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Destination Image

Case Study: Porto and Accessibility

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Kerava

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Case Study: Porto and Accessibility

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**Destination Image
Case Study: Porto and Accessibility**

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This is a Bachelor's thesis by a Tourism student from Laurea University of Applied Sciences. The aim of the research was to study the destination image of Porto from the viewpoint of both regular tourists and tourists with disabilities. The aim was also to compare the results of these two groups and the overall results with a previous study done on destination image in Porto. The research was conducted in Porto, Portugal in summer/autumn 2015.

There were no previous studies done regarding accessibility issues in the city of Porto or combining destination image and accessibility, which gave the study a more experimental nature. Mainly qualitative methods were used for the study and information was collected from actual tourists through an online-survey and by handing out the questionnaire in some main touristic areas in the city. The questionnaire was based on the holistic model of Destination Image, from Echtner and Ritchie (1991) and it was divided into four categories consisting of information about the traveler and different aspects of the visit.

The research was successful from some parts and from others left room for further studying. The main image seems to be clearly connected with Port Wine and the history and culture of the city. In general the city seems to have a positive image also regarding accessibility. In total the number of responses from tourists with disabilities was fairly low and therefore further research will be necessary for making full conclusions about the results. There were some areas which attracted more negative replies, such as mobility in the city. All in all the tourists were generally satisfied with the holiday.

This thesis provides some insights on the matter and a good surface for future researches. These are matters that should be taken into consideration by tourism operators. The results of this study could be beneficial for those studying similar topics, for tourism operators in Porto or tourism professionals interested in accessibility issues and/or destination management and marketing.

Keywords: Tourism, Destination Image, accessibility, Destination management

Melissa Vanha-Majamaa

Kohdeimago ja esteettömyys
Tapaustutkimus Porto, Portugali

Vuosi 2015 Sivumäärä 41

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia Porton imagoa matkailukohteena, sekä tavallisten matkailijoiden näkökulmasta, että niiden joilla on fyysisiä rajoitteita matkan aikana. Tavoitteena oli verrata tuloksia näistä kahdesta eri näkökulmasta, sekä verrata tuloksia aiempaan tutkimukseen Porton imagosta ja löytää mahdollisia eroavaisuuksia näiden kahden välillä. Tutkimus suoritettiin Porton kaupungissa, Portugalissa kesällä/syksyllä 2015.

Tutkimus oli suurelta osin kokeellinen, sillä vastaavia tutkimuksia joissa olisi yhdistetty matkakohdeimago ja esteettömyys, ei löytynyt. Tutkimusmenetelmät olivat laadullisia ja määrällisiä ja aineistoa kerättiin oikeilta matkailijoilta, online-kyselyn kautta ja kaupungin tärkeimmiltä turistialueilta jakamalla kyselyä paperiversiona. Kysely pohjautuu Echtnerin ja Ritchien (1991) holistiseen matkakohdeimago-malliin, johon on liitetty esteettömyyttä käsitteleviä kysymyksiä. Kysely koostuu neljästä osiosta, joihin sisältyy kysymyksiä matkailijasta, avoimia kysymyksiä kaupungista, sekä loman eri komponenttien arviointia.

Tutkimus oli pääosin onnistunut, vaikka osa työtä jätti tilaa mahdollisille jatkotutkimuksille. Voidaan vetää johtopäätös että Porton imago on selvästi kietoutunut portviinin, kulttuurin ja kaupungin historian ympärille. Yleisesti ottaen matkailijat olivat tyytyväisiä myös esteettömyyden tasoon kaupungissa. Kyselyyn vastanneiden määrä oli suhteellisen pieni, joten täydellisiä johtopäätöksiä koskien matkailijoita joilla on rajoitteita ei voida vetää. Kyselyn tuloksena selvisi alueita, jotka keräsivät enemmän negatiivisia vastauksia, kuten liikkuvuus kaupungissa. Kaikki kyselyyn vastanneet olivat kuitenkin tyytyväisiä lomaan kokonaisuutena.

Tämä opinnäytetyö tarjoaa joitain oivalluksia aiheesta ja hyvän pohjan jatkotutkimuksiin. Tämän tutkimuksen aiheet ovat merkittäviä matkailualalla työskenteleville ja ne tulisi ottaa huomioon matkailun suunnittelussa ja kehittämisessä. Tämän opinnäytetyön tulokset voivat olla hyödyllisiä vastaavia aiheita tutkiville, matkailualan toimijoille Portossa sekä ammattilaisille, jotka ovat kiinnostuneita esteettömyydestä tai matkakohdeimagosta.

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1 Introduction

Tourism is one of the main economy sectors in Portugal and its importance just keeps growing each year. Tourism has reached also cities besides Lisbon and Algarve, such as Porto in the North. Growing tourism indicates not only growing economy, but various aspects which need attention in order to develop in a sustainable way. Accessibility is one of today's and tomorrow's biggest concerns in tourism, to ensure equal rights and opportunities in traveling for everyone.

For this Bachelor's thesis the aim was to research the destination image of Porto and gather information on whether there is any possibility of creating image of accessibility for the city. The concept and formation of destination image were studied as well as previous researches done in Porto or for similar purposes. The author specialized in accessibility in the city of Porto during 5 months, conducting an internship in a tourism company offering animation and services for tourists that are disabled and for their families or friends and helpers.

Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in the study. Primary data was collected from an online survey, the internet and from previous studies from the same subject area. The questionnaire was conducted mainly online and also by interviewing tourists in the center of Porto, in October 2015. Also some personal contacts were used to collect data from a wider audience. The research can be seen as an experimental study on these matters, since no previous studies of this kind could be found. The aim of the research was to find answers to these following questions:

- 1) What is the current destination image of Porto?
- 2) What is the image (related with accessibility) from the viewpoint of tourists with disabilities and impairments?
- 3) Which areas are sufficient and which need focusing in the future?
- 4) Are the results in line with the previous study conducted on destination image of Porto?

2 Tourism in Portugal and Porto as a Destination

Tourism is one of the main sectors of the economy in Portugal and its weight has grown significantly over recent years. It is also one of the main forces for job creation. (Ministry of economy and innovation in Portugal.2007) As presented in the following image, in 2014 the service sector contributed 76.7% of GVA and employed 67.7% of the population. The biggest area on the service sector in Portugal is tourism. (Portugal basic data.2014)

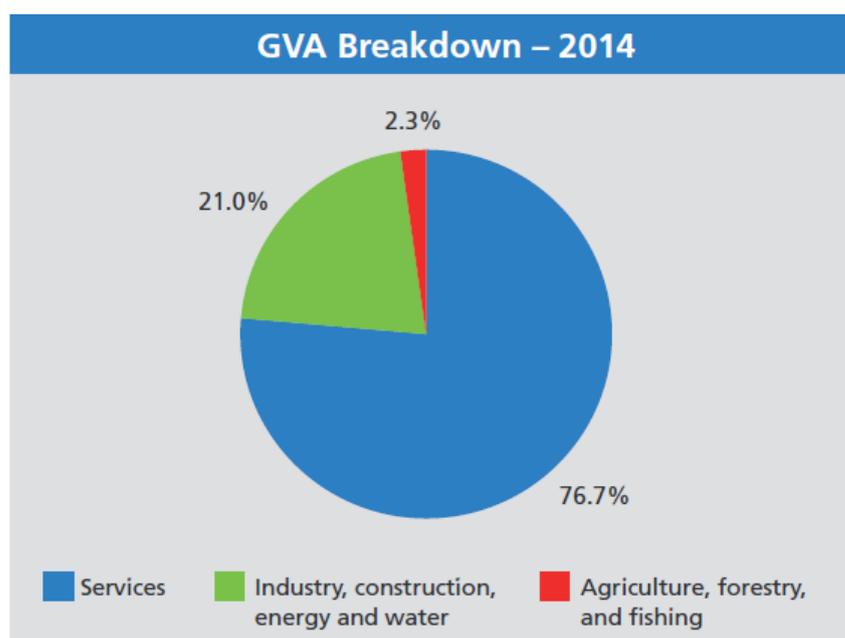


Figure 1: GVA Breakdown 2014/ INE (Statistics Portugal 2014)

