

# The brand image of Gothenburg as a travel destination for Finnish travellers

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<p>Gothenburg is the world's leading destination in sustainability and the aim of this thesis is to better understand the brand image of Gothenburg in the eyes of the Finnish traveller. Understanding the correlation between destination brand and image is of utmost importance to be able to compete in today's global market filled with endless destinations.</p> <p>This thesis examines the familiarity and knowledge that Finnish travellers have about Gothenburg as a tourism destination, and at the same time attempts to discover the perceived image and compare it with the destination brand.</p> <p>The research approach used to conduct this study is quantitative, and the data collection was done with a survey. The selected method supports the goal of the study, to understand the brand image perceived by Finnish travellers. A total of 61 answers were recorded during the data collection period, which lasted four days.</p> <p>The result of the study shows that the image, perceived by the respondents is similar to the ideal image Gothenburg wants to brand itself as. The majority of respondents had positive feelings towards the destination with a few exceptions that considered the destination non-exotic.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Gothenburg, destination branding, destination image	

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# 1 Introduction

Destinations with identity. Destinations with a brand and image.

Having an identity as a destination is key to competitiveness and differentiation. A favourable image is one of the strongest pull factors for a travel destination today. Top travel destinations such as Paris, Dubai and Bangkok can all be connected to certain keywords and/or characteristics. For instance, Paris, the city of light and the city of love.

The choice of travel destination for this thesis is Gothenburg, with the study's main goal to learn what Finnish travellers picture and know about the world's most sustainable destination of today. The structure of the study consists of three parts, starting with a theoretical framework to better understand the main concepts and topic of the thesis. The theoretical framework includes insight on major terms related to destination, starting off with defining travel destination and the concept of destination image, while in the following chapters, the significance of destination branding is introduced.

The second part is an introduction to Gothenburg as a destination with some of its top attractions and details on the destination's amenities and accessibility. Gothenburg's brand is also briefly discussed and later reviewed again as part of the research results.

The third and final part of the study presents the methods and research approach used for the data collection, followed by the findings made by the data analysis and the conclusion of the study. At the end of the thesis, the survey used to collect data is presented.

## **2 Destination**

This chapter discusses destination image and also opens up the definition of a travel destination to better understand the whole picture of the study.

### **2.1 Defining a travel destination**

A travel destination, also known as a tourist or tourism destination can be considered a tangible, physical location in which the traveller is able to spend time but also an intangible, as it has the ability to create images, expectations and memories. As a physical space, a destination by size can be anything from a small village, to a large city and even an entire country. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009,112-113; Wang & Pizam 2011, 24; Cooper 2012, 32; Lohmann & Netto 2017, 205.)

Another definition for destination by Pike (2004) is that they are geographical locations with resources, attractions, infrastructure, superstructure, and facilities designed for people to visit and stay for a specific time based on their own individual reasons.

Chris Cooper (2012, 32-34) identified four common features of most destinations. Destinations are 1) amalgams, 2) cultural appraisals, 3) inseparable in context of tourism being produced where it is consumed and the final feature being that 4) destinations have multiple functions for many other groups and not tourists alone.

Amalgams in the case of a destination means that it consists of the “four As”, meaning attractions, amenities, accessibility, and ancillary services. Cultural appraisals are the tourist’s desires to visit the destination based on different factors such as historical background, culture, and environment. Inseparability projects the very nature of the visitor’s requirement to be physically present to experience tourism at a destination. The multifunctionality of a destination means that it has the possibility to share its tourism and is not just built for visitors to consume. For example, tourism in urban areas is shared with local businesses, tourism in coastal areas can be used by hydroelectric power plants to generate electricity. (Cooper 2012, 32-34.)

## **2.2 Destination image and its importance**

Tourists always have initial thoughts and feelings towards travel destinations. Whether they are positive or negative, it will have a major impact on the likeliness of the tourist visiting that destination. Therefore, destination image is one of the most important concepts in tourism destination marketing. The purpose of destination image is to show the differences between destinations, and it plays a crucial role in the decision-making process of the tourist when selecting a travel destination. It is important to note that destination image is based on the tourist's perspective and not the marketer's image. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 130-131; Lohmann & Netto 2017, 205-206; Alcocer & Ruiz 2019; Cooper 2012, 274.)

The significance for a destination management organization to understand their destination's image is key for successful destination marketing strategies. The image of the destination for the tourist can be very personal as the image is dependent on each tourist's individual perspective. The concept of destination image itself has been acknowledged to be very unique in characteristics and the complexity of it requires the development of different conceptual frameworks and methodologies to grasp a better understanding of the nature of destination image. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 130-131; Alcocer & Ruiz 2019.)

According to Alcocer & Ruiz (2017), most of the key research on the nature of destination image have focused on two main components, the cognitive and affective images. The cognitive component refers to the tourist's knowledge and beliefs about the destination's physical attributes whereas the affective component is represented by feelings or other emotional responses towards the destination. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 130-131; Alcocer & Ruiz 2020.)

In addition to the two main components, another component named the conative component has been deemed vital in defining destination image. The conative component explains the element of action, which means the manifestation of the tourist's behaviour towards a specific action that affects the probability of visiting the destination. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 133.)

## **2.3 Destination image influencers**

Understanding how destination images are formed is essential knowledge for destination management organizations and tourism organizers as it can provide valuable information in marketing and assist in future decision-making. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 139.)

Table 1. Destination image formation agents (Adapted from Gartner 1993)

Information sources	Description	Examples
Overt induced 1	Traditional advertising by destination promoters	Television, printed media such as brochures and radio
Overt induced 2	External sources that are interested in destination marketing	Workers in the tourism industry such as travel agents and tour operators
Covert induced 1	Paid public spokesmen that are well-known	Celebrities such as models and artists
Covert induced 2	Unbiased sources influenced by the destination promoters	Media representatives or tour providers that are projecting the desired image of the destination
Autonomous	Independent sources such as news and popular culture	News reports, documentaries, and films
Unsolicited organic	Individuals who provide unrequested information	Friends who have visited the destination before, business colleagues
Solicited organic	Knowledgeable sources without interest in marketing	Requested information by friends or relatives that have visited or heard about the destination
Organic	Individual experiences	Personal experiences at the destinations from previous visits

Table 1 gives examples of different sources that have the ability to influence and form an individuals' destination image.

One of the big influencers on destination image is mass media. According to Wang and Pizam (2011, 141). Movies and television shows have had significant impact on destination image, which affects a traveller's decision to visit certain destinations where for instance, the movie was filmed.

### **3 Destination branding**

When we think about brands, we would immediately think about consumer products such as Coca Cola or Adidas. A simple definition for “brand” is a name, term, design, symbol or another feature identifying a provider’s goods or services (The American Marketing Association 2017). Another definition for “brand” by Heidi Cohen, President of Riverside Marketing Strategies (2011) is that brands are shorthanded marketing messages, which create an emotional bond with the consumer. Brands consist of intangible elements such as its promise and personality, and tangible elements which are identifiable such as logos and sounds.

