles collaborer afin de communiquer le même message sur Liège à ses visiteurs potentiels?

Il me semble que rien n'empêcherait la Ville de Liège d'entreprendre une opération de communication vis-à-vis de tous ses partenaires de promotion, si le plan stratégique global en décidait. Mais il faut d'abord réaliser ce plan.

C'est quoi, l'image de marque (brand) de Liège?

C'est LA question. L'image de marque n'a pas encore été bien établie. Personnellement, j'avais essayé de résumer Liège dans le flyer 4 langues à la couverture rose avec un bouchon de champagne ..., mais, là aussi, c'est aussi une image multiple et non une image de marque qui est présentée. Je sais que le service Communication est en train de plancher dessus et t'en dirai plus quand je saurai où ils en sont.

Appendix C

Jean-Sébastien Bogaert, Belgian Tourist Office for Brussels and Wallonia

La ville de Liège, pourquoi est-elle présentée différemment par les institutions qui ont créé les sites web sous observation ?

www.visitbelgium.com/index.php/our-cities/liege est notre site développé pour le public américain.

www.belgiumthelaceto.be/liege.php est notre site développé pour le public anglais.

www.opt.be/contenus/liege__the_ardent_city__a_city_that_never_sleeps/en/4155.html est la page internationale du site général en anglais.