In 2014 the tourism trade balance was 7.1 billion euros, increasing 15.4% from the previous year. (Figure 2) Tourism revenue in Portugal has been growing steadily from 2010 and in 2014 it reached nearly 10.4 billion euros, increasing 12.4% from 2013. (Portugal Central Bank.2014) According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Tourism Barometer 2015 Portugal was the 26th world market in tourism revenue and the 36th market receiver in 2013.



Figure 2: Tourism Revenue/Banco de Portugal. (Portugal Central Bank 2014)

The country is one of the world's top 20 destinations despite having progressively lost market share in world tourism. The growth in number of international tourists has grown, but at a lower pace than the number of domestic tourists. Tourism, focused on three main regions (Algarve, Lisbon and Porto e Norte), is highly seasonal and was until recently constrained by air connections. (Ministry of economy and innovation in Portugal.2007) In recent years, however, there has been a change to this, with low-cost airlines, such as Ryanair and EasyJet launching new routes from Lisbon, Faro and Porto to several European cities.

Tourism in Portugal is primarily focused on three national regions: Algarve, Lisbon and Porto e Norte and dependent on four outbound markets: United Kingdom, Spain, Germany and France. These countries were accountable for 60% of all international tourist arrivals in 2006. Regions of Alentejo, Porto e Norte and Centro are essentially dependent on the domestic and Spanish tourists. The region of Porto e Norte recorded the best performance in terms of international tourism growth in 2006. The city of Porto was selected as the Best European destination in 2012 and 2014, which had an extensive impact on the tourism in this area. (European Best Destinations.2014)

Porto was founded in the 12th century and it is currently the second largest city in Portugal. It belongs to the region called Porto e Norte (Porto and North) and is crossed by river Douro. Porto is one of the oldest cities in the country and the old town is listed as UNESCO's World Heritage since 2006. (Visit Porto and North.2015) Porto's population is around 300 000 and the whole Metropolitan Area has around 2.5 million inhabitants. The climate of Porto is mainly Mediterranean, but due to its location on the Atlantic coast the winters are usually extremely humid and rainy. Summers are normally dry and hot, with temperatures between 20 and 35 degrees Celsius. The city is reachable by plane, train and busses. The only airport in the region is Francisco Sá Carneiro and it has connections with most large European cities. (Wikitravel Porto.2015)

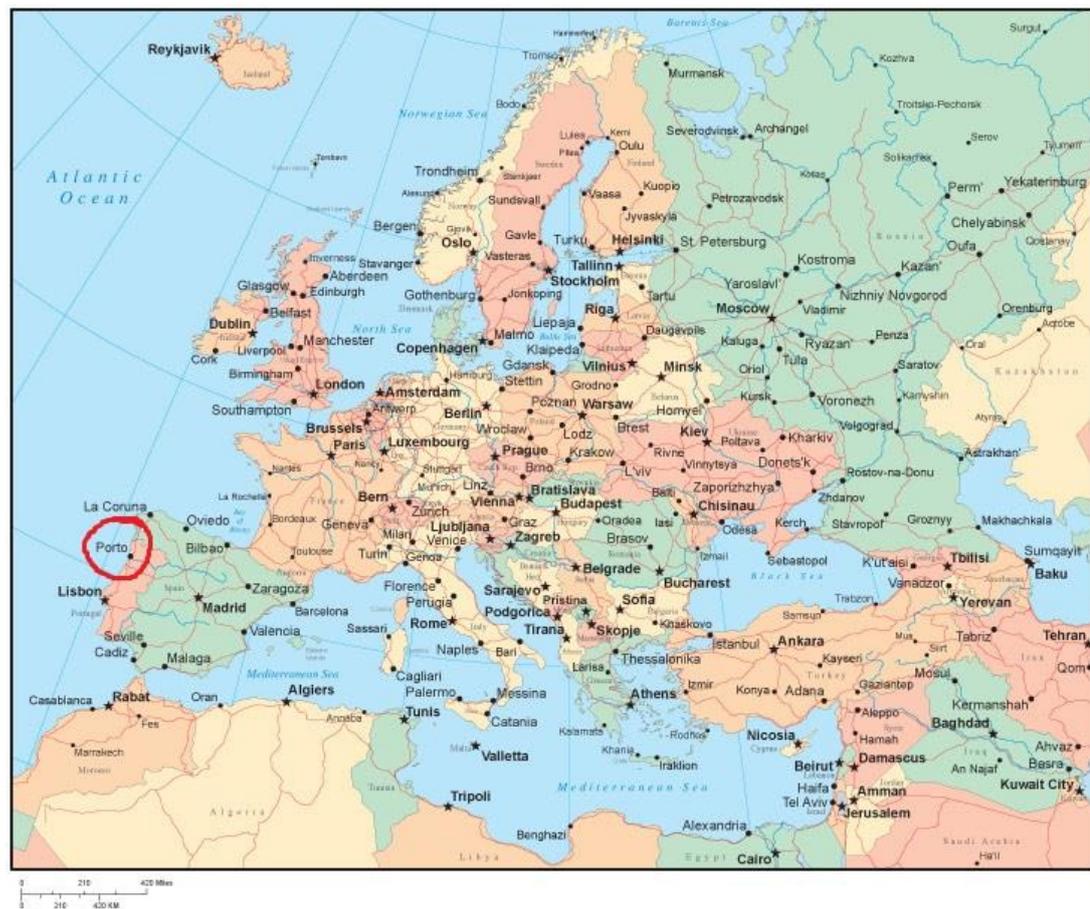


Figure 3: European map: Porto (Map Resources 2015)

Tourism in Porto and the North has been progressively growing in the recent years. In 2006, the region recorded best performance in terms of international tourists in the country. The city of Porto was selected as the Best European Destination in 2012 and 2014, which led to growing number of international tourist arrivals. (Best European Destinations.2014)

In the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (PENT) in 2007, objectives for Porto e Norte were growing numbers between 3,2 and 3,3 million international tourist overnights, growing at an annual average rate of 8,5% and increasing of 7,5% in the number of tourists until 2015. (The Ministry of economy and innovation of Portugal.2015) Tourism in the area has been growing rapidly and its effects can be seen in the city. Tourism has given an opportunity for several new companies to rise to the market, yet it has also increased competition in the industry in Porto. Proper tourism planning is vital in order for the destination to grow to be sustainable. This concerns both evolving and already established destinations. Without proper planning and market alignment research, increasing tourism can permanently damage the destinations environment and its quality of life. (Uysal, Harrill, and Woo.2011)

Finding up-to-date, reliable information on the tourism planning of Porto was fairly challenging. Porto as a fairly new top destination and with its attractiveness growing might also be facing risks in the future. These risks seem more probable when the economic situation of the country is taken into consideration. When the country has been in an economic crisis, the amount of funding in developing sustainable tourism might be affected negatively. This could lead to finding cheaper solutions to increase offering for the increasing tourism flow to the city. In this case proper research and planning of tourism development is vital, for the city to achieve and maintain a sustainable position as a destination. Porto has several tourism organizations that operate on tourism marketing and promotion of Porto and the North. The biggest one of these is 'Visit Porto and the North', which is the main tourism organization in the area. Also the town hall of Porto (Câmara Municipal do Porto) is working closely with developing tourism in the city. (Visit Porto and North.2015)

The author of this thesis got interested in the tourism in Porto during Erasmus study exchange and later on during an internship in a tourism company specialized in accessibility. This provided the opportunity to observe the city becoming a greater tourist destination during two years from 2013 to 2015. On the last period in 2015, there was more contact with the industry in the city, while working in accessible tourism services, marketing and building contacts with different organizations.