Destination and a regular consumer product can be differentiated in many ways. A destination as a product is a large-scale entity that inhabits human people and already has pre-existing brand features coming from different elements such as the destination’s name and flag. Destinations also have static and uncontrollable elements such as its history, political relationship and economic situation which can all affect the brand. (Wang & Pizam, 2011, 116.)

A destination brand is not created by just a single company, but it is a complex entity managed and developed by independent networks and other stakeholders that collectively create services and facilities required for the tourist destination product to succeed. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 113.)

Branding in tourism is widely acknowledged for its significance in destination development. The impact branding has in the competitive global market makes branding the most powerful marketing tool available to today’s destination management organizations. (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride 2010, 60-61.)

A strong destination brand successfully differentiates its products, brings a certain level of quality, value, trust and assurance, and also brings out anticipation and emotions out of the tourism consumer. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 122-123.) Branding helps to connect with the consumer, for example to understand why they choose a certain destination for vacation. It can help the destination marketing organization and other stakeholders stay focused, which in return improves strategic planning, implementation, and quality of service. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 6-8; Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride 2010, 60-61.)



### 3.1 Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and their role in tourism

Today, the marketing responsibility for a tourism product is overseen by a DMO, which stands for destination marketing organization. The main purpose of a DMO is to market its product, provide economic benefit to its stakeholder and improve sustained destination competitiveness. Alongside the primary responsibility of a DMO, which is the marketing of the destination, it is also responsible for industry coordination, monitoring services and quality standards, and managing the communication between all the stakeholders of the destination. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 115-116.)

It is important to note that the DMO's partnerships play a vital role in the overall success of the destination's brand. The brand must be owned and displayed across the entire destination, from its town planners and architects to its retailers and transport companies. (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride 2010.)

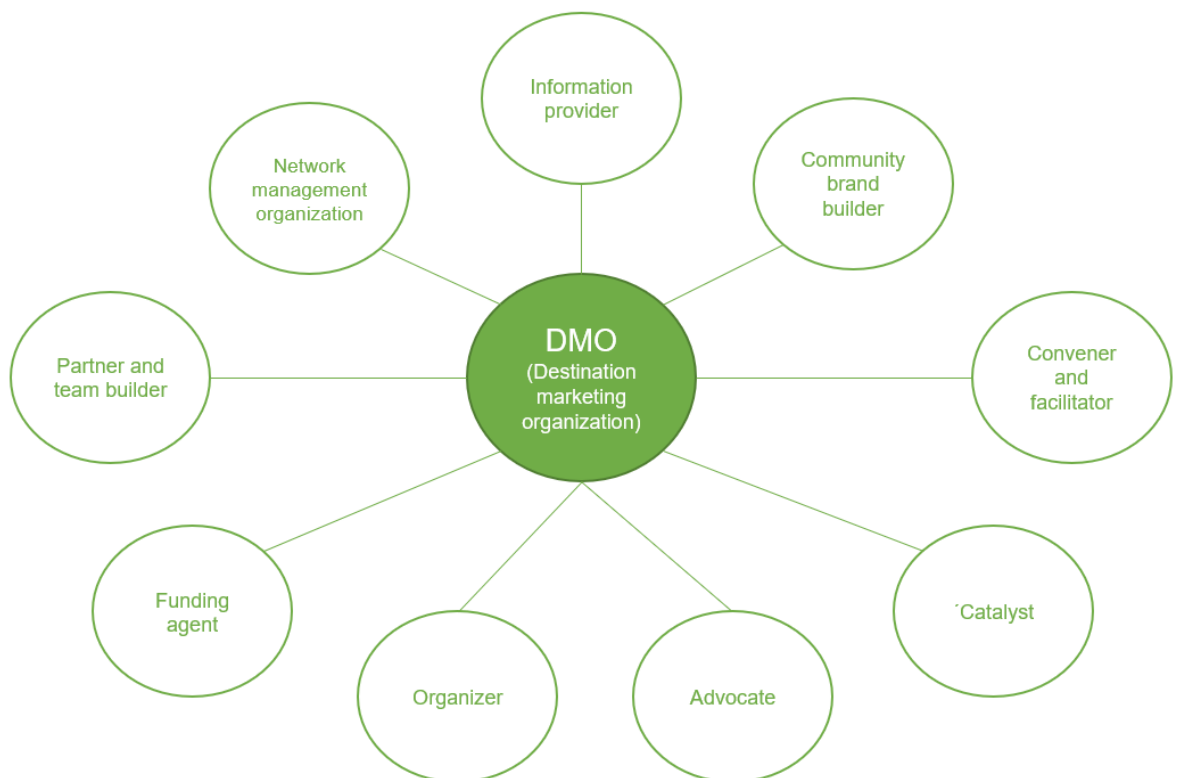


Figure 1. The role of the DMO in destination marketing (Adapted from Wang 2008).

Figure 1 is based on a case study performed by Wang (2008) and its purpose was to better understand and describe the roles that a DMO has in general and the marketing of the

destination. In total, 37 tourism businesses and local DMO staff members were interviewed for this research and the results provided nine different roles which are as follows:

- 1) Information provider
- 2) Community brand builder
- 3) Convener and facilitator
- 4) Catalyst
- 5) Advocate
- 6) Organizer
- 7) Funding agent
- 8) Partner and team builder
- 9) Network management organization

The role *information provider* describes the responsibility of the DMO as an information source, which its tasks are to identify their target markets, meet the expectations of visitors and share information with other stakeholders. This information is especially useful for local businesses to enhance their services and products and giving them insight on potential opportunities. They also serve as a contact point for tourists and potential visitors, providing them with information at tourist facilities and through channels like online websites and social media. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 11.)

As *community brand builder*, the DMO acts as its destination's marketing representative, being responsible for marketing the destination as one entity. DMOs have partnerships at local and regional levels, which allow them to market themselves over other areas as well. The DMOs work together with local businesses to market and promote the destination to various different markets. This can bring in, for instance, business travellers coming for conventions or meetings, group tours and leisure travellers. This role is noted as crucial for the DMO because other stakeholders are invested in their own private businesses, meaning that it would be challenging for them to brand and market the destination. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 11.)

DMOs often play a significant role when it comes to community issues, that is why *convener and facilitator* is one of the responsibilities of the DMO. They are problem solvers for issues that intervene in the cooperation of the DMO and the community. They are also responsible for acting as the intermediary between visitors and the community, and between the local tourism industry and the government. When this role is well done, it can strengthen and encourage cooperation. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 11.)

The role of a *catalyst* defines the DMO's responsibility to be a leader in creating a collaborative environment for its stakeholders. This role goes hand-in-hand with the *convener and facilitator* role, with the goal of the DMO to create long term strategies for problem solving and making commitments together with the stakeholders.

(Wang & Pizam 2011, 11.)

The DMO acts as the *advocate* for the tourism industry, delivering the significance of tourism and the impact it has on the area and local economy. This role requires the DMO to also be an advocate for smaller groups that are part of the collaboration activities. In some cases, these smaller groups can create difficulties for other stakeholders, which in turn requires the DMO to bring support. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 12.)