3 Accessibility in Tourism

People with disabilities make a significant part of the world's population. The amount of these people is on the rise, due to the aging European population. In 2011, there were approximately one billion people with disabilities, which counts for around 15% of the world's total population. Together with their families they represent almost a third of the world's population. (UNWTO.2015)

Accessible tourism is about giving equal chances for all people to enjoy tourism experiences. The European population is aging and according to European Commission by 2050 the number of people over 65 will be 3 times higher than it was in 2003 and for people over 80 years the number will be 5 times higher. (European Commission.2014) Disabled people represent a huge market which at the moment is immensely underserved. Not only serving this segment of customers being a social responsibility, it is also a great chance for competitive business and a way to boost tourism in Europe. Examples show that making basic accessibility adjustments can result in increased numbers of visitors. These adjustments do not only benefit the disabled, but all tourists and can also improve the quality of life in the local communities. Other people benefiting from improved accessibility are for example families with small children, the elderly, injured people and tourists with heavy luggage. Disabilities are also not restricted only to physical features, but also people with mental or intellectual disabilities should be considered. (European Commission.2014) Tourist facilities and services compete with each other on quality, price and the provision of services and attractions. Currently the levels of accessibility vary considerably and improving the accessibility in tourism offers a competitive advantage.

People with disabilities have all the same rights for travelling as anyone else. For example people with reduced mobility are entitled for assistance at the airport before and after the flight, as well as during the flight. A person cannot be denied boarding (or any other service) due to reduced mobility. Any sort of limitation should not be a barrier for travelling. European Union finished a law concerning the rights of people with disabilities in air travel in 2006. (Your Europe.2015, Access to European Union Law.2011)

First step of building better accessibility should be information provided regarding the accessibility. When tourists with limitations or disabilities are planning a trip, receiving up-to-date information on the accessibility conditions is vital for making plans for the travel. If provided with good information on the conditions, they can judge for themselves whether the facility is

accessible for them. People with disabilities are often as keen of travelling as the rest of the population, but they can get discouraged by poor information, varying levels of accessibility and negative experiences. (Westcott & European Commission.2014)

As mentioned before, the group of people with physical limitations is significant and increasing. Tourism destinations, attractions and activities need to be readjusted to fit the needs of this target group. Many activities for tourists can be made accessible and enjoyable also for tourists who have temporary or permanent physical limitations. For people travelling with physical limitations or restrictions, the first experience is often vital, since a negative experience can affect the will to travel and the trust on services of this area.

The author conducted an internship for a company specialized in accessible tourism services. This period strengthened the student's interest in accessibility issues and gave some valuable insights and knowledge on the matter. Both the internship and the thesis process took place in Porto which made it the natural location to conduct the research. The author worked mainly in marketing research, development and communication, which led to the topic of destination image. No previous studies done on destination image or studying images related with accessibility were found, so the aim was to integrate these two subjects together in this thesis.

4 Destination Management

Destination management is a complex issue that requires a holistic, comprehensive and systematic approach to comprehend it thoroughly. One of the features which makes it a challenging topic is the fact that there are numerous operators in destination management, not only in the whole tourism industry, but in one destination. The management of a destination does not fall on to one or two operators of marketing, but a complex structure of operators in several layers. According to Wang and Pizam (2011) the concept consists of the following areas to be considered:

- The concept of destination management and marketing
- Consumer decision-making in relation with the destination
- Principles and functions of place image, positioning and communication
- Strategies in destination product development and distribution

- Approaches to manage stakeholders in the destination
- Strategies for managing destination competitiveness and sustainability
- Principles and strategies for safety, disaster and crisis management

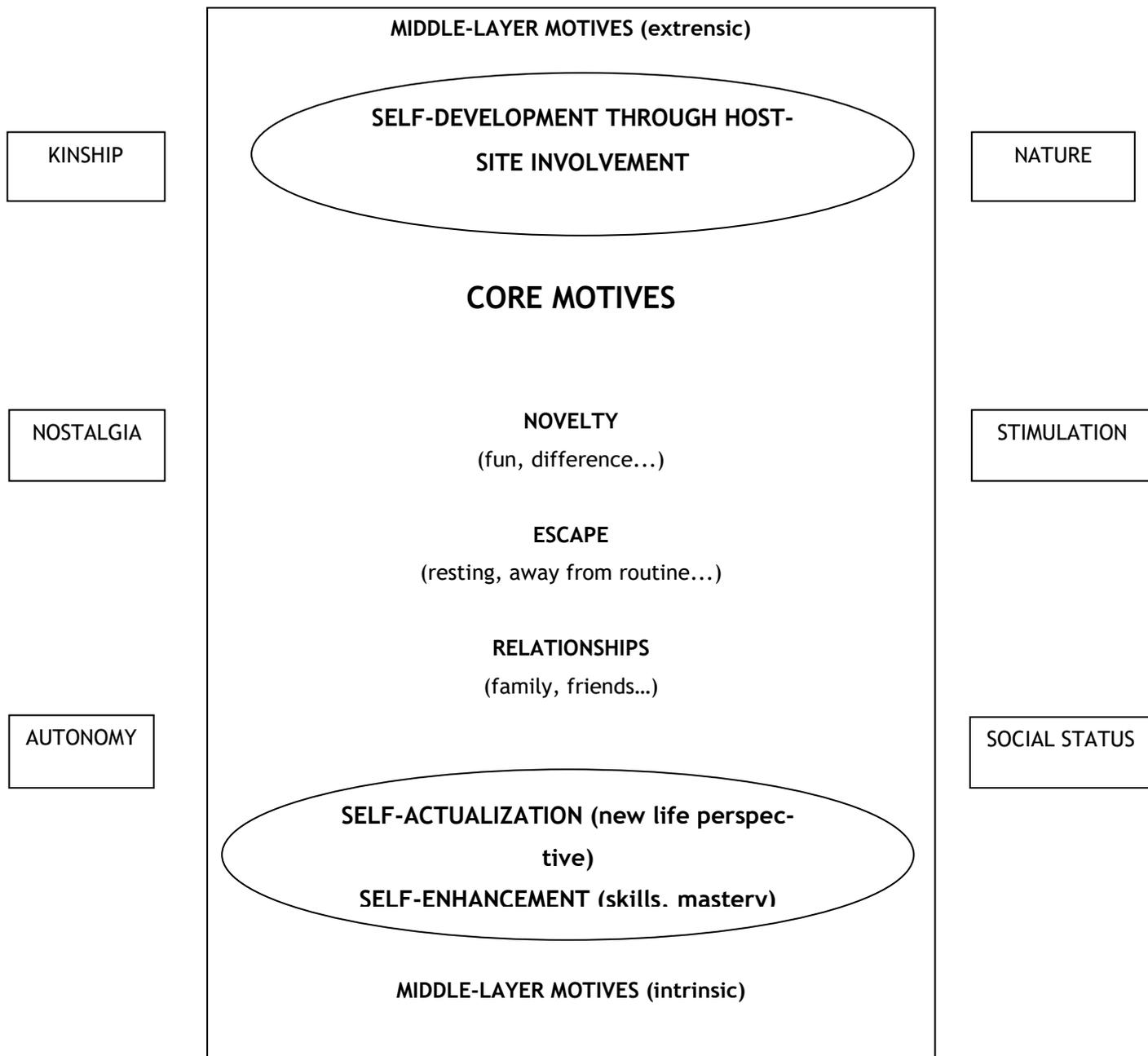
(Wang and Pizam.2011)

For building an accessible destination, the concept of accessibility should be included in all these aspects of destination management. Accessibility can play a big role in providing a competitive edge and a positive image to the destination if it is one of the fundamental parts in managing a destination.

4.1 Travel Motivations

The definition of motivation have been widely accepted as the following: "Motivation is the combination of biological and cultural forces that drive our behavior".(Pearce.2011) In tourism, however, the concept of travel motivations is far more complex - involving also sociocultural needs. Nowadays, the tourism industry has so much diversity and complexity, that the approach of the customer has also changed. The modern tourism customer is less consistent in approach to holiday purchases and decision-making process. Travel motivations can be divided into several different categories and layers in which they appear. P.L Pearce (2011) presents the components of travel motivations in an image divided into layers starting from the core motives and continuing to outer layers of motives. The main aspects are presented in the following image:

ISOLATION



ROMANCE

Illustration 1: Different layers of travel motivations. Image adapted from P.L Pearce (2011)

According to this image, the core travel motives are: novelty - searching for new experiences, escaping - getting out of the mundane and relationships - visiting friends/family or just spending time with the loved ones.

In general, travel motivations for tourists with or without limitations or disabilities are the same. Tourists with disabilities, however, tend to be more easily influenced by negative experiences and might require more encouragement to taking the travel in the first place. Travel motivations of people with disabilities should be considered as any other person's motivations, despite the fact that this group needs some special consideration from tourism operators.

4.2 Destination Marketing Research

A solid understanding of the elements of a functioning tourism system is necessary for recognizing and understanding the current issues and concerns and to be able to tackle these issues properly. Destinations go through different development processes which may affect and change the nature of their appeal and markets. Up-to-date information and comprehension through destination marketing research can allow tourism destination managers to better allocate their resources to maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Main goal of destination marketing research is to understand the interaction between visitors and tourism providers in the destination. For destinations to maintain their competitive edge, accurate, relevant information is essential, whether the destination is just emerging or already established. (Uysal, Harrill and Woo.2011)

In today's competitive tourism industry, destination marketing research needs to be continuous. The industry is constantly changing and new trends are rising - the destinations need to be prepared to align themselves to these changes. Without proper research the destinations will not have enough knowledge for effective marketing efforts and strategic positioning. Effective destination marketing research provides information on whether the marketing and management efforts are reaching the targeted market and whether the target customers are reacting in the desired way. Uysal, et.al. (2011) suggest that the main goals of destination marketing research are twofold:

- 1) To increase demand while maintaining a competitive edge in the minds of potential and actual visitors

2) To facilitate effective destination management

Clearly the goals are often far more complex and can be divided into more specific categories, but the main purpose of research naturally is to increase the attractiveness and competitive edge of the destination to receive greater flows of tourism - and greater flows of revenue. As mentioned earlier, accessibility can be a certain competitive edge for tourism operators and destinations, since the demand for accessible services is on the rise and the market is still underserved.

Researches considering destination image are essential for destination marketing research, in order to know what the consumers imagine when they think of a specific destination. By knowing what the image is, the marketing efforts can be clearer and targeted to the right segments. A destination might also want to modify or change its image, when it is also important first to know what the current image is. This study is focused on destination image and how it is from different point of views of different tourist segments and to find out if accessibility could be one of the features of the destination image of Porto.

5 Destination Image and its Formation

In this chapter the author will introduce the concept of Destination Image - relevant theories of its formation and its impact on tourism.

The concept of destination image was formed in the early 1970's when Hunt began to research the role of image in tourism development. (Carvalho Moura de Sousa, 2014; Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2006.) Since then it has become one of the key elements in tourism research. The term "destination image" comprises the emotions, feelings, reactions and effects that a person obtains from a destination. It consists of all the objective information and knowledge that a person has towards a destination, but also all the impressions, imaginations and preconceptions.

Destination image has a major impact on the tourism destination. (Hunt, 1975; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1996) Several studies have shown that a positive and strong image will affect the decision-making process positively and is more likely to be considered and selected in the end - and a negative image can do the opposite. (Lopes.2011; Hunt.1975;Chen and Kerstetter.1999; Sönmez and Sirakaya.2002) A destination will benefit from a strong image - it

helps to differentiate from competitors. (Lim and O' Cass.2001) However the concept is complicated to define and measure, due to its subjective and immaterial nature. There are several suggestions and theories trying to conceptualize the Destination image - however there is not yet a solid consensus on the formation of the image. (Aaker, 1991; Lopes, 2011)

The main view on destination image is that it is a multidimensional construct, which can be divided into three main components: the cognitive, the affective and the conative. The cognitive image consists of the internal image one has about a destination and it's formed by receiving external stimuli that leads to a picture of the destinations attributes. The affective component becomes operational when starting to evaluate different destination options. It is related to the motives one has for a travel or destination. The conative component is the action part. After receiving and processing the information - a destination is selected. This part depends on the images developed during the first two stages. (Knowles, Diamantis and El-Mourhabi. 2004. Gartner. 1993.)

Gunn was the first to identify that there are different ways in which these cognitive images are formed. He argued that they are formed by organic and induced agents. Organic images are formed from unintentional sources not directly associated with the destination area, such as mass media communications appearing in magazines, newspapers, travel books, internet, TV programs and literature. Induced images however come straight from the destination area and the marketing efforts of operators in that area. They are a conscious effort to try to affect opinions and develop and promote the destination. (Gunn.1988, Knowles etc.2004) The difference between the agents is that the organic agents cannot be controlled by the destination as opposite to the induced images. (Gartner.1993)

Gunn also developed a model of the 7 phases of travel experience (1988).

- 1) Accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences
- 2) Modification of those images by further information
- 3) Decision to take a vacation trip
- 4) Travel to the destination
- 5) Participation at the destination
- 6) Return home
- 7) Modification of images based on the experience

(Gunn.1988, Echtner & Richie.2003)

Gunn suggests that the actual image is being formed in phases 1,2 and 7. Steps 1 and 2 are for forming the primary image based on secondary sources of information. In step 7 the actual experience is used to modify the existing image. (Echtner & Ritchie. 2003)

With modern technology and trending use of social media, it is highly probable that some of these phases happen simultaneously. For example with steps 5, 6 and 7, the borders can be blurred - the consumer can modify the image in all these phases and also participate through social media sharing, blogs and rating-websites. Even though the phases of the travel experience have remained widely the same as in this model, the image formation has certainly developed into something more complex and sensitive for changes. For images of majority of products and services, the sources for information are mainly commercial. For destination images, however, the spectrum of sources is a lot wider. Echtner & Ritchie (1993) propose that there is a link between the country's image and the destination image.