The role *organizer* refers to the DMO's primary responsibility of destination marketing. The DMO is tasked with understanding and putting together potential marketing activities, including as many partners as possible. This role requires the DMO to continuously search and develop marketing and promotion ideas. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 12.)

DMOs encourage collaborative marketing activities, providing partners with support and matching fund. The fund is financed directly by the DMO or through other sources from the DMO's side, which makes the DMO a *funding agent* for collaborative marketing activities. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 12.)

One of the more obvious roles of a DMO is to make sure that partners act as a team, sharing responsibilities, resources, and rewards. The DMO helps establish mutual respect and trust, strengthening the relationship between all stakeholders in their collaborative marketing efforts. In this role as a *partner and team builder*, they also create common interest for the tourism industry to work together and are the contact point for local businesses when they seek a partnership. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 12.)

The DMO is considered its destination's network management organization, which means that the DMO is responsible for the coordination and management of the diverse group of stakeholders. It oversees and supports all stakeholders in the network, allowing the complex array of different community-based services to proceed smoothly. Without the DMO, local businesses that work in collaboration would have a challenging time meeting the needs of the consumers, facing substantial problems such as resource allocation, expected outcomes and benefit sharing. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 12.)

### **3.2 Challenges in destination branding**

Considering the fact that destination marketing organizations market on a global scale, they are usually operating on limited resources. Destinations, and tourism generally, are extremely vulnerable to internal and external issues such as natural disasters, pandemics, political strife, economic crises, and terrorism. The whole process of destination branding is done with all the stakeholders involved, therefore lack of unity can be a big challenge in successfully branding a destination. (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride 2010, 62; Wang & Pizam 2011, 117.)

## **4 Gothenburg as a travel destination**

Gothenburg is the second largest city in Sweden, located on the west coast of the country. It is also the largest non-capital city in the Nordic countries and holds a population of an estimated 570,000 in the city proper and one million in the metropolitan area. Gothenburg was founded in 1621, making it its 400<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2021. (Göteborg & Co 2020a; Visit Sweden 2020.)

Gothenburg is one of the most sustainable destinations of today, having been selected for Best in Travel 2021 in the sustainability category by Lonely Planet and ranking first in the Global Destination Sustainability Index in 2019, making it four years in a row. (Lonely Planet 2020; Göteborg & Co 2020b; Global Destination Sustainability Movement 2020.)

### **4.1 Accessibility**

The easiest and fastest way to visit Gothenburg from Finland today is via flight. Direct flight to Landvetter Airport from Helsinki Airport takes approximately two hours and 15 minutes with Finnair. There are other flight providers but the travel time would be considerably longer and also consist of stop-overs. (Momondo 2020; Finnair 2020.)

Other travel options would be taking a cruise to Stockholm and then taking a train or going by bus. (Forsberg 2012.)

### **4.2 Amenities**

Gothenburg has great shopping options, with large shopping centers such as Frölunda torg and Nordstan, and exclusive department store NK. Vintage and retro shops can also be found in areas like Linne and Haga, so the variety of selections is outstanding. (Göteborg & Co 2020c; Göteborg & Co 2020d.)

As the city is situated on the west coast, Gothenburg boasts top-quality seafood with locally grown produce. The city has world-class restaurants, trendy bars and food trucks so finding a good meal will not be a problem. Gothenburg is also known as Sweden's beer capital, being one of Europe's hottest hubs for craft beer with the world's best breweries. Vegetarians and vegans can also find a great variety of vegan-friendly restaurants as sustainability is one of Gothenburg's number one attributes. (Göteborg & Co 2020e.)

Accommodation in Gothenburg is easy to find, there are options for everyone, varying from fancy and regular hotels to hostels and camping sites. The majority of hotels are eco-friendly and 95% of all hotel rooms are eco-certified. (Göteborg & Co 2020f.)

### 4.3 Attractions

This chapter presents some of the most popular tourist attractions of Gothenburg with descriptive text and pictures.

#### 4.3.1 Liseberg

Liseberg Amusement Park is one of the top attractions in Gothenburg, it was first opened in 1923 and is visited by approximately 3 million visitors every year. As an amusement park, Liseberg also arranges musicals and shows, and hosts corporate events and conferences. In terms of sustainability, Liseberg has been awarded two stars in the Michelin Green Guide and aims to be a world leader in sustainable park operations by 2025. Liseberg is open over three “seasons”: summer, Halloween and Christmas, and offers over 30 rides and attractions during each season. Liseberg is unique during all seasons, offering special programs and visuals to its visitors. (Liseberg 2019; Liseberg 2020; Göteborg & Co 2020g.)



Image 1. Entrance at Liseberg Amusement Park (Peter Kvarnström 2020)





Image 2. Christmas at Liseberg Amusement Park (Frida Winter 2020)

### 4.3.2 Slottsskogen

Slottsskogen, which translates into “Castle Forest” is Gothenburg’s main park. Before the park was officially opened in 1874, it was used for pasture in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and belonged to the then existing castle named Älvsborgs Slott. The park offers its visitors large open spaces in a fantastic environment for relaxation, recreation and outdoor activities, and also animal interaction in the park zoo, which is open all year-round admission free, and the petting zoo, which is open from April to September. Slottsskogen also has a segway center, where you can rent a segway to travel through the park on wheels. (Göteborg & Co 2020h.)



Image 3. Slottsskogen City Park (Steampipe Production Studio AB 2020)

### 4.3.3 The Gothenburg archipelago

The Gothenburg archipelago is made up of over 20 islands, lining around the west coastline of Sweden. The islands are host to charming villages with breath-taking nature and beaches, which is perfect for relaxing long walks and picnics. There are great options for overnight stays, outdoor activities such as sea-fishing and boating, and restaurants. Reaching the archipelago can be done via tram/bus - ferry transport from Gothenburg city. (Göteborg & Co 2020i.)



Image 4. Seals in the archipelago (Happy Visuals 2020)



Image 5. Island Dönsö (Peter Kvarnström 2020)



#### 4.4 Gothenburg as a brand

As a travel destination, Gothenburg brands itself as Europe's capital of smart tourism, having won first place in the GDS-Index four times in a row as of 2019. With its 400<sup>th</sup> year anniversary coming up in 2021, Gothenburg has made big project plans to create sustainable solutions to current issues and to develop the city, making it a better place to visit, live in and work in. (Göteborg & Co 2020b; Göteborg & Co 2020i; Göteborg & Co 2020j.)

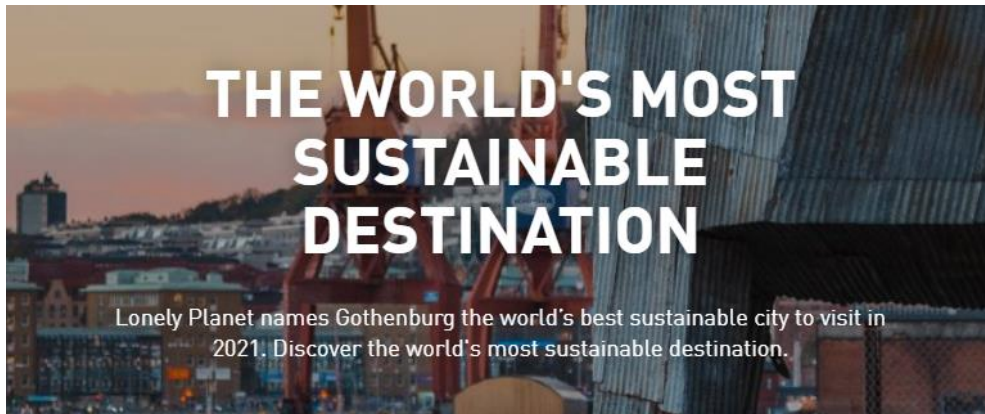


Image 6. Screenshot of Gothenburg DMO's website cover (Göteborg & Co 2020)



Image 7. Screenshot of Gothenburg DMO's instagram account (Instagram 2020)

Visit Sweden (2020) promotes Gothenburg on its official website as a culinary destination, mentioning its organic produce of seafood and fishing heritage, wide array of restaurants, and craft beer. Gothenburg is also promoted as an idyllic city with beautiful views of nature and the sea.

## **5 Methodology**

This chapter explains the method used in conducting this study, the processes of the study's data-collection and data-analysis, and the reliability and validity of the outcome.

### **5.1 Quantitative research approach**

The goal of a quantitative research approach is to determine the correlation between two variables, an independent variable and a dependent or outcome variable. Quantitative research has a strong focus on numeric and unchanging data such as populations and is used to test hypotheses. Using quantitative research allows for a broader study and better generalization of the research results. The vast information gained by using a quantitative research can be reused across different categories and compared with other similar information over time. (USC Libraries 2020.)

There are limitations when it comes to quantitative research, such as its inflexibility for more contextual detail. Answers given in quantitative research may also not reflect the individual's true opinion on the topic as the answers are pre-set. When poorly executed, the research results may even lead to structural bias and false representation. (USC Libraries 2020.)

### **5.2 Survey as data collection method**

A survey with Webropol 3.0 was created to collect data for this study. Webropol 3.0 is a unique data collection and reporting tool that is easy to learn and is used by companies such as Audi and Astellas Pharma. Over 30 million peoples' feedback is given through Webropol every year, making it a very reliable tool for research. (Webropol 2020.)

A survey is defined as a systematic tool or method for obtaining information. Surveys can be delivered in multiple ways, for instance through mail, over internet as a web-link, over the phone or in-person. Surveys are designed as an ordered list of questions, with simple answer options such as yes or no, statements that they can either agree or disagree with, short text-fields or multiple-choice tick-boxes. (NOAA Coastal Services Center 2007, 3-4; Wolf, Joye, Smith, & Fu 2016.)

### **5.3 Data collection and analysis**

The stratified random sampling technique was used for collecting the study's survey responses. The benefit of using stratified random sampling is that it guarantees a similar percentage of gender compositions as the target population in question. This technique still gives the chance for each gender to fall into random subgroups, such as age groups and education level. (NOAA Coastal Services Center 2007, 5-6.)

In the beginning of the survey creation, multiple factors were considered for an efficient way to generalize and categorize respondents into profiles. The core of the survey, which consisted of the main questions for the study, was kept as simple and structured as possible, giving small to non-existent windows for misunderstandings. The survey was also short-in-length, with most respondents having answered to all questions within five minutes. Some of the questions also had a short description with tips to make it easier for the respondents to answer the survey. The survey used for this study can be found at the end of the thesis.

The survey delivery was mainly done with a shared web-link and in-person interviews. The web-link to the survey was active for four days, starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> of November until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. In-person interviews were rather challenging as the majority of met individuals were either unwilling or uninterested to answer the survey. In-person interviews were conducted mainly outside on the street and inside public spaces. The attitude of unwilling or uninterested respondents could have been generated by the current Covid-19 pandemic that was going on during the time this study was conducted, where social distancing was a norm.

The collected data was analysed with Webropol 3.0 and it was used to match and compare different question answers. Microsoft Excel and WordArt were used as visualizing tools, making the results easier to grasp.

### **5.4 Research reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity are important measurements for a study's quality. A study which is reliable and valid means that its results are accurate. (Carmines & Zeller 1979, 11-14; Heale & Alison 2015; Wolf, Joye, Smith, & Fu 2016, 531-533.)

The term reliability in quantitative research is proof of consistency in measurement. To get a reliable result, the result of the measurement is consistent when it is repeated, and all

factors have stayed the same during the process. A measurement is unreliable when the same procedure is taken but the result is different, meaning it is inconsistent. (Carmines & Zeller 1979, 11-14; Heale & Alison 2015; Wolf, Joye, Smith, & Fu 2016, 531-533.)

Validity in quantitative research is defined as the level of accurateness of the measurement. The purpose of the research must match the type of measurement used in the research method. Validity refers to the correlation between the measurement and theoretical concept. For instance, measuring Finnish travellers' level of interest to travel to an Asian country would be pointless in this study and make it invalid. (Carmines & Zeller 1979, 11-14; Heale & Alison 2015; Wolf, Joye, Smith, & Fu 2016, 531-533.)

Survey-related studies require true representative samples. The selected stratified random sampling technique for collecting this study's data enhances the validity due to its nature of fairness in giving an equal chance for respondents to fall in all the subgroups of age and educational level but still remaining similar to the population's gender percentage.

According to Statista (2019), there are more females than males in Finland but the gender difference between male and female is only 1.24%. The following table displays the survey's gender difference and compares it with the total population's gender difference.

Table 2. Gender difference comparison of sample and target group

	Survey	Survey (%)	Total population	Total population (%)
Male	26	42.62%	2 728 262	49.38%
Female	35	57.38%	2 790 030	50.62%

The sample's gender difference percentage is 13.52% higher compared to the total population. The difference is relatively small when you compare the number of respondents to the number of the total population. There are less men and more female respondents like the gender difference of the total population.

Another case to support the study's reliability, is that the survey by itself was very simplistic. The survey was tested multiple times to make sure that misunderstandings would not occur and that all the questions and survey functions worked as intended, giving it consistency.

## 6 Research results

This chapter presents the results of the research that was made with the survey, including profile information of the representative sample, their travel preferences and worries. Each key finding is provided with a figure and descriptive text that is supportive to the data analysis.