There are two important highlights in the process of forming an image for a destination. Firstly, individuals can have an image of a destination without having visited the country. Information of these primary images can be very useful for future strategies and planning of tourism marketing. Secondly, since the images tend to change from before visiting the destination and after the visit - it is important to separate the ones who have actual experience from those who don't, when studying a destination's image. (Echtner & Ritchie.2003) In this thesis research the focus is only on tourists that have actual holiday experiences in Porto.

Most studies on destination images have used similar scales and attributes to describe the images. Echtner and Ritchie (2003) however remind on the importance of understanding that while all destinations share some common traits, they should also be measured by more unique features, auras or atmospheres. The following image presents the dimensions of destination image according to Echtner and Ritchie.

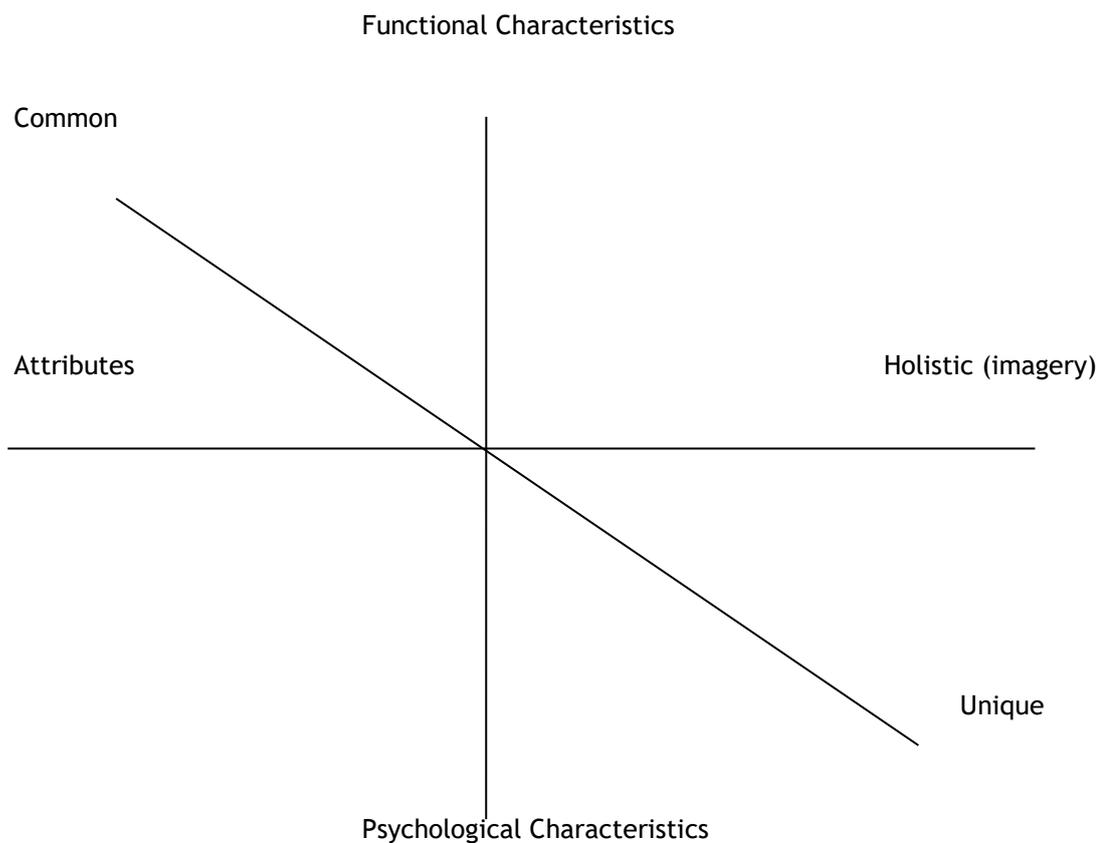


Illustration 2: The continuum of destination image formation: ranging from common traits to unique features and auras. Image adapted from Echtner & Ritchie (1993.2003)

In this thesis the model of this illustration was used as the basis for creating the questionnaire for measuring the destination image of Porto. The questionnaire and its formation is explained more thoroughly in the following chapters.

The study of destination images can be divided into two categories: structured and unstructured, according to the methodology used. (Echtner & Ritchie.2003) Ferber (1974) has defined these two categories as following: structured methodology is when various common image attributes are put to a standardized setting and the product is rated according to the respondent on each attribute. An unstructured methodology uses free-form or open-ended descriptions to measure the image. For a comprehensive study, both methodologies should be used to receive also more holistic and unique components of the image. Further in this paper a survey done for this thesis will be presented. It consists of both, structured and unstructured, categories of questions.

Tourism researches have previously focused mainly on common attributes when measuring destination images, therefore not addressing the more holistic and unique components of the

image. Researchers have strongly preferred structured methodologies, such as semantic differentials and Likert type scales. Previous studies have generally received lists of attributes from literature, brochures and from tourism professionals, instead of using consumers to identify and generate more specific and relevant destination image attributes. (Echtner & Ritchie.2003) The attributes used for this study were mainly received from previous thesis works done in Porto and Portugal. Some of the attributes came also from personal and professional contacts. The official pages for tourism in the area were also researched: visitportoandnorth.pt. The main topics on this page include for example Gastronomy and Wine, Historical Sites, World Heritage Sites, Wine Cellars and Architecture. A variety of offering can be found from Visit Porto and North and they have for example sections for different types of travelers to find information fitting to their specific needs and desires. (Visit Porto and North.2015)

6 Research Aim, Methodologies and Source Review

In this chapter the research aim, methodologies and the sources used for the study will be presented more thoroughly.

6.1 Research Aim

This thesis research topic was formed during an internship that the author conducted in the city of Porto. The student's interest on accessible tourism led to an internship which was done for a tourism company specialized in accessibility and tourism services. Since the tasks during the internship were mainly focused on marketing and developing services, it was natural to aim to combine these two topics in a thesis. The author was interested in the concept of destination image and since there was only one previous study done on this subject in the city of Porto, it was a suitable choice for the research.

The aim of the research is to find answers to these following questions:

- 1) What is the current destination image of Porto?
- 2) What is the image (related with accessibility) from the viewpoint of tourists with disabilities?
- 3) Which areas are sufficient and which need more focus in the future?
- 4) Are the results in line with the previous study done on destination image of Porto?

As a starting point for this research a thesis work done by a marketing student in Porto (2014) was used. It is currently the only study done on destination image in the city of Porto. Extensive amount of valuable information was gathered from this research and it created a solid background for this study. In the thesis, the author had collected information about the destination image through online sources, using text-mining tools and word-clouds. (Carvalho.2014) Several other researches done on destination images in different European cities or countries were also used for this research. Besides studies done by students and universities, many important literature sources were used. Despite the complexity of destination image and its formation, it was fairly easy to find a good number of studies and articles done on the subject.

The major part of the research was a self-administrative online-questionnaire, which was complemented by interviewing tourists in person at the location. Secondary data was collected through literature and previous studies from this field. Theoretical background and previous studied helped to shape to research and to gain a deeper understanding of the matter.

6.2 Qualitative Approach

For the research, qualitative study methods were used. A qualitative research seeks answers to a question - in this case the research questions can be seen in the previous chapter.