### 6.1 Respondent information, travel interests and worries

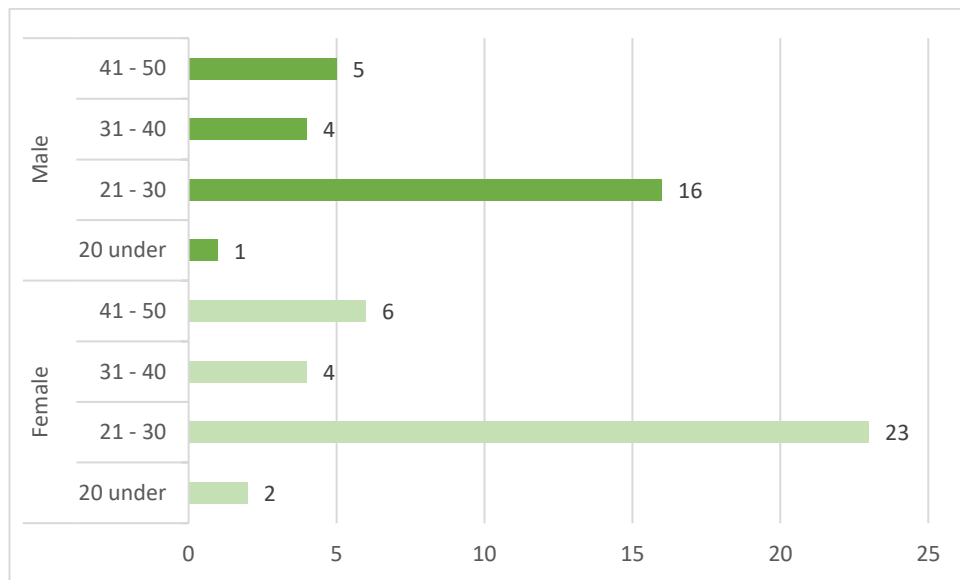


Figure 2. Profile of survey respondents: gender and age (n=61)

This figure displays the number of male and female respondents in each age group. Age groups 51 to 60 and 60+ are missing because none of the respondents fit in those groups. The majority age group was 21 to 30, having a total of 39 respondents, and the smallest age group being respondents under 20, with a sum of 3.

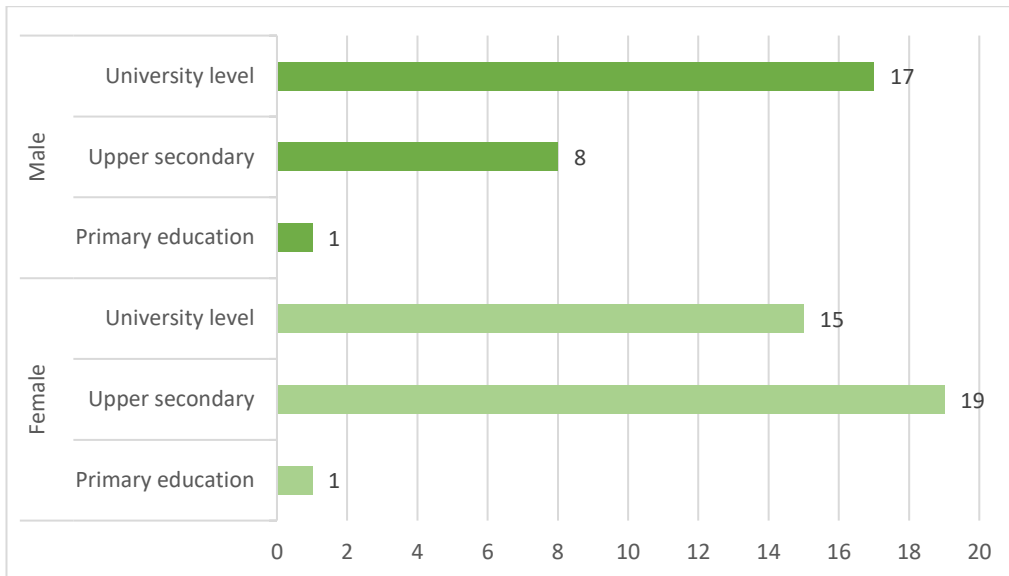


Figure 3. Profile of survey respondents: gender and education level (n=61)

This figure represents the level of education of the respondents. In total, 32 respondents were on upper secondary education level, 27 respondents were on university level and two respondents were on primary education level. The majority of male respondents had university level education and for the female respondents, the number between university level and upper secondary level was quite even.

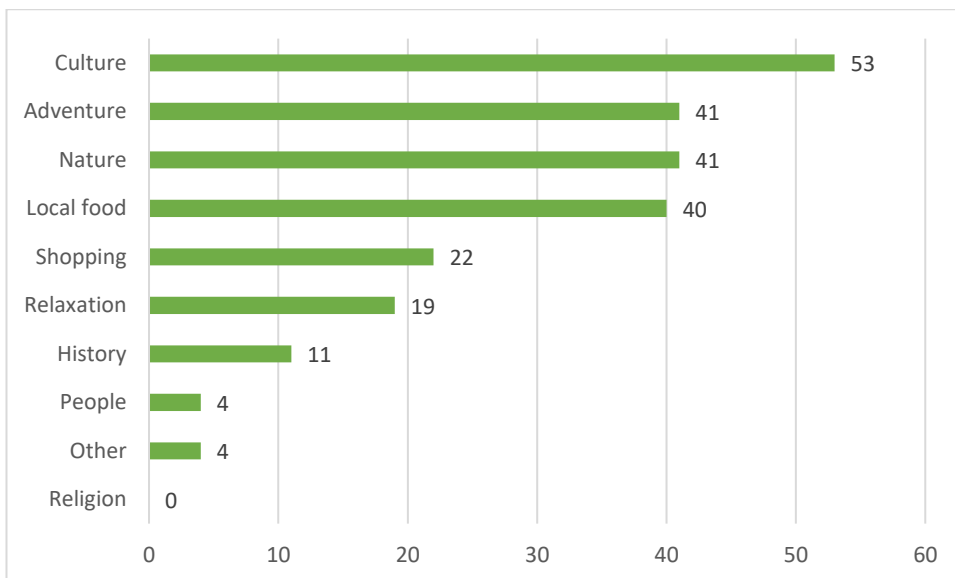


Figure 4. Respondents' interest during travel (n=61)

This was a multiple-choice question, where the respondent had an option to pick more than one of the pre-set answers or create their own. The top interests were culture (89%), adventure (67%), nature (67%) and local food (65%). The least picked interests were religion (0%), people (6%) and other (6%).

The self-created answers were events, extreme sports, and language. One of the respondents had selected “Other” but left it empty.

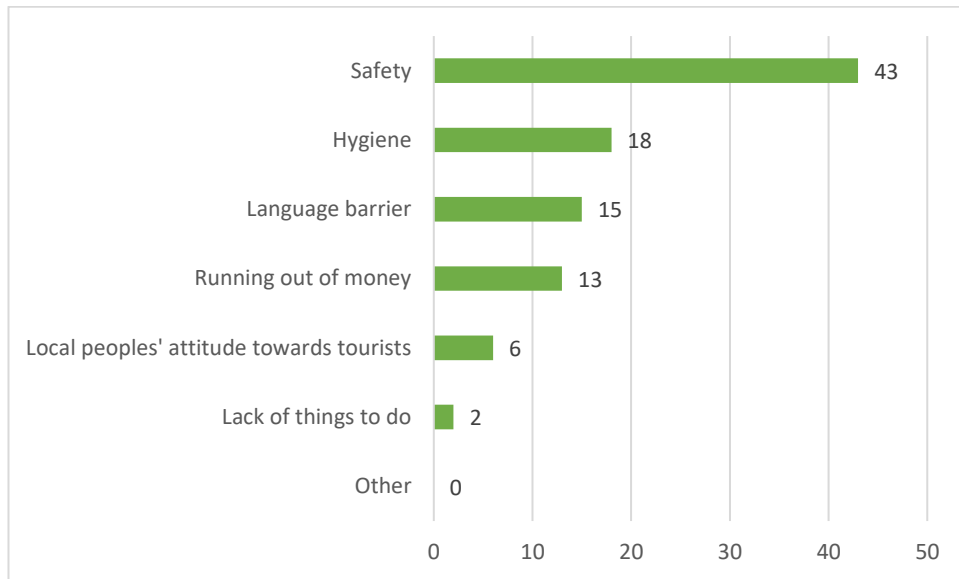


Figure 5. Respondents' worries during travel (n=61)

This figure represents the worries of the respondents when they travel. This was also a multiple-choice question so the respondents could pick more than one. The most worrying issue was safety (91%), followed by hygiene (38%), language barrier (32%) and running out of money (28%).

## 6.2 Key findings

This chapter discusses the key findings of the survey, which directly relates to the correlation of the target group and Gothenburg as a travel destination and brand. The knowledge of the respondents about the destination and its brand is also discussed during this chapter.

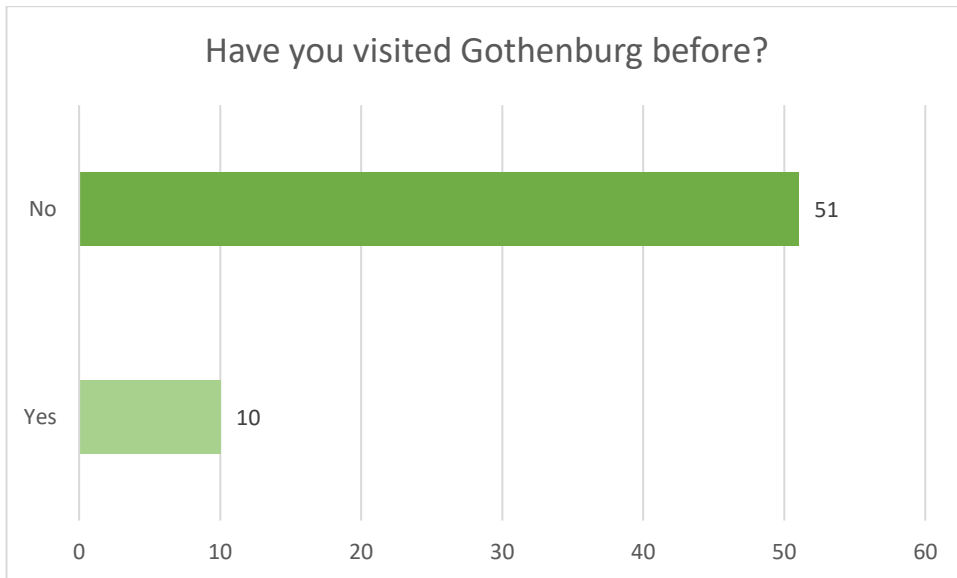


Figure 6. Respondents' familiarity of Gothenburg as a travel destination (n=61)

This figure shows how many of the respondents have visited Gothenburg before, with the majority of the respondents not having visited (84%) and only a small amount having visited (16%).

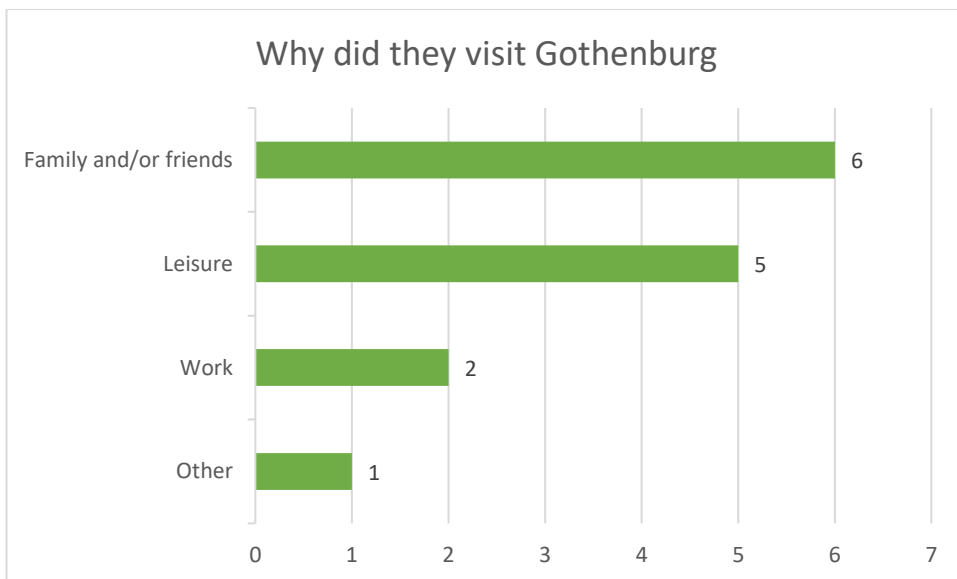


Figure 7. Respondents who have visited Gothenburg and the reasoning behind it (n=10)

This was a follow-up question to the question presented in figure 6 for respondents who answered "yes". This question was a multi-choice question; therefore, the total answer amount is higher than the number of respondents who have visited Gothenburg. The main purposes for the trips to Gothenburg were family and/or friends (60%) and leisure (50%).



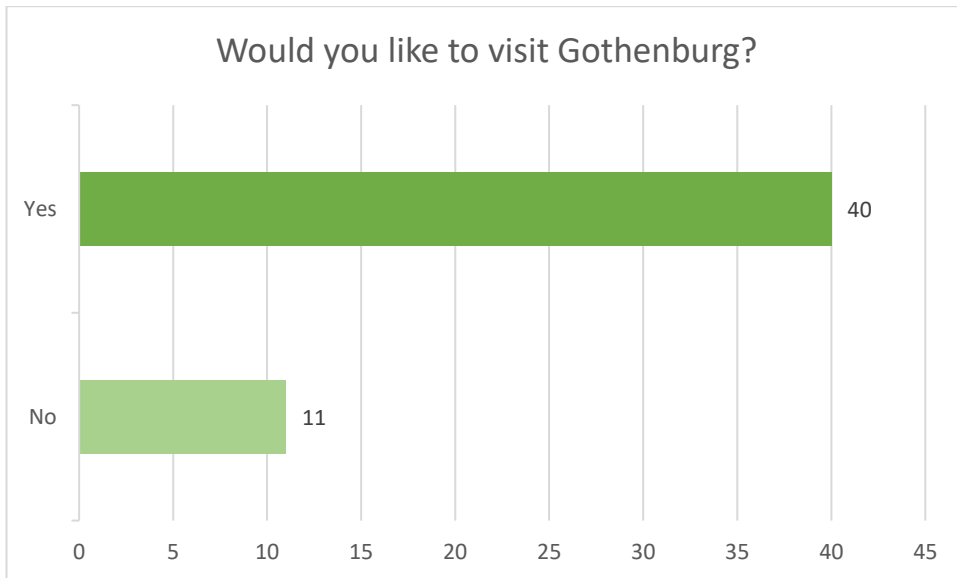


Figure 8. Respondents' interest to visit Gothenburg (n=51)

This figure displays the interest of the respondents to visit Gothenburg. This was another follow-up question to the question presented in figure 6 but for the respondents who answered “no”. 40 (78%) of the respondents who have not been in Gothenburg before are interested in visiting while 11 (22%) are uninterested.