Qualitative research methodology uses a systematic approach to collecting and analyzing data. Data can be calculated and so analyzed in a numeral way. Findings of the study are not determined in advance and the results can normally be used for further purposes. Questionnaires are often used in social studies done with qualitative research methodologies. (Bricki.Green.2007) The research method was inductive, which means that there was no pre-set theory for the results. The theory generated from the data collected during the research process. The starting point was a previous thesis study done on destination image in Porto and

the author's interest in accessibility issues in the city. There was no certainty of how many tourists with disabilities the questionnaire would reach and therefore no theory of the results could be created beforehand. As the research process proceeded, some of the aims of this thesis had to stay in the background, since the number of responses was fairly low. Some aims were reached and this thesis can provide some insights on the matter.

The areas of interest were the main motivations for visiting Porto, associations with the city, level of accessibility and demographical information. For the questionnaire no restrictions were made for the respondents and the author had no control on who answered the online-questionnaire. Some answers were also collected in the main touristic areas in Porto, to make sure the sample is large and diverse enough.

6.3 Surveys and the Questionnaire

Surveys can be divided into two categories: questionnaires and interviews. (Web center for social research methods.2006) Questionnaires are commonly used in qualitative researches. They offer an effective way for collecting information across nations and demographics, but it is important to be careful when designing the questionnaire to make sure the questions are easily understandable by the respondents and that they provide the aimed information for the specific research. (Learn Marketing.2015)

The questions in these types of surveys can be either Closed or Open questions. Closed questions aim for answers such as YES or NO. They usually provide quantitative data, whereas open questions provide qualitative data. Questions can also fall between these two categories: they can be so called Scaled Questions, where the respondent is asked to pick an answer from a scale provided to them. In this research only open questions and scaled questions were used, since the aim of the study was to collect information related with opinions and views.

Some basis for the questionnaire was taken from a thesis work done by an Italian student of Tourism Management (2008). The framework for the questionnaire is originally from Echtner & Ritchie (1991,1993,2003) and is based on their holistic model of destination image formation. Questions were created by considering their nature and using the following determinants: functional - psychological characteristics, Common - Unique features and attributes - holistic experience (imagery). (Echtner and Ritchie.2003, Di Marino.2008) The questionnaire had in total 10 questions, which were divided into four categories: Tourist Profile, Travel Components, Open-ended Questions and Demographic Information. The part "Tourist profile" the respondents were asked to answer to questions regarding their motivations to travel to

Porto and the length of the holiday. The “Travel components” part consisted of scaled questions where the respondents were asked to rate several attributes according to their experience in Porto. The “Open-ended questions” were formed from the basis of Echtner and Ritchie, using three questions to measure the unique and holistic features of the city. The last part focused on demographic information about the respondents, such as age and country of origin. Uysal, Harrill and Woo (2011) state the following: “Visitor feedback should include amenities such as lodging and food services, but also destination-level services such as roads, security and health care”. Most of these aspects are covered also on the questionnaire created for this research. The whole questionnaire can be found in appendix 1.

The questionnaire was created during August 2015 and published 13.9.2015. For creation of the questionnaire, a free platform called Survey Monkey was used (surveymonkey.com). The survey was tested prior to publishing in two ways: presenting it to the tutor teacher of this thesis process and by using test persons from the author’s own personal contacts. Some changes were made to the original survey, but the core remained the same. The aim of the questionnaire was to reach regular tourists from different backgrounds and hopefully a decent number of people with disabilities. Unfortunately the second group (disability) was more difficult to reach than the author had thought when starting the process.

7 Results

In this chapter the results of the research will be presented and some conclusions about the success of the study. Results will be presented together with charts and illustrations.

7.1 Overall Evaluation

No previous research of this kind or with similar aims could be found. For that reason, some parts of this study were mainly experimental, providing a starting point for possible future researches. However, this study is able to provide some insights on the matter and can be helpful for tourism professionals in Porto for planning and developing their marketing.

In the end the research was successful from some parts while others left room for further studies. The sample of population for the questionnaire may not have been large enough to withdraw extremely reliable conclusions. Finding enough respondents with disabilities was challenging and therefore it was difficult to reach all the objectives from the parts of the

study that considered accessibility-issues. The biggest reason for the lack of respondents was merely the attempt to leave out personal contacts from the research. The aim was to get responses from “real” tourists who have no connection to the author. Nevertheless, all the responses are dealt with in anonymously and in the same manner, whether or not the respondent has a connection with the author. On the positive side, the sample was very versatile - consisting of several different nationalities and age-groups.

There were some restrictions to the research caused by the questionnaire. Firstly, it was only available in English, which shut out some possible respondents. Secondly: some of the tourists that were interviewed had not spend a lot of time yet in the city, thus did not have an image or were not comfortable in sharing it yet from some parts, such as restaurants or accommodation. Thirdly, there were several responses where some questions were skipped completely and therefore could not be considered in the study. For future studies, these are some issues that should be considered and taken into account when planning the research.

Next parts present more thoroughly the results of the study and some conclusions and comparisons with the previous study.

7.2 Results of the Questionnaire

All in all, the number of replies to the online questionnaire was fairly low. There was, however, a good amount of variety within nationalities and age-groups. The number of respondents with disabilities was lower than hoped for this study, but some conclusions can be made. All in all 35 answers were received to the questionnaire and out of this number 7 people had either a temporary or permanent disability or limitation during their travel.

7.3 Tourist Profile and Travel Motivation

Answers were fairly divided for the purpose of the travel, out of 35 responses 13 (38%) said the purpose for the visit was leisure; for 12 (35%) it was studying and for 10 (27%) visiting friends or family. Porto is a popular city among Erasmus study exchange and the number of young international students is very high. This explains not only the number of respondents visiting the city for studies but also the number of people coming to visit family and friends. (Table 1.)

Time spent at the destination also had a lot of variety. 35% of respondents stayed in Porto less than a week, 30% 1-2 weeks and 35% more than a month. It is very likely that this final group staying more than a month consists mainly of exchange students. In the following chart is presented the division of the main purposes for travel according to this questionnaire.

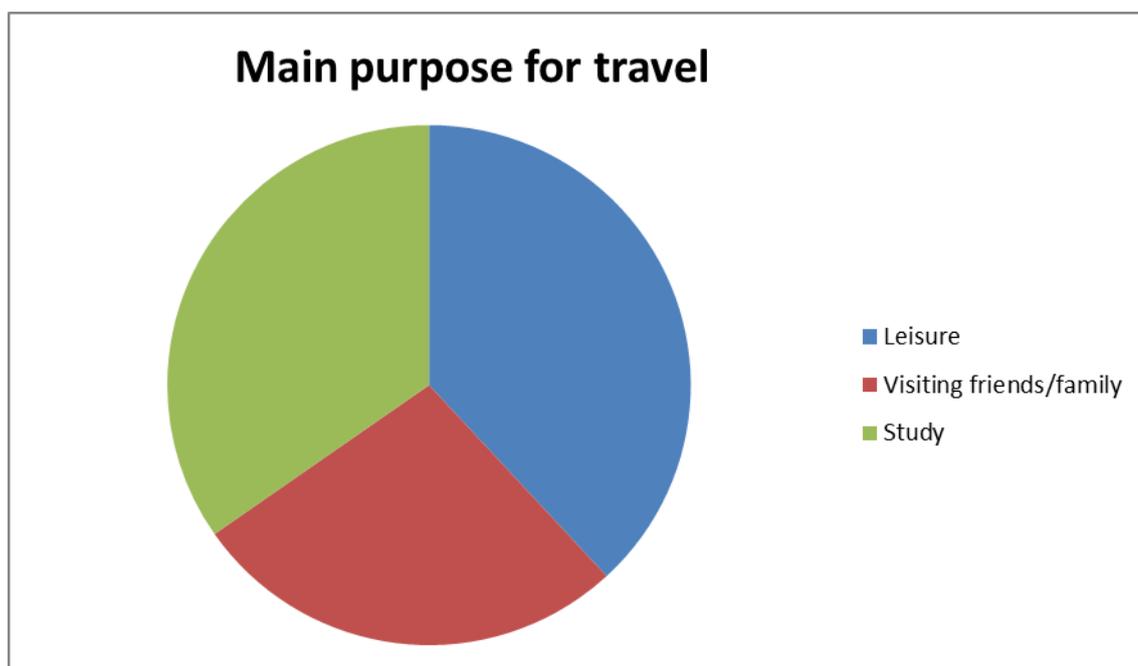


Table 1: Main purpose for travel

In total the number of responses from tourists with disabilities or limitations was 7. Three people answered that they are travelling with a temporary disability or limitation and four people with a permanent disability. 22 people had no disability or limitation affecting their travel.

7.4 Travel Components: Destination Image and Accessibility

The answers to this section were all mainly positive, meaning that they were at least OK/Satisfactory.

The section “Mobility in the city” had the most negative replies and also the most divided answers. In this section respondents were asked to evaluate moving around the city and for example the quality of the streets. It got more criticism from tourists with disabilities, which can be easily explained by the landscape of Porto - with it being an old city with lots of dif-

ference in altitude. Some of the streets are very narrow and so called cobble-streets, which can cause difficulties for people with limited vision or mobility. There have been a lot of improvements done recently on repairing the streets, but certainly more can be done in the future. The tourists with disabilities would also benefit from proper information where to find the most accessible routes and about possible street maintenance that can restrict moving around. There is not much that can be done for differences in altitude, but the streets can be made more flat and even to ease moving around for example with a wheelchair. A good example of an improved street is “Rua das Flores” which dates back to 1500-century and was recently repaired thoroughly. Now it serves as one of the most accessible streets in the city.

In this research, one of the main aims was to receive information on which features are seen positive and which more negative - which aspects could be improved in the future and which the visitors are satisfied with?

The most divided answers came from three categories: climate, beaches and mobility in the city. Interestingly if the images of Portugal and Porto are compared - the whole country’s image generally includes features related with good climate, sun and beaches. If this is the image of the country, it is natural that the weather in Northern cities, like Porto, can disappoint the visitor. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the weather tends to be cooler and rainier than in most Portuguese cities. If the tourist is not aware of this fact and is expecting only sun and good weather, he/she is likely to be more critical when evaluating the climate. This, naturally, is out of the reach of tourism professionals, but perhaps as the image grows stronger, it will be clearer that Porto is not only a beach destination.

This leads us to the second aspect of criticism: beaches. The beaches of Algarve have received a lot of attention and are widely praised. Porto, as mentioned earlier, is a fairly new destination and it’s climate differs from Southern parts of the country. It is not suitable for sunbathing all year long and it’s beaches are less touristic compared to the ones in Algarve. Some tourists expecting the same quality and weather might be disappointed. However, Porto is a popular destination among surfers, also during wintertime. Answers in this category varied a lot and it had the most negative answers, with 6.25% rating the beaches “very bad” and 25% “bad”. The majority, however, was “okay/satisfactory” with 31.25% of the answers.

As already mentioned, the third aspect receiving more critical answers was mobility in the city. This part can be improved by city planning, reliable and available information and public transportation. From some areas it is impossible to fix completely but a lot can be done for making mobility easier in the city. Public transportation was not widely mentioned in the answers to this questionnaire, but in general it was rated either good (28.5%) or very good (34.3%) Some of the interviewees that the author was speaking with were praising the modern

and well-functioning metro-system in the city. The public transportation has been improved significantly in the recent years and is without a doubt useful for both the local inhabitants and the tourists. Room for improvement was found in all the categories related with accessibility; “directions/signs/assistance”, “accessible tourism activities in the city” and “accessible information about the city” were all rated OK/Satisfactory by most of the respondents.

7.5 Open-Ended Questions: Destination Holistic and Unique Features

In the open-question where the respondents were asked to describe Porto with adjectives, by far the most common adjective was “beautiful”. A lot of similar terms such as “lovely” and “gorgeous” were used. Almost all the adjectives were positive and only in two responses were used less flattering words such as “unclean”, “rainy” and “dangerous streets”. A lot of adjectives were mentioned also related with age of the city and the old part of the city. Some of these adjectives were for example: “charming”, “cultural”, “old”, “historical” and “rustic”. Conclusions can easily be made from this, since almost every answer included at least one adjective related with the age of the city or the cultural heritage. It suggests that Porto has a strong image of cultural heritage and that the old town is a big part of the image for tourists. This matches with the previous study done by Carvalho, where the main aspects of the holistic image of Porto were Douro-river, Dom Luis -bridge and the old town. Also in this study the river Douro, bridge and Ribeira (river shore) were mentioned frequently. Out of other monuments and attractions the most mentioned were Palácio de Cristal, Casa da Música and Livraria Lello. Interestingly, in this study the train station São Bento was not mentioned at all, whereas in Carvalho’s study it was one of the main unique elements. On the other hand, Carvalho’s study didn’t mention Casa da Música at all, which may be due to the fact that the Music house was built in 2010 and many of the reviews in the study might be from before this year.

7.6 Demographic Information

Positively, the ages of the respondents had some variety in this research. Majority of the responses were from young people in age between 18 and 25. Second largest group was tourists from 26 to 35. The percentage of people over 70 was surprisingly 6,9%. The age-groups are presented graphically in the following chart. (Table 2.)

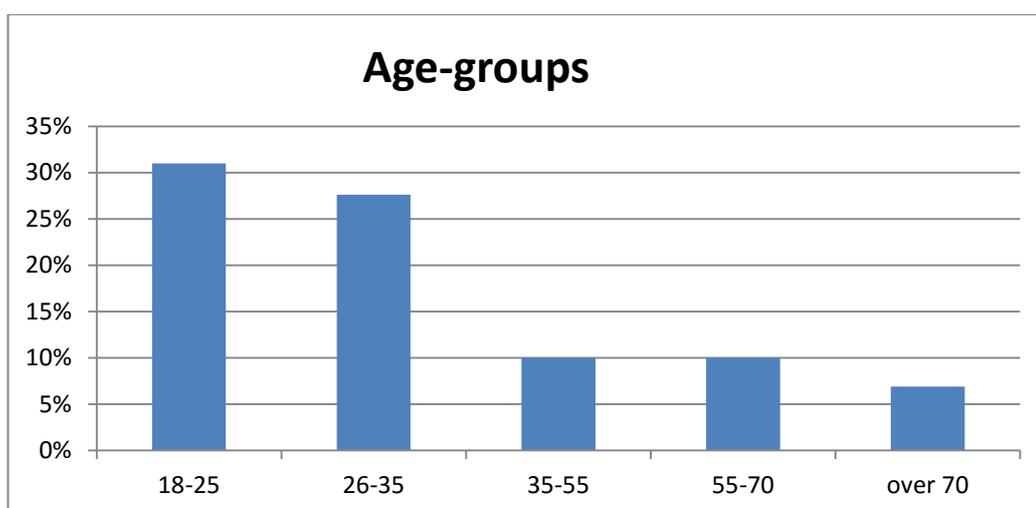


Table 2: Division of age-groups

Countries of origin will be presented in the following chart. (Table 3.) Most of the answers were from Finnish tourists, second French and Danish. Where the previous study (Carvalho.2014) focused only on English reviews, this study has more variety in nationalities to get a more international image.