The following two figures are directly related to the answers to the question presented in this figure, examining the reason behind the interest and lack of interest in visiting Gothenburg.



Figure 10. Respondents' reasons behind the interest in visiting Gothenburg (n=40)

The respondents had the option to explain their interest in visiting Gothenburg using short sentences, single words, or adjectives. The words and reasons mentioned the most are in a larger sized font while the less frequent words and reasons appear in a smaller font. The most common reason why the respondents were interested in visiting Gothenburg was the thought of experiencing something new, visiting a destination for the very first time.

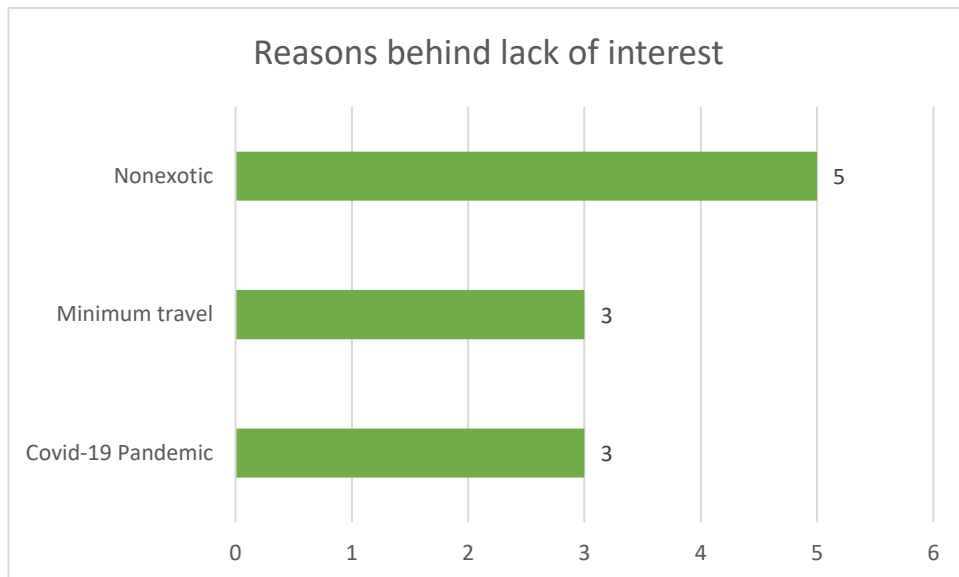


Figure 11. Respondents' reasons behind the lack of interest in visiting Gothenburg (n=11)

Similar to figure 10, the respondents had the option to explain their lack of interest in visiting Gothenburg. The most recurring mentioned reason why the respondents were uninterested in visiting Gothenburg was because it was too ordinary of a travel destination and therefore decreased potential travel interest. Two other reasons were mentioned, one being that the respondents do not travel very often, and the other being the risks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following figure visualizes the thoughts of the respondents when they think of Gothenburg. The fonts that appear large are the most recurring words or themes that were described by the respondents. Some words that could be considered negative have been put in a dark brown color font.



Figure 12. The respondents' destination image of Gothenburg (n=61)

The majority of the words and themes that were used by the respondents to describe Gothenburg's image were positive. The standout words and themes were about historical elements, such as Gothenburg's history and historical sights, and the beautiful appearance and charm of the destination. Other recurring words and themes were about natural elements of the destination, attractions, car brands and transportation.

The following table introduces the last part of the survey, which consisted of nineteen linear-scale statements where the respondents were asked to either agree or disagree by giving it a rating from one to five. One being "strongly against the statement", two being "somewhat against the statement", three being "indifferent" or "not knowing", four being "somewhat agreeing with the statement" and five being "strongly agreeing with the statement".

Table 3. Respondents' linear scale question results (n=61)

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Great shopping possibilities	1,64 %	1,64 %	39,34 %	36,07 %	21,31 %	3,74
Friendly local people	0 %	0 %	47,54 %	47,54 %	4,92 %	3,57
Lots of criminality	44,26 %	31,15 %	22,95 %	1,64 %	0 %	1,82
Terrorism	80,33 %	8,20 %	11,47 %	0 %	0 %	1,31
Lots of activities	0 %	0 %	31,15 %	44,26 %	24,59 %	3,93
Easily accessible ( easy to visit )	0 %	0 %	24,59 %	26,23 %	49,18 %	4,25
Safe city	0 %	0 %	24,59 %	55,74 %	19,67 %	3,95
Interesting attractions	0 %	1,64 %	21,31 %	55,74 %	21,31 %	3,97
Great food	0 %	3,28 %	39,34 %	47,54 %	9,84 %	3,64
Manageable with English only as a tourist	0 %	0 %	9,83 %	32,79 %	57,38 %	4,48
Beautiful sights such as nature and landsc	0 %	1,64 %	31,15 %	50,82 %	16,39 %	3,82
Historical sights	0 %	3,28 %	27,87 %	42,62 %	26,23 %	3,92
Good overnight stay options	0 %	0 %	32,79 %	36,06 %	31,15 %	3,98
Very religious	54,10 %	22,95 %	22,95 %	0 %	0 %	1,69
Good transportation inside the city	0 %	1,64 %	54,10 %	26,23 %	18,03 %	3,61
An interesting culture	1,64 %	19,67 %	44,26 %	32,79 %	1,64 %	3,13
A good city for events	0 %	0 %	65,57 %	22,95 %	11,48 %	3,46
A clean city	0 %	0 %	60,66 %	19,67 %	19,67 %	3,59
A expensive city	0 %	11,48 %	62,29 %	24,59 %	1,64 %	3,16

On the table, the majority of statements are more on the side of agreement than disagreement, with the average being 3, not knowing or being indifferent. The statements with the highest agreement rate are “manageable with English only as a tourist” and “easily accessible”. High numbers were expected from these statements, with English being a globally spoken language and Gothenburg being in our neighbouring country. Low agreement rates were given to three statements, “criminality”, “terrorism” and “religiousness”.

According to Travel Safe - Abroad (2020), Gothenburg has a low risk of crime, but travellers should still be aware of tourist robberies and walking alone at night. It is also mentioned that Gothenburg has never been victim to terrorist attacks so travellers should not have to fear that.

When it comes to religion, over half of Sweden’s population (58%) follow Christianity and belong to the Church of Sweden, though only 19% of Swedes consider themselves religious. Other major religions in Sweden are Islam, Orthodox/Eastern churches, and Catholicism. (Sutherland 2020.)