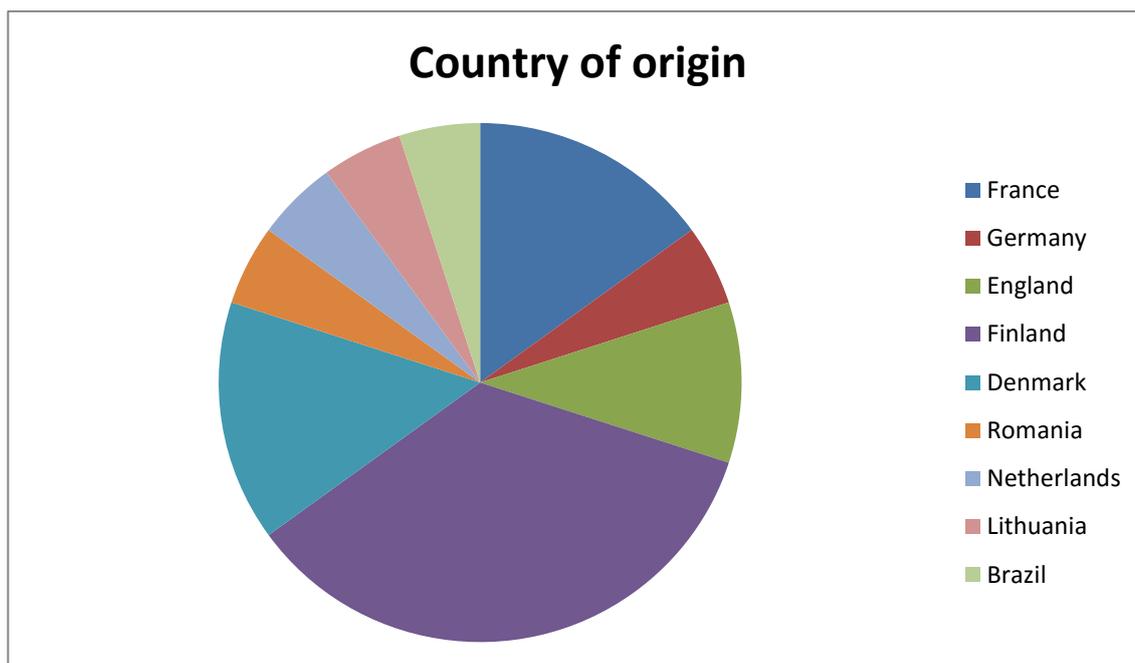


Table 3: Country of origin

The general sensation of the holiday was positive and all respondents were at least satisfied with their trip and majority was totally satisfied with the holiday.

8 Conclusions and Improvement Ideas

This research was mostly successful and some conclusions can be made from the results. There were some parts where the aims were not fully reached and will therefore leave need for future studies. The method used for this research complements well the only previous research done on Destination Image in Porto, where text-mining tools were used to collect most frequent words from web-sites. This thesis study was the first reaching out for tourists with disabilities and their images of the city and therefore served more as an experimental research.

As a conclusion it can be stated that the results were in line with the previous studies. They also seemed to match with the information provided by official tourism organizations in the area. It appears that the image of Porto is strongly built around Port Wine, River Douro and the History and Culture of the city.

Considering the level of accessibility, the sample was not wide enough to withdraw any strong conclusions. However, according to the results of this study, the general image of the city and its accessibility is positive. Some criticism could be seen regarding mobility in the city, but on the other hand public transport, public places and infrastructure were rated “Good”. Room for improvement is in all the categories related with accessibility; “directions/signs/assistance”, “accessible tourism activities in the city” and “accessible information about the city” were all rated OK/Satisfactory by most of the respondents. It is possible for the city to receive image as an accessible destination, but due to its landscape and historical sites, it might be difficult. The good public transportation system makes it more accessible and comfortable for visitors, but it is not enough to cover all the issues. As stated already in the earlier chapters, the most important and primary improvement for accessibility is providing reliable, up-to-date information about the level of accessibility of different tourism destinations, services and infrastructure.

The nature of this study was mainly experimental considering the subjects related with accessibility. With more time and connections, a wider sample could have been reached, mainly from tourists with disabilities. Conclusions can be made regarding the general image, but the difference between tourist segments needs further studying. For future, the author suggests more detailed research regarding the level of accessibility in the city or how the destination image can be influenced by marketing professionals. Also a research about accessible information for tourists with disabilities would be beneficial for knowing the city’s overall level of accessibility. A “bank” of information, maintained by city officials or a private company, about the accessibility of any destination would be highly useful for tourists travelling with disabilities.

9 Reflection on professional development

All in all, this thesis was highly useful for the professional development of the student. During the internship and the research process, the student got not only valuable knowledge directly from the industry, but also experience of working in an international context and in a foreign country. Conducting the research outside one’s own home country was very challenging due to limitations with language for example. However, it was also a motivating, exciting and rewarding process. There were some issues during the thesis-process, mainly related with difficulties in getting enough responses for the questionnaire part. Despite these issues, the research was successful for the learning of the student and for the results. This was the first

thesis work from the author, which naturally means that areas of improvement can be found. It was a good learning opportunity for expanding knowledge on the topic and also for conducting an individual work and managing time between the research and the writing.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire - Destination Image of Porto

Tourist Profile

Main motivation for visiting Porto?

- 1) Leisure
- 2) Business
- 3) Visiting friends/family
- 4) Study
- 5) Other

Time spent at the destination?

- 1) Less than a week
- 2) 1-2 weeks
- 3) 2-4 weeks
- 4) More than a month

Do you have a disability/limitation that affects your travel?

- 1) Yes (permanent)
- 2) Yes (temporary)
- 3) No

Type of disability/limitation?

- 1) Mobility
- 2) Visual
- 3) Hearing
- 4) Cognitive
- 5) No disability/limitation
- 6) Other

Travel Components

Rate the following terms according to your experience from Porto, from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good)

	Very bad	Bad	OK/Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Costs/Price level					
Tourist Sites/Activities					
Cultural Attractions (museums etc.)					
Religious Sites (churches, monasteries etc.)					
Nightlife/Entertainment					
Architecture					
Infrastructure/Public facilities					
Historic Sites					
Beaches					
Accommodation (hotels, hostels etc.)					
Accessibility to the city					
Mobility in the city (streets, rails, sidewalks)					
Accessible information about the city					
Accessible tourism activities in the city					
Quality of restaurants					
Variety of tourism service offering					
Hospitality/Friendliness					
Directions/Signs/Assistance					
Quality of services					

Open-ended Questions

- 1) Attractions/Experiences you would recommend for a friend visiting Porto? (Name 2-3 things)
- 2) Describe Porto with 3 adjectives.
- 3) Satisfied with the visit to Porto?
 - 1 (not at all)
 - 2 (not satisfied)
 - 3 (satisfied)
 - 4 (very satisfied)
 - 5 (totally satisfied)

Demographic Information

Choose an age-group:

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-55
- 55-70
- Over 70

Country of origin:

- Spain
- France
- Germany
- England
- Other (please specify)