According to a global study conducted in 2015, Sweden is the least religious nation in the West. About eight out of ten Swedes consider themselves either non-religious or convinced atheists. (The Local 2015.)

When combining the information about criminality, terrorism, and religiousness in Gothenburg, with the low agreement rates of the statements in question, the numbers seem plausible.

Statements which were close to the middle were “expensive city” and “interesting culture”. The indifference in “interesting culture” was expected in a sense of neighbouring Nordic country culture not being very different, stereotypically speaking.

In terms of budget, Sweden is not the cheapest destination when compared to some other European countries, such as Germany or Italy. However, according to Scandinavian travel guide Routes North (2020), Sweden is still cheaper than its fellow Nordic countries, Finland, and Norway. The average number for statement “expensive city” therefore is also reasonable since it is very close to being indifferent.

When comparing Gothenburg’s brand to some of these statement results, it matches quite well. “Beautiful sights such as nature and landscape” and “a clean city” can both relate to the sustainability aspect of Gothenburg’s brand. Both statements are well agreed upon, closing to a rating of four. Visit Sweden also promoted Gothenburg as culinary destination, and the statement of Gothenburg having “great food” options was rated 3,64 with over half of the respondents rating it a four.

Even though the rate of agreement on the majority of statements are relatively high or low, with only a few statements being near the middle, it is important to note that it does not confirm the knowledge of the respondents. Some respondents may have selected a high agreement or low agreement rating based purely on their image of Gothenburg, without ever having visited the destination. Only 16% of the respondents have visited Gothenburg, which leaves the majority (84%) on an unknown level of knowledge about the destination.

A qualitative research approach could have had a more reliable and valid case for the justification of the rating numbers, giving each respondent more “space” to explain their reasoning behind their rating choices.

## 7 Conclusion

This is the final chapter of the thesis, which takes a deeper look into the results of the study and measures the reliability and validity of the research. Based on the study, development ideas are given and a final evaluation of the overall work process.

### 7.1 Discussion

The aim of this study was to better understand the knowledge that Finnish travellers have of Gothenburg as a destination and to interpret their image of Gothenburg as a brand. When comparing the results with the elements of Gothenburg as a destination and brand, presented in Chapter 4, it can be perceived that the random sample representing the Finnish population has an image of Gothenburg closely befitting the brand.

Sustainability is one of Gothenburg's keywords and it was mentioned several times by some respondents in multiple parts of the survey. Nearly 40% of the respondents have an image of Gothenburg being a clean city, which refers to the responsibility of the environment. The remaining 60% are unsure whether it is or not, but none disagreed with the statement.

Measuring the respondent's general knowledge on Gothenburg as a destination, figures 10 and 12 represented some of the thoughts that the respondents had. When their interest to visit was questioned, words such as "green destination", "sustainability" and names of attractions were listed.

When reviewing the respondents' image of Gothenburg in an overall picture, the image is certainly positive. The image of the sample, representing the Finnish population can be summarized as Gothenburg being a historical and charming city with a sense of environmental responsibility.

There were no real concerns or negative images of the destination, besides a few comparing it to other European cities making it a "dull option" for travel. Only a small number of respondents were uninterested to visit Gothenburg, and the reason for some of them not wanting to go was because of Covid-19.

The reliability and validity of the study was discussed earlier in chapter 5 but having mentioned at the end of the results chapter that some of the statements may not be the respondents answer based on knowledge but rather individual perception, some reliability could be taken away. There is also always a chance of having more individuals that know

about the destination or just different values and perceptions in the new sample if the same research is repeated.

## **7.2 Development ideas**

To measure the knowledge of the respondents, new questions could be added to the survey, if survey method is used. For instance, the respondents could place themselves in a group of whether they have any idea of the destination or not. Referring to one of the survey questions where some respondents were asked why they do not want to visit Gothenburg, the pandemic should have been considered. There should have been some sort of text indicating that the pandemic should not affect the choices you make but instead the choices should be made purely on willingness under normal life circumstances.

## **7.3 Evaluation**

The whole process of creating and doing this thesis gave me better insight on topics I was not extremely familiar or knowledgeable in. I personally learned a lot more about destination branding and what impact a destination image has since I never thought about it much myself. Even though I spent one year in Gothenburg in 2019 and the beginning of 2020, I also discovered new things about the destination that I did not know beforehand.

Unfortunately, the timing of the thesis was very poor as it was conducted during the pandemic, limiting the amount of data I was able to collect. I personally also did not do the thesis as structured as I should have, having had to deal with a lot of personal issues along the way. In the end, I feel that this thesis was somewhat of a success, but I certainly feel that I could have done better with the right motivation and mindset. I hope that my thesis can be useful for someone else in the future and that this may inspire someone to visit Gothenburg one day.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The survey used to collect data for this study

#### The brand image of Göteborg / Gothenburg as a travel destination for Finnish travellers

The purpose of this survey is to better understand the thoughts and knowledge Finnish travellers' have about Gothenburg as a travel destination. Your responses are strictly confidential and under no circumstances will be shared to anyone else. This survey is approximately 10 minutes long.

This survey is conducted by Haaga-Helia student Hai Nguyen for his Bachelor's thesis, your answers will be very helpful and appreciated! Thank you in advance. :)

Note: Some questions may disappear depending on what answers you pick. This is not a bug!

#### 1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

#### 2. In which age group are you?

- Under 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 60
- Over 60

#### 3. What is your highest level of education?

- Primary School (Peruskoulu)
- Upper Secondary / Vocational School (Lukio / Ammattikoulu)
- University ( Yliopisto / Ammattikorkeakoulu )

**4. What are the main things you look forward to when traveling abroad?**

( You can select more than one option )

Culture

Local food

History

Religion

Adventure

Relaxation

Nature

Shopping

People

Other

**5. Which things worry you the most when traveling abroad?**

( You can select more than one )

Safety

Hygiene

Local peoples' attitude towards tourists

Language barrier

Lack of things to do

Running out of money

Other

**6. Have you visited Göteborg before?**

Yes

No

**7. Why did you visit Göteborg?**

( You can select more than one option )

- Work
- Leisure
- Family and/or friends
- Other

**8. Would you like to visit Göteborg?**

- Yes
- No

**9. What are the reasons why you would want to visit Göteborg?**

( You can answer with short sentences, words and adjectives. )


**10. What are the reasons why you would not want to visit Göteborg?**

( You can answer with short sentences, words and adjectives. )


**11. What comes to your mind when you think of Göteborg?**

( You can answer with sentences, single words or adjectives )

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## 12. Göteborg is / has ...

From a scale 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statement?

1 = Completely disagree

2 = Somewhat disagree

3 = I don't know

4 = Somewhat agree

5 = Completely agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Great shopping possibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly local people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lots of criminality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terrorism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lots of activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily accessible ( easy to visit )	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Great food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manageable with English only as a tourist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beautiful sights such as nature and landscape	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Historical sights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good overnight stay options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Very religious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good transportation inside the city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An interesting culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A good city for events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A clean city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A expensive city